

# **A documentary review of Quality Assurance (QA) Policy and Processes implemented in Teacher Education institutions. A case of selected Primary Teacher Training Colleges (PTTCs) in Uganda**

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## **Abstract**

Implementation of quality assurance policy and processes in higher education institutions like PTTCs in Uganda has been legitimated in the neoliberalism dialogue. Although international organizations such as the World Bank and Organization for economic cooperation and development (OECD) point out that, there is convergence in quality assurance policy and processes implementation, the genesis of Neoliberalism has had a tremendous effect on the implementation of QA policy and processes in higher education institutions such as PTTCs in Uganda. The study presented a case study on the implementation of quality assurance policy and processes in primary teacher training colleges (PTTCs). As a way of enlightening the analysis of quality assurance policy and processes, one public and one private PTTC were purposively selected as the case studies. The study applied documentary evidence from key national, institutional, and departmental documents on the implementation of QA policy and processes/practices. Data were analyzed using content and thematic analysis of documents on quality assurance policy and processes/practices. The ways on how the QA policies inform QA practices were unveiled. In addition, the status of the current quality assurance processes/practice applied in PTTCs were identified. The study also gave several recommendations for enhancing of quality of primary teacher education in the PTTCs in Uganda.

**Keywords:** Quality assurance, Policies, Processes, Teacher education, Primary Teacher Training College (PTTCs)

## 1.0 Introduction

Quality assurance has progressively become more an important feature of higher education institutions in both developed and developing countries, as expressed in the development of policies, and practices at national and institutional levels (Onocha, 2002; Ingvarson et al., 2013; Maniku, 2008;Geda, 2014). Such events are also true for teacher training institutions too. As such, there has been some reforms and policies established to promote teacher quality and quality teaching in teacher training institutions (Ingvarson et al., 2013). Some of these reforms and policies include: policy on admission of better students into the teaching profession, accreditation policies to monitor and assure the quality of teacher education programs, policies to ensure that teaching becomes an attractive career (Kane et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2000). These policies not only eradicate the problem of teacher quality but also teacher shortage. The quality assurance policies guide several processes such as student admission into the teacher education program; accreditation processes which ensure monitoring, assuring, and enhancement of quality of teacher training institutions (Hayward, 2006).

Although the policies formulated are crucial at improving the quality of teacher education, they may not work in isolation without adequate QA processes. As such, several processes to ensure quality of teaching and learning in teacher education institutions include quality assessment, use performance indicators and self-evaluation. Various countries' quality assurance policies have been developed to support and guide implementation of quality assurance processes as a way of ensuring and enhancing quality in teacher education (Maniku, 2008; Lockett, 2006; Ingvarson & Rowley, 2013). Several studies have been conducted in relationship to quality assurance policies and practices in higher education (Lukket,2006; Maniku, 2013; Geda, 2014); quality policies in higher education (Tam, 1999); quality assurance policy in secondary schools (Meremo,2017). However, little is known about quality assurance policies and processes implemented in primary teacher training colleges in Uganda. The major aim of this study was to explore the quality assurance policies informing implementation of quality assurance processes in PTTCs in Uganda. The study also aimed at identifying the processes applied in the implementation of quality assurance in the PTTCs in Uganda. The study was meant to answer the following questions.

## Research questions

1. What quality assurance processes are applied in PTTCs in Uganda?
2. How does the quality assurance policy inform the implementation of quality assurance processes?

This paper consists of the following sections: literature review, methodology and findings and discussion. The next section presents literature review.

## 2.0 Literature review

This section presents a brief on quality assurance in tertiary and higher education institutions in Uganda as the main literature of the study.

### **A brief overview of quality assurance in Tertiary and higher education institutions in Uganda.**

Over the last two decades, Uganda adopted and applied a rigorous and comprehensive national quality assurance system encompassing a range of policies, practices, and processes to ensure and enhance quality education (Kasozi,2006). There has been an ongoing national effort to foster and promote quality assurance in all tertiary higher education institutions by establishing a national quality assurance system to implement and sustain institutional accreditation across the country (Haywaord,2006; Matove,2013; Kakembo and Makumbi Barymak,2017).

In order to achieve this, the University and higher education intuitional act of 2001 was enacted by the act of parliament of Uganda and one of its aims was to establish the quality assurance agency, the National council for Higher education. This act was amended in 2003 and 2006 and enacted by the parliament of Uganda as ACT 7 which states that:

*An Act to provide for the establishment of the National Council for Higher Education, its functions and administration and to streamline the establishment, administration and standards of universities and other institutions of Higher Education in Uganda and to provide for other related matters (University and higher education intuitional act of 2001; NCHE,2006, pp. 17).*

The other objective of this Act is to establish and develop a system governing institution of higher education in order to equate qualifications of the same or similar courses offered by different institutions of higher education while at the same time respecting the autonomy and

academic freedom of the Institutions and to widen the accessibility of high-quality standard institutions to students wishing to pursue higher education. These are to be achieved through: regulating and guiding the establishment and management of those institutions; and equating the same professional or other qualifications as well as the award of degrees, diplomas, certificates and other awards by the different institutions (Kasozi,2006).

The aforementioned objectives are re-enforced by the NCHE whose role is to regulate the quality of tertiary and higher educational institutions in Uganda. Some of the other major roles of NCHE are to implement the objects of university and other tertiary education institutions Act 2001; to promote and develop the processing and dissemination of information on higher education for the benefit of the people; to advise the Minister on the establishment and accreditation of public and private institutions of Higher Education.

In addition, the NCHE established a framework with several acts, proclamations and statutory instruments that guide the tertiary and higher education to implement quality assurance practices in order to ensure and enhance quality. As per the NCHE Framework, both public and private tertiary and higher education institutions follow almost similar Acts, proclamations, statutory instruments, and QA practices while ensuring and enhancing quality of their education. For instance, statutory Instruments No.80 A (2008) which guides, regulates the established and registration of private tertiary and higher education institutions; Statutory Instruments No.63 (2007) which sets requirements for admission to Universities or Other Tertiary Institutions; and Universities-and-Other-Tertiary-Institutions-Act-2001 which apart from establishing the NCHE, it also informs the formation of internal quality assurance systems in tertiary and higher educational institutions.

While looking at the QA processes, evidence from the NCHE shows that there are also common institutional quality assurance processes in public and private tertiary and higher education institutions. For example, institutional self-assessments, student evaluation of teaching, institutional quality audit, self-evaluation, and external examinations (peer reviews). These QA practices are common to both private and public tertiary and higher education in situations as some of them are used by the NCHE for external evaluation, accreditation, and reaccreditation. In support of this view, Okebukola and Shabani (2007), contend that the quality assurance practices in both private and public tertiary and higher education institutions are implemented in

the same way and thoroughness as spelt out by their country's quality assurance frameworks. On the same note, some other quality practices implemented in tertiary and higher education institutions such as performance indicators, appraisals, quality audits have been credited for offering transparency, learning, enhanced status of work and social integration at the contextual level (Stensaker, 2008; Haapakorpi, 2011).

Although this seems to be true, there is a concern if it may really apply to all tertiary and higher education institutions especially in Ugandan PTTCs due to their size, experience of staff, fiscal resources, and their environment. Evidence to show how these the QA policies/Acts inform the implementation of QA practices and the corresponding QA practices in PTTCs seems to be scanty and extant. Therefore, the major objective of this study is to establish how QA policies inform the implementation of QA processes and what QA processes are applied in the PTTCs. The next section presents the methodology of the study.

### **3.0 Methodology**

This section presents the research methodology, research design, sampling, methods of data collection, validity, reliability, and data analysis.

#### **3.1 Research methodology**

According to Kothari (2004), research methodology a logical, theoretical analysis of processes applied to a field of study while investigating a phenomenon. Since this study aimed to gain deeper understanding of how quality assurance policy and processes are implemented in PTTCs in Uganda, an interpretive paradigm was found to be the most appropriate. Data was obtained through document analysis (qualitative data) of government policy documents, institutional documents, quality audit reports, quality assessment reports and academic performance reports.

#### **3.2 Research design**

The research design refers to the overall strategy in which a researcher chooses to incorporate various components of the study in a systematic way to address the research problem effectively (Fetters, Curry, & Creswell, 2013). This study applied a case study design to investigate the quality assurance policy and processes applied in PTTCs in Uganda. According to Stake (2013), a case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of a complexity and uniqueness of a particular phenomenon, which can be a policy, project, institution, program or system in a

real life situation. Yin (2009) points out that case studies are the methods of choice when a researcher aims at answering research questions with 1) “how” and “why”; 2) also when the researcher has little or no control over actual events; and 3) the focus of the study is on a current phenomenon within a real-life context.

### **3.3 Sampling strategy**

Two PTTCs Kibuli Moslem (ABC PTTC-public) and Ggaba PTTC (TT PTTC -private) were purposively selected as cases for this study, which are one private, and public. The selection was based on purposive sampling to obtain information-rich cases on implementation of QA policy and processes. The rationale for studying the different contexts of PTTCs in Uganda is underscored by the fact that different quality assurance processes and practices applied by these colleges seem to differ, with some seemingly having more rigorous QA processes than others. The diversity in these institutions’ approaches to implementation of quality assurance policy and their quality assurance processes is worth studying. Conducting a comparative analysis of the QA policy and processes applied in various two types of PTTCs contexts in light of the relevant QA literature is expected to give valuable lessons for Uganda’s higher education QA implementation framework and policy in general.

### **3.4 Data collection methods**

Document analysis was used to collect data from public and private, published, and unpublished documents obtained about the phenomenon under investigation at the research sites. Documents are considered the most important source of information in research (Merriam, 1998; Hanson, Creswell, Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005). Documents can be of various forms ranging from visual, physical material, which are of great relevance to the study (Denzin, 2008). In this study document, analysis was focused mostly on institutional and national policies on QA and processes. These documents included mission statements, strategic plans, explicit QA policies, education acts, and quality delivery institution reports. This tool revealed the comparison between what is stipulated in QA policy and processes and the actual texts in policy and processes being implemented. Although this method has an advantage of facilitating collection of large amount of reliable data without necessary questioning of people, it has a limitation of being liable to errors and laborious in terms of analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

### 3.5 Validity and Reliability (Trustworthiness)

This refers to the ability of the research instrument to give similar or consistent results when applied to various contexts. While validity is the ability of an instrument to measure what is supposed to measure (Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008). In the same vein, Golafshani (2003) points out that validity of the instruments should be conducted to enhance its dependability, credibility, and the trustworthiness of its instruments. Before documents are analyzed for a particular study, they should be validated through checking their authenticity, credibility, representatively, and meaning to ensure that they are suitable for the study (Mile & Huberman, 1994).

### 3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is a process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming and modelling data with the goal of underlining essential information, suggesting conclusions and supporting decision-making (Ader, 2008). In this study, thematic analysis was used to provide rich description of the data set. The themes were drawn from the documents reviewed on quality assurance policy and processes applied in PTTCs in Uganda.

### 4.0 Findings of the study

The QA policy and processes applied by the PTTCs colleges were analyzed in relation to the national QA framework for tertiary and higher education institutions in Uganda, using evidence collected through documentary review. The information obtained from the documents was analyzed together. How the QA policies/proclamations/Acts/statutory instruments inform the implementation of QA process /practices in the different public and private PTTCs was the focus of investigation conducted through the case studies.

#### 4.1 Quality assurance practices applied in PTTCs in Uganda

This part explains the QA practices/ processes in the each of the case institutions.

##### Comparison of the emergent related to how QA practices implemented in PTTCs

Research questions	List of emergent themes related to QA processes	
	ABC PTTC	TT PTTC
1. What QA processes are applied in PTTCs	Admitting students with suitable entry requirements.	Admitting students with suitable entry requirements

in Uganda?	Student evaluation of teaching enhances quality of student learning.	Student assessment of teaching enhances quality of student learning.
	Continuous assessment and external examinations	Continuous assessment and external examinations
		Accreditation

The review of documents and analysis of documents indicates that ABC and TT PTTCs have no established internal QA policy they follow the QA framework for tertiary and higher education institutions. This QA framework is an important official document which consists of proclamations, Acts, and laws that guides the implementation of QA practices at the colleges.

**Theme 1: Admitting students with suitable entry requirements**

In this cross-case study, all the four PTTCs namely, ABC and TT PTTCs follow the policy on admission of students with suitable entry requirements in their colleges. Admission to all the four colleges is indicated in statutory instrument No. 63 of 2007, which spells out the minimum entry requirements for admission such as a credit in math, English and at least in two science subjects. For the public colleges like ABC PTTC placement of students is done by the Ministry of Education using their aggregated scores in the final UCE examinations and they have no control or influence on the process while for the private colleges namely TT PPTC although they follow the same guidelines as the public one, they have a control and influence on the admission process and the more students they admit the better as they depend student numbers and tuition as a source of income.

**Theme 2: Student evaluation of teaching enhances the quality of student learning**

The documentary analysis of the documents from the four colleges indicate that they all conduct student assessment of teaching through regular surveys, academic meetings, interviews etc. as required by the QA framework for NCHE. In ABC, students monitor the quality of their learning through the use student and class representatives to evaluate the teaching and learning through giving feedback in meetings in areas such as tutor regularity in teaching, learning materials, tutor participation in college activities, subject content, and examination. Furthermore, copies of various students’ feedback as part of student evaluation of teaching confirmed the aforementioned areas as the basis for ensuring and enhancing the quality of education in the college. On the other hand, in TT PTTC, throughout all the departments, tutors are evaluated by



students using a survey form to identify their strength and weaknesses and as a procedure to ensure and improve the quality of teaching and learning process as well as the quality of education.

After conducting the student evaluation of teacher and learning, it was revealed that in two colleges that there was no document indicating that there is no formal follow up on the feedback provided to the individual tutors to improve on their weakness.

### **Theme 3: Continuous assessment and external examinations**

Examination regulations and awards standardization (a) Institutions of higher learning shall ensure that all their candidates are fully informed in writing about existing examination regulations and procedures at the beginning of the semester/term. (b) Institutions shall ensure that there is consistency in the formats of examinations, transparency in conduct of examination and rigor.

Documentary analysis from all the four colleges, indicate that their students do both continuous assessments set by the tutors in the college and final which are set and administered by Kyambogo University. As part of the policy the of continuous assessment has changed the grading system from being relative (from distinction, credit, pass and fail) to fixed (to A, B, C, D, E and F) this is one of the initiatives for ensuring quality of education. The tutors give different assignments, tests and practical projects. This continuous assessment amounts to 50 % which submitted to Kyambogo University which is the awarding university of the primary teacher education certificate. After passing this continuous assessment, students can sit for final exam, which they must pass before qualifying as primary teachers. In response to the mentioned proclamation as stated in the quality assurance framework for tertiary and higher education institutions, in both colleges the assessment of student performance is grounded in continuous assessment and external examinations as an initiative to enhance the quality of education.

### **Theme 4: Accreditation**

The higher education and other tertiary education Act of 2001 and the proclamation on quality assurance of 2008 mandates to accredit private tertiary and higher education institutions such as the private PTTCs. In this case the accreditation system focuses at both institutional and program levels. At institution level private PTTCs mainly GBK and BLB apply for accreditation

while at program level Kyambogo University of which all PTTCs ensures that the primary teacher education program is accredited by the NCHE.

Regarding this, both colleges need to undergo the accreditation process before they start to operate. In this respect, accreditation refers to an assessment by a legal body (National Quality Assurance Agency) to decide whether an institution or an educational program qualifies for a certain status. The documentary review indicates that this colleges are licensed which means they already underwent accreditation by the NCHE and Ministry of education of Uganda. In addition, other documents from the quality assurance office also indicated that a self-evaluation report and application for accreditation has been submitted to the ministry of education and NCHE. On the other hand, the public PTTCs (ABC) does not apply for accreditation since it is already accredited by the state/act of parliament.

In the Uganda's case, the education act of 2001, and the quality assurance regulation of 2008, was mainly shaped by mainly three main factors: (a) the rapid expansion of the private education institutions due to high demand of higher education provision; (b) the variety and complex nature of private providers of higher education; and (c) the absence of a vigorous quality monitoring system. Through these proclamations, the quality of private tertiary education institutions like private PTTCs are closely monitored by the NCHE and ministry of education to ensure that there is no compromise of education standards.

## 4.2 How QA policies inform the implementation of QA processes in PTTCs

**Table 4 Comparison of the emergent themes of how QA policies informs implementation of quality assurance processes**

Research questions	Document	ABC PTTC	TT PTTC
2. How do QA policies, inform the implementation of QA processes in PTTCs?	Education Act of 2001.	Education Act of 2001: implementation of internal and external assurance practices.	Education Act of 2001: implementation of internal and external assurance practices.
	NCHE framework for QA: universities and tertiary education Act of 2001; Statutory Instrument No 34 of 2008: Quality Assurance Regulations, 2008.	Quality assurance regulation of 2008: establishment of quality system at institutional level.	Quality assurance regulation of 2008: establishment of quality system at institutional level.
	Statutory Instrument No.63of2007: Minimum Entry Requirements for Admission to Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Regulations, 2007.	Statutory Instrument No. 63 of2007: Admission of students with adequate qualification.	Statutory Instrument No. 63 of2007: Admission of students with adequate qualification.
	Education Act of 2001: implementation of internal and external assurance practices.	Education Act of 2001: implementation of internal and external assurance practices.	Education Act of 2001: implementation of internal and external assurance practices.
	University and tertiary instructions regulations,2007: Statutory instruments No.63.	Minimum entry requirements for admission to tertiary and HEIs.	Minimum entry requirements for admission to tertiary and HEIs.
	Universities and other tertiary institutional act,2001(Section 2.7)	Examination regulations and awards standardization) informs implementation of Continuous assessment and final examinations	Examination regulations and awards standardization) informs implementation of Continuous assessment and final examinations

## **Theme 1: Education Act of 2001: implementation of internal and external assurance processes**

In accordance with this Act, the two colleges have a well-established quality assurance system that handles quality assurance issues. For instance, in both colleges there is an internal quality assurance system which guides the implementation of quality assurance practices headed by the quality assurance officer who reports directly to the college principal. The only difference is that in TT college, the quality office recruited some student representatives who work hand in hand with officer in charge of QA while in ABC college students are only informed to take part only when they are needed to fill a questionnaire survey or meet some officials from the NCHE or ministry of education.

It's like the Act is more pronounced in the PTTCs (TT and ABC) where it provides the guidelines for their establishment. Furthermore, the Act has some limitations in view of enforcing the implementation of quality assurance practices. One of the inadequacies of the Act is lack of provisions regarding PTTCs' financing strategies. In other words, there is no Act for regulating or caters for financing in the PTTCs. Another limitation of the Act is its lack of provisions that encourage competitions between students and funding among the PTTCs. The proclamation does not require public PTTCs (ABC) to gain accreditation as it is for the private ones (such as TT).

## **Theme 2: The proclamation on quality assurance of 2008: Accreditation**

The proclamation on quality assurance of 2008 mandates to accredit private tertiary and higher education institutions such as the private PTTCs. In this case the accreditation system focuses at both institutional and program levels. At institution level private PTTCs apply for accreditation while at program level Kyambogo University of which all PTTCs ensures that the primary teacher education program is accredited by the NCHE.

Regarding this, TT PTTC needs to undergo the accreditation process before they start to operate. In this respect, accreditation refers to an assessment by a legal body (National Quality Assurance Agency) to decide whether an institution or an educational program qualifies for a certain status. The documentary review indicates that this college is licensed which means it already underwent accreditation by the NCHE and ministry of education of Uganda. In addition, other documents

from the quality assurance office also indicated that a self-evaluation report and application for accreditation has been submitted to the ministry of education and NCHE. On the other hand, although, ABC college complies with these regulation and Act, it does not apply and implement accreditation since it is already accredited by the state. In Uganda's case, the formation of the Act and regulation is underscored by three main factors namely (a) the rapid expansion of the private education institutions due to high demand of higher education provision; (b) the variety and complex nature of private providers of higher education; and (c) the absence of a vigorous quality monitoring system.

The regulation and Act also put emphasis on the private tertiary education institutions (TT PTTC) to conduct accreditation and obtain a license to operate. Since the public PTTCs (ABC PTTC) are accredited by the state this regulation is not followed in this respect as it is the case for the private ones. Concerning this, private PTTCs (TT) apply for accreditation to the NCHE and ministry of education, they conduct a self-evaluation, and invite the officials from the NCHE to come and review the college and make their recommendations about the status of the college. The NCHE and Ministry of education have jointly developed criteria for registering tertiary education institutions like PTTCs so that they operate legally.

### **Theme 3: Statutory Instrument No.63 of 2007: Minimum Entry Requirements for Admission to Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Regulations, 2007**

The statutory instrument requires that students joining PTTCs must have obtained two credits in Math, English as well as passes in two of the science subjects such as Agriculture, Biology, Chemistry and Physics. The institutional documents from the colleges indicate that all the student admitted met all the requirements as spelt out by the statutory instrument of the admission policy.

For ABC college admission of students is done by the Ministry of Education using their aggregated scores in the final UCE examinations and they have no control or influence on the process while for the private colleges TT college although it follows the same guidelines as the public one and have control and influence on the admission process and the more students admitted the better as they depend on the student numbers and tuition as a source of income. It is believed that admitting students with suitable entry qualifications, ensures performance and

quality of teachers. The statutory instruments mandate the NCHE and Ministry of education to disqualify any student without proper entry qualification.

#### **Theme 4: NCHE framework's universities and tertiary education Act of 2001 and quality assurance regulation: Article 2.8: Student assessment of teaching enhances quality of student learning**

As per the Act and regulation, all instructors, (including tutors' lecturers or professors in tertiary and higher education institutions are required to be assessed by the students in a homogenous format at the end of each lesson, term, and course. In this case, the students assess tutors/lecturers' performance to help them address their weaknesses and help them to improve teaching through the improvement of content and teaching skills. In this college, throughout all the departments, tutors are evaluated by students to identify their strength and weaknesses and as a practice to ensure and improve the quality of teaching and learning process as well as the quality of education.

Although the documents reviewed indicated that students evaluate the tutors regularly, there was no document indicating that feedback was provided to teachers and follow up was carried out as a way of enforcing improvement in the teaching and learning process in the PTTC. This means that the staff members are not provided with useful data to enable them to take concrete measures to improve their teaching. In this case, the link between student evaluation of teaching – learning process and enhancing quality seemed not have existed.

#### **Theme 5: University and tertiary instructions regulations,2007; Statutory instruments No.63: Minimum requirements for admission to universities or other tertiary institutions**

As per this regulation and statutory instrument, the two colleges admit students with minimum entry requirements which are: completion of Uganda certificate of education with a credit in English and Math and passes in science subjects such as Biology, Physics, or Agriculture. Documents in from the registrar's offices of the two colleges indicated the students admitted for the primary teacher education with their corresponding grades attained in ordinary level.

Although both colleges follow the regulation and statutory instrument, admission of student in ABC college is affected by the ministry of education which means the college has no control in

allocating students. On the other hand, TT college admits students without the influence of the ministry of education. The more the students admitted in this college the better since its funding depends on the number of students. For the case of ABC, its funding depends on the allocated students in the college in terms of block capitation grants given to public colleges (such as ABC) quarterly.

Although this Ministry of education directs admission of students in the colleges, it has no influence on funding in the PTTCs and doesn't encourage competition for funding and competition for students to the primary teacher education course.

**Theme 6: Universities and other tertiary institutional act,2001(Section 2.7) (Examination regulations and awards standardization) informs implementation of Continuous assessment and final examinations**

This is cited as:

*Examination regulations and awards standardization (a) Institutions of higher learning shall ensure that all their candidates are fully informed in writing about existing examination regulations and procedures at the beginning of the semester/term. (b) Institutions shall ensure that there is consistency in the formats of examinations, transparency in conduct of examination and rigor (Universities and other tertiary institutional act,2001; Section 2.7, pp 13-14).*

In accordance with the mentioned Act, documentary analysis from both colleges, indicate that their students do both continuous assessments set by the tutors in the college and final which are set and administered by Kyambogo University. As part of the policy the of continuous assessment has changed the grading system from being relative (from distinction, credit, pass and fail) to fixed (to A, B, C, D, E and F) this is one of the initiatives for ensuring quality of education. The tutors give different assignments, tests and practical projects. This continuous assessment amounts to 50 % which submitted to Kyambogo University which is the awarding university of the primary teacher education certificate. After passing this continuous assessment, students can sit for final exam, which they must pass before qualifying as primary teachers. In response to the mentioned proclamation/act as stated in the quality assurance framework for tertiary and higher education institutions, in both colleges the assessment of student performance is grounded in continuous assessment and external examinations as an initiative to enhance the

quality of education. The college documents reviewed indicated that the colleges are committed to implementing the policy on continuous assessment as an initiative for supporting student learning and ensuring the quality of teaching and learning.

## **5. Discussion**

This section presents a discussion of the findings of the study according to the themes relating to the research questions and objectives of the study.

### **5.1 Quality assurance practices applied in PTTCs**

#### *Admitting students with suitable entry requirements*

Data from the documentary analysis from the PTTCs is highly functional in both ABC and TT colleges. For students to be admitted in the PTTCs, as a must they should meet the requirements as spelt out the quality guidelines for the NCHE and ministry of education. Admission of students with suitable requirements is underscored by the fact that such students can perform better in their courses. This belief is also in line with Mutonga (2011), Lizzio, Wilson and Simons (2002), Adjei (2001), Alia and Zain (2006) and Mudavanhu and Zezekwa (2011) who from their studies unveiled that there is a positive relation between student performance and their entry qualification.

#### *Student evaluation of teaching enhances the quality of student learning*

Both colleges conduct the student evaluation of teaching as they regarded as a major tool for ensuring quality of the teaching and learning process. This is also in support of scholars such as Johnson (2000) who also point that student evaluation of teaching (SETs) is key factor on the plan for attaining quality of education through demonstrating institutions' performance and effectiveness in the process of teaching and learning. Similarly, Spooren, Brockx, and Mortelman (2013) also point out that, student evaluation of teaching is a major practice in assessing the teaching quality through collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data from the students and giving feedback to the individual teachers so that he or she can improve.

Although student evaluation of teaching is a very crucial quality tools in ensuring quality and is conducted in both PTTCs, it seems to be less function as also documents indicated no follow up of feedback provided by the students. The management from the PTTCs doesn't trust the



students' comments as they feel that they feel the evaluation forms and surveys with emotions towards some staff members and also that some staff may influence the student feedbacks. Another observation is that most of the top management may not actually analyze the students' responses statistically as most of them are based on numbers and those which given verbally are also analyzed with some degree of bias which makes the whole process to lack authenticity. In support of this, Alshamy (2011), who recognized this from his study in Egypt that management in the universities did not take student evaluation of teaching seriously as they believed that their feedback may not make any significant difference in the process of teaching and learning.

Therefore, the effectiveness of student evaluation of teaching can be improved only if the management in the PTTCs provides constructive feedback to students on how their evaluations are being used and also show to them that their feedback has been instrumental in making a positive change in enhancing the quality of teaching as well that of their education.

### ***Accreditation***

The emergency of private providers in primary teacher education in Uganda has made it more complex than before with increased competition among the PTTCs for students which has led to a concern for education standards and quality. Although both colleges share similarity in implementation of some QA practices, they differ in that the private one (TT PPTC) applies to the NCHE and Ministry of education for accreditation. The college conducts a self-evaluation and institutional quality audit process which is based on the assessment of results of its available resources, purpose-specific evaluation results, summary of self-analysis and other documents, data obtained during the site visits of experts to the institution, findings of the previous evaluation and recommendations and data on how and to what effect they were implemented, as well as other information about the activities of the higher education institution. After the process of self-evaluation and quality audit, then a peer review team from the NCHE conducts external evaluation by comparing what they observe with the self-evaluation report the college provided and a later a decision is made on the status of the college (Van Vught & Westerheijden,1994; Kasozi,2006).

Private PTTCs such TT conduct accreditation to attain the license to operate which is an indication that they meet the required quality standards set by the NCHE and ministry of

education. This is also in line with Kahsay (2012) who also contend that accreditation boosts trust, confidence, and legitimacy as it indicates compliance to the standards and quality guidelines set by the QA agency.

### ***Continuous assessment and external examinations***

In Both colleges, students do both continuous assessment and external examinations during their two-year period of study. Continuous assessment is usually done at the end of a course unit, topic, grade, or program; *assessment as learning* which uses students as contributor to assessment, learning process and as a link between them. It plays a vital role in ensuring quality teaching and learning as well as quality of education. This is also in agreement with Amedeker (2014) and Abejehu (2016) who also point out that continuous assessment leads to improvement of the teaching and learning process and motivating students to work harder, and thus, its success should be measured in terms opportunities it provides for educational quality enhancement

On the other hand, external examinations are prepared by a group of experts outside the college or school or higher education institution and are administered by a national examination board or by an examination board. They play a great role in maintenance of certain uniform standards at the end of the stage, providing a basis for choices at the secondary stage and creating incentives for better teaching and learning. This is in line with the views of Vlaardingnerbroek & Taylor, (2009), Abejehu (2016), Rind & Mari (2019) who confirm that they are used as measures that show achievement which are critical to students' success required for their further studies and employment after school.

In PTTCs, students are graded using the results from both continuous assessment during the course and external examination at the end of the course. As per the assessment policy, continuous assessment contributes 50% and external examinations also contributes 50% all of which makes a total of 100%. Currently, the students in PTTCs are assessed using ABCDEF scale with A being the best and F which is 0 grade and is the lowest. Both continuous assessment and external examinations need to be conducted effectively and efficiently to improve the quality of primary teacher education.

## 5.2 How QA polities inform the implementation of quality assurance processes in PTTCs

Both colleges (ABC & TT PTTCs) implement QA practices following the policies/Acts/proclamations provided by the NCHE and ministry of education. The documentary review indicated that both colleges lack their own internal quality assurance policies. The study also unveiled that several policies/Acts/proclamations have put in place to guide the implementation QA practices in PTTCs. For instance, Universities and other tertiary institutional act,2001 informs the implementation of the assessment policy in which the college students are assessed through both continuous assessment and final examinations; University and tertiary instructions regulations,2007; Statutory instruments No.63 informs the colleges to admit students required requirements as provided by the policy for admission to universities or other tertiary institutions.

In this case the policy requires that all PTTCs to admit students who have completed Uganda certificate of education with a credit in English and Math and passes in science subjects such as Biology, Physics, or Agriculture; quality assurance regulation (Article 2.8) informs the PTTCs to conduct the student assessment of teaching to enhances quality of student learning. As per this regulation, all instructors, (including tutors' lecturers or professors in tertiary and higher education institutions are required to be assessed by the students in a homogenous format at the end of each lesson, term, and course; proclamation on quality assurance of 2008 informs the PTTCs to have an internal quality assurance system and accreditation of private ones (in this case the TT PTTC).

In PTTCs, the quality assurance policies/Acts and proclamations play a great role in the implementation of QA practices so as to and enhance ensure quality. This is also in agreement with Newton (2002), points out that quality assurance policy implementation is fundamental at changing or reshaping quality assurance process, practices, and instructional quality in higher education. In the same vein, Saketa (2014) point out that a quality assurance policy displays standards to be attained, the methodology to be used and the commitment of the actors who implement the policy following the institution's mission statement.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

This study was aimed at investigating the QA policies and practices/ processes applied in PTTCs in Uganda. From the study it was revealed that PTTCs have no institutional QA policies to inform the QA processes. The QA processes applied in PTTCs are: Admitting students with suitable entry requirements, student assessment of teaching, enhances quality of student learning, accreditation, continuous assessment, and external examinations. It was also discovered that there is a difference in implementation of QA processes/practices among the two PTTCs in which the private ones apply for accreditation while the public PTTCs do not. It was also learnt that QA policy and process implementation was a more of top-down approach initiated by Ministry of education, National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) and Kyambogo University. The study also found out that PTTCs follow several QA policies/Acts/proclamations while implementing QA practices such as: Universities and other tertiary institutional act,2001; University and tertiary instructions regulations,2007; Statutory instruments No.63; quality assurance regulation (Article 2.8); proclamation on quality assurance of 2008. These QA policies inform the PTTCs on implementing QA practices such as admitting students with suitable entry requirements, student assessment of teaching, enhances quality of student learning, accreditation, continuous assessment, and external examinations. For the PTTCs to effectively comply with the quality assurance policies/Acts/proclamations during the implementation of QA practices requires management commitment, staff and student involvement, continuous improvement through workshops, seminars on QA implementation and a bottom-up policy implementation that involves all the stakeholders.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

It is recommended that PTTCs should initiate quality assurance process, own it and work towards achieving their identified quality objectives. Both private and public PTTCs should conduct a comprehensive self-evaluation exercise, involving all the staff in it as a way of enhancing quality of primary teacher education. Currently, the PTTCs do not have an institutional QA policy and systems in place to assure quality. It is recommended that internal quality assurance policy should be established to reflect the institutions' missions, visions and values in order to guide and inform QA processes. It is also recommended that PTTCs should have well documented

institution quality assurance guidelines and clear definitions of responsibilities of the staff involved in the quality assurance to ensure consistent and successful QA implementation.

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