INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE STRATEGIES IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN GHANA - AN INSTITUTIONAL THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

In Ghana, internal quality assurance (QA) strategies of tertiary education institutions under mentorship are characterized by institutional isomorphism. However, the nature of influence and implications of institutional isomorphism on quality assurance strategies of the colleges have not received research attention. Using illustrative multiple-case studies through in-depth interviews and document analysis, this study sought to examine the influence and implications of institutional isomorphism on internal QA strategies of Colleges of Education in Ghana. It emerged that majority of the quality assurance strategies employed by the participant College were regarded as mandatory regulatory requirements which must be complied with. Some of them were also deliberately copied from mentor institutions for reputational purposes with few of them developed based on professional norms. The study concludes that, QA strategies of the participants Colleges of Education appear to be about obsession with compliance with little desire to promote internal culture of continuous improvement because everything is based on meeting regulatory requirements and copying for recognition. Based on the conclusion drawn, we recommend that the Colleges pay more attention to the normative isomorphism to balance off the coercive, and mimetic dominance in their QA strategies in order to promote the culture of continuous improvement, which is critical for teacher education delivery.

Keywords: Internal quality assurance strategies; institutional isomorphism, context-relevant; colleges of education, Ghana

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Quality assurance has become the focus of attention and a central element of higher education globally. Contemporary higher education institutions are required to have robust and resilient internal quality assurance strategies in order to be publicly recognized and accepted as providing quality higher education institutions. Today's massified higher education systems are under tremendous pressure to institutional quality assurance (Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumberg, 2009). The usual response to this demand on new higher education institutions has been a reliance on institutional isomorphism, especially those from the developing countries where the concept is emerging. They are compelled by environmental forces to adopt existing quality assurance practices in order to gain legitimacy and credibility. According to Leiber, Stensaker, and Harvey (2015), the aspect of context and how it influences IQA is widely under-researched from an empirical point of view. Meanwhile, general quality assurance frameworks usually do not provide context-relevant solutions for specialized higher education institutions such as teacher education institutions.

Internal quality assurance strategies of Colleges of Education (teacher education institutions) in Ghana are characterised by institutional isomorphism pressures because nonconformity to established standards may threaten their legitimacy and existence as tertiary teacher education institutions (Newman, 2018). However, how institutional isomorphism pressures are able to provide context-relevant quality assurance strategies for the Colleges of Education to fulfill their mandate has received less research attention. Meanwhile, strong

isomorphic pressures towards conformity can lead institutions to adopt structures that are sometimes against the interests of efficiency and rationality (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Therefore, this study sought to examine influence of institutional isomorphism on internal quality assurance strategies of Colleges of Education in Ghana through multiple-case studies. The goal of the study was to examine the nature of influence and implications of isomorphic pressures on internal quality assurance strategies of Colleges of Education in Ghana. It was intended to unearth the practical realities of institutional isomorphism with its associated benefits and challenges in the Colleges of Education in Ghana.

1.1 Ghanaian Colleges of Education in context

Over the past forty years, initial teacher preparation for basic education (from pre-school to grade 9) in Ghana is offered by dedicated institutions (present Colleges of Education) has undergone a number of modifications. These modifications are a result of policy changes, which aimed at producing well-trained teachers to meet the basic education needs of the country at various times (Addo-Obeng, 2008). In the early 2000s, following a comprehensive review of the educational system in Ghana, the Government published a White Paper and declared that "all Teacher Training Colleges will be upgraded into diploma-awarding institutions and be affiliated to the education oriented universities" (Government of Ghana, 2004). In this regard, 38 Public Teacher Training Colleges operating at a level equivalent to level 4 of the International System of Classification of Education (ISCED 4) were re-designated as Colleges of Education (CoEs) to offer tertiary education in 2008. The number has since increased to forty-six (46). They are made up of (1) One male only, Six (6) female only and Thirty Nine (39) mixed CoEs. The general mandate of the CoEs is to train teachers for the primary schools and junior high schools. Prior to their elevation and re-designation as tertiary institutions, the then Teacher Training Institutions (TTIs) were under the Ghana Education Service (GES). This is the agency responsible for pre-tertiary education. The Teacher Education Division, one of the divisions of the Ghana Education Service, directly supervised the TTIs. Thus funding, appointment of staff and determination of requirements to enrol in the institutions were the responsibilities of GES. However, the assessment and certification of the products of TTIs has been the responsibility of the University of Cape Coast. This makes University of Cape Coast a mentor university for Colleges of Education in Ghana. The University over the years has collaborated with the Teacher Education Division of GES to develop and constantly evaluate the curriculum of CoEs to enable them to produce competent professional teachers for Basic Schools in Ghana (Opare, 2008). Meanwhile, Newman (2013) stated that since the re-designation of TTIs as COEs in 2008, the institutions have faced challenges regarding supervision, infrastructure, governance and autonomy. This has raised concerns about quality in the operations of the Colleges of Education.

1.2 The quality assurance context of the Colleges of Education

Internal quality assurance until 2012 when the CoEs received upgrade to tertiary status was not a topical issue in the colleges. As indicated earlier, the CoEs were only under the monitoring and supervision regime applicable to pre-tertiary teacher education institutions in the country. They did not have any regulatory requirement to establish their own internal quality assurance mechanisms for their operations. Their elevation to tertiary status brought them under the supervisory regime of the National Accreditation Board (NAB) of Ghana. The NAB was established by the government of Ghana in 1993 with the enactment of the NAB LAW 1993 (PNDCL 317) which has since been replaced with the National Accreditation Board Act, 2007, Act 744. NAB has the mandate to safeguard standards and enhance the quality of tertiary education as a quality Assurance Agency. The birth of the NAB as regulatory agency of the Ministry of Education therefore is to ensure that the country's tertiary education system continues to be responsive to the fast- changing world and to make its graduates progressively competitive in the world of work (NAB, 2007). NAB's role, according to Dadzie-Mensah (2012) rests on decisions in getting the tertiary institutions to do the right things towards enhanced quality in the Ghanaian higher education. NAB attaches great importance to institutional audit and the role of the internal quality assurance in higher education institutions. It is therefore a requirement for all higher education institutions in Ghana to have internal quality assurance units or directorates. As a result, the Colleges of Education in Ghana have the responsibility to put in place resilient internal quality assurance systems to enhance quality in their operations and outcomes. The responsibility for enacting quality is theirs even though they are affiliated to a university for mentorship. They must have their own quality assurance strategies that are context-relevant as tertiary institutions with specialised mandate that may be different from their mentor University.

2.0 THEORETICAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

Institutional Theory perspective guided this study because the study was undertaken to answer the question of 'how context-relevant is institutional isomorphism in quality assurance strategies of Colleges of Education in

Ghana? This theory focuses on particular aspects of social structures that are inherent in organisations including higher education institutions. According to the theory, conformity to the rules, norms and values of the institutional environment is compulsory for the sake of legitimacy (Covaleski, Dirsmith, and Larry 2003). DiMaggio & Powell (1983) consolidated inputs on Institutional Theory from several of its proponents and found that institutions in making a transition between one condition and another consist of three possible mechanisms of isomorphism.

Firstly, there is the Coercive Isomorphism, in which the organisation is led to adopt new structures through compulsion such as from the mandate of a law. This suggests that higher education institutions of any kind in Ghana have to comply with quality assurance regulations of the National Accreditation Board of Ghana to be considered legitimate by the state and the society. The National Accreditation Board requires all Colleges of Education to establish quality assurance unit within the institutions to address quality assurance issues. Bell and Taylor (2005) highlight that quality assurance regulations work as strong forces to mould organizations. Although the Colleges of Education are still under mentorship by universities and regulatory bodies, internal quality assurance is a basic requirement to gain legitimacy as tertiary education institutions.

Secondly, there is Mimetic Isomorphism in which the organisation follows the lead of another organisation with the purpose of reducing uncertainty (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Mimetic Isomorphism evolves when there is uncertainty in the system that enhances the process of imitation. Quality Assurance in higher education is a concept that has been in existence for quite some time; however, changes do occur as time changes to suit current trends. As a result, Colleges of Education in their quest to establish strong quality assurance unit, could copy quality assurance structures and tools from other higher education institutions with strong quality assurance structures provided such quality assurance structures fit the context of the Colleges of Education.

The third mechanism is the Normative Isomorphism, which is the pressure to use professional norms for organisation progress and development. Professionalism is interpreted as "the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work, to control and to establish a cognitive base and legitimation for their occupational autonomy" (Tsevi, 2015). The organisation adopts the new condition based on the recommendations of experts within the organisation. The Colleges of Education as a result of their attainment into the tertiary level are required to attain some level of professionalism. In fact, the minimum requirement for teachers in the colleges is master's degree in a specialised field. The Normative Isomorphism however suggests that Colleges of Education in Ghana are influenced by the professional associations within them to apply specific standards and ethics to develop their own quality assurance strategies that are robust, resilient and context-specific relevant to train quality teachers for pre-tertiary education in Ghana.

These three pillars of Institutional Theory have been used to examine the context-relevant nature of internal quality assurance strategies of colleges of education in Ghana.

3.0 STUDY METHODS

A multiple qualitative case study approach was employed for this study. To help understand complex real-life situational dynamics requires either experiences or specific cases that can provide lessons (Eisner, 1998). Although, it is unusual for the outcome of a case study to generalize in the way that natural science data can, this is possible (Denzin, 2009). It has been claimed that knowledge transfer occurs through outcomes of case studies (Eisner, 1998). The reason for choosing this design was that the study was about deep insights into the context-relevant nature of internal quality assurance strategies of the different groupings (female only, male only and mixed sex) of colleges in the midst of institutional isomorphism. This made multiple-case study a natural design option for the study. Yin (1994) emphasized that multiple cases strengthen the results by replicating the patterns thereby increasing the robustness of the findings. Literal replication (where the cases are designed to corroborate each other) and theoretical replication (where the cases are designed to cover different theoretical conditions).
Participants from three (3) different Colleges of Education contexts were purposively chosen and were interviewed in-depth at their offices. The selected Colleges of Education were made up of one female only College of Education, one male only College of Education and one mixed sex College of Education. A total number of four (4) participants in each case college involving the College Principal, Vice-Principal, Quality Assurance Officer, and Assessment officer was selected. These officers are the initiators and lead implementers of quality assurance strategies in the Colleges of Education and therefore considered to be information rich for a study of this nature. In all nine (9) key informants were used for the study. Before the commencement of each interview, permission was sought from the participant, the rules of the interviews were explained to them so they were not left in doubt as to what to expect during and after the interviews (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2011). Participants were given a consent form to fill to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. All

the interviews lasted for an hour and twenty minutes and were audio taped. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity by using pseudonyms to represent them. Additional data was also derived from documents. Quality Assurance Policy documents and the Harmonised Statutes for the Colleges of Education in Ghana were analysed and relevant data extracted. Data from interviews were transcribed   and were analysed together with relevant institutional documents thematically. Transcriptions were sent back to participants to confirm before analyses. The themes that emerged included: coercive quality assurance strategies, mimetic quality assurance strategies, normative quality assurance strategies, usefulness of isomorphic quality assurance strategies, challenges of isomorphic quality assurance strategies, and context-relevant nature of quality assurance strategies of the colleges. These themes have been presented and discussed in the next sections.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The goal of the study was to examine the influence of institutional isomorphism on internal quality assurance strategies of Colleges of Education in Ghana to determine the implications of institutional isomorphism on quality assurance strategies for the promotion of continuous improvement in quality. This section presents and discusses the key themes that emerged, including coercive, mimetic and normative influences and related challenges. The implications for promoting a culture of continuous improvement in quality are also discussed.

4.1 Coercive influences on quality assurance strategies

Findings from respondents indicated that majority of the internal quality assurance strategies of the participant Colleges were mandatory requirements by regulatory bodies and mentor institutions. The mandatory strategies that emerged are: the establishment of QA unit, QA strategies for staff recruitment; QA strategies for student recruitment, QA strategies for staff professional development and QA strategies for monitoring and supervision.

4.1.1 Establishment of a QA Unit

It was found that all the participant Colleges have established an internal QA Unit as a strategy to promote standards in the institutions. However, this was not an institutional idea but a mandatory requirement by the NAB. A respondent from the male only college had this to say,

> As a basic requirement for all colleges of education we have tried our best to establish quality assurance unit which is headed by a quality assurance officer who works with a defined committee. (Interviewee AOO)

 When probed for where the idea for establishing QA Unit came from, the respondent said,

> The establishment of quality assurance unit is a primary and mandatory requirement for all tertiary institution therefore, as part of our agenda, we have been able to set up a quality assurance unit we have assign roles to them to bring out the best. (Interviewee AOK).

Respondents AOM,PM,VPM,QAM,VPK,PK,QAK,QAO,PO,VPO made similar claim.

A review of NAB policy (NAB, 2018) shows that setting up an Internal Quality Assurance Unit (IQAU) is a requirement for every tertiary education institution in Ghana. To that effect, NAB has developed guidelines for this purpose and Colleges are required to adopt the guidelines as a necessity. The mandatory nature of this policy makes it coercive from an institutional theory point of view but it is essential for every tertiary institution. As it has been argued, achieving quality in higher education is the primary responsibility of higher education institutions and their staff and setting up a quality assurance unit in higher education institutions has become a ubiquitous quality assurance strategy in higher education systems globally (Anane & Addaney, 2016).
Almost every higher education institution has a quality assurance unit. Then it is plausible to argue that the participant Colleges would have established QA units on their own even if it was not regulatory requirement.

4.1.2 QA strategy for the recruitment of qualified staff

It emerged from the study that all Colleges use the same QA strategy to recruit qualified staff. They indicated that recruitment of staff is based on a requirement provided by the government and the colleges are expected to comply failure to do so may render them illegitimate for their tertiary status. One participant had this to say;

> We are informed and required that all teaching staff must hold a minimum of research Master's degree and their Bachelor's and Master's degrees must all be in the same subject area. Besides, all

qualifications are vetted and verified from issuing bodies and foreign ones are sent to NAB for evaluation before appointment letters are issued to qualified staff. In addition, all applicants for teaching appointment must also appear before either the Academic Board or the Governing Council depending on the position being sought for face-face interview to establish the suitability of the applicant. All these processes are mandatory for all Colleges of Education. (Interviewee PK)

All the participants indicated that the same QA strategy to hire qualified and competent teaching staff. However, some participants were not enthused about the rigid nature of the strategy, particularly, the insistence on Bachelor's and Master's degrees being in the same subject area. A respondent put it this way,

The processes involved in the recruitment strategy is quite rigid and cumbersome but we can't do anything about it. I must say we are trying our best to meet standards required of us, but the rule on 'skirt and blouse' makes things difficult for us (Interviewee PM).

The situation shows coercive pressure brought to bear on the Colleges. Nonetheless, the issue of staff quality is inextricably linked to recruitment processes, and rigour in the processes is essential. For in recruiting teachers, for example, institutions aim to attract individuals who are well prepared, effective and who will remain in the teaching profession long enough to make a difference. Quality teaching and learning in tertiary education institutions largely depends on the availability of highly qualified faculty members. Mullins (2010) highlighted that effective recruitment practices and policies enable an organization to get the required labor force to work with. However, some participants' argument against the insistence on vertical alignment of degrees (non-acceptance of 'skirt and blouse' degrees) deserve consideration because there is dearth of empirical evidence to argue that teachers with vertical alignment of degrees perform better than those without even though it appears logical.

4.1.3 QA strategy for recruitment of qualified students

Just like QA strategy on staff recruitment, it emerged that all the participant Colleges use the same QA strategy for the recruitment of qualified students because it is imposed by the NAB. From the responses given, participants indicated that in recruiting students, they go by the standard given to them by NAB. The following quotes illustrate this claim:

For our admission process we don't do it on our own, however, we play an active role in the admission process. NAB sets the admission requirements and we must follow strictly because non-compliance will lead to severe consequences. NAB requires us to admit applicants who possessed credit in English language, Mathematics, Integrated Science/Social Studies and three relevant electives in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) or West Africa Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) (Interviewee VPM).

We follow the admission requirements and processes given to us by NAB strictly so that we don't fall foul of the rule. NAB requires us to admit applicants who possessed credit in English language, Mathematics, Integrated Science/Social Studies and three relevant electives in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) or West Africa Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). We are also made to conduct oral examinations in addition to verification of SSSCE or WASSCE results before we offer admission. Sometimes we want to ignore the oral examinations but it's mandatory for us so we are incapacitated (Interviewee VPO).

With student's admissions it is mandatory for us to follow standards from the NAB. Sometimes, being strict on the minimum requirement of credit pass does guarantee quality students but we can't do anything about it (Interviewee VPK).

The above quotes demonstrate that a coercive QA strategy for student recruitment is at play in the participant Colleges. Even though this QA strategy imposed by NAB appears useful for safeguarding standards in the Colleges, the participants feel some level of autonomy given to the Colleges to ensure a certain level of flexibility is necessary. In this regard, Colleges of Education will be able to employ innovative ways to admit students and still maintain standards or even enhance quality.

4.1.5 Monitoring and supervision as a QA strategy

The case colleges OC, KC and MC indicated that monitoring and supervision is used as quality assurance strategy in teaching, and learning activities. Respondents stated specifically that heads of department, quality assurance officers, vice principals go round to monitor the lesson delivery of teachers, attendance of teachers and staff to make the necessary changes in teaching and learning approaches. It emerged that the approach used was imposed by their mentor institutions.

Respondents in female college indicated that;

> *Our mandate given us by the government is to train professionals and so to belong to a professional environment we expect to comply to rules given us, as a result NAB requires and expect us to make sure we monitor activities of staff. However, the current monitoring and supervision framework we use is given to us by our mentor institutions and we are obliged to comply (interviewee QAO)*

Respondents in male College also stated that;

> *NAB as an external body comes round to monitor the quality assurance issues in the college. We also give our best. The vice principal with his team always make sure from time to time they monitor activities and attendance and lessons of tutors to ensure they are actually doing the right thing, if a tutor is consistently not performing, they are being queried0 (interview QAM).*

Respondents in mixed college made similar claims

When considering the quality of teaching in higher education, one needs to resist the temptation of seeking simplistic and single dimensional classification. It is best for teachers to be monitored to help them get abreast with current happening so they could change their mode of delivery continuously to meet current trends.

The finding above affirms the claim by Arthur (2011) that effective supervision plays a very crucial role in ensuring quality education by improving students' academic performance.

Linking with the institutional theory to this finding, the coercive pressures compels the colleges of education to conduct supervision in their schools in order to reach the standard expected of them. This supervision is done by the principals, vice principals, quality assurance officers, heads of departments and external supervisors from Institute of Education, University of Cape Coast (UCC).

4.2.0 Normative quality assurance

Themes that emerged under the normative QA strategies are QA strategies for facilities, staff appraisal, professional development and induction and orientation.

4.2.1 QA strategies for facilities

Most of the case colleges in the study indicated that they try as much as possible to maintain their facilities as a way to enhance quality in the institutions through their own internally developed QA strategy. These include appointing an officer in charge of all the facilities in the colleges and making sure that he report to the principal so as to know what step they can take considering the little resources available.

Respondents from mixed college and female college had this to say

> *We are actually trying our best to crawl into our tertiary status, to resemble our dear tertiary institutions our facilities undergoe regular maintenance, we find it difficult with the limited resources but we are trying .we have assigned maintenance officer, the quality assurance officer usually goes round to observe all the facilities, makes their report, if there should be improvement, it is discussed with the principal and the necessary action taken by the technocrats. We make sure our vehicles are actually in good shape so randomly and occasionally we service them. This is something we cannot do without because there is a standard set for all tertiary institutions and so to meet such standard requires that we catch up with the tertiary status given us. (Interviewee QAO).*

As required by all CETAG members, we expected to meet certain criteria when it comes to our facilities hence we make sure our resources or facilities are maintained properly to meet standards, we try to improve on them from time to time. (Interviewee AOK)

Their findings corroborate with Leung, Chan and Wang (2006) which state that, facilities in the institutions are the buildings, water, sanitation, and electricity and waste management logistics. Poorly maintained institutional facilities have an adverse effect on staff and student- teachers. The quality of school facilities and materials has the potential to affect greatly the quality of education provided to students. This is done where an expert in charge of all facilities go round to check the various buildings which is deteriorating or below standards and find necessary measures to address it.

4.2.2 The formal appraisal system strategy

The case colleges of education OC, KC and MC indicated that as part of their professional norm they make sure they conduct formal appraisals for academic staff as strategy for quality assurance. Though their commitment to this exercise seems to differ according to how well resourced a college is, they all indicated by way of assuring quality, they administer questionnaires through departmental heads and students to evaluate staff job knowledge and personal behaviours against established standards. The colleges indicated that through adoption from workshop from institute of education, what they do is to set performance standard, then communicate it by way of implementing it, then they measure it after every process and make necessary corrections and input after the result are being discussed. This strategy is considered as a normative pressure

Participants in college KC and MC gave these illustrations.

In our college, formal appraisal system is a key strategy, we don't joke with it all.

Producing quality and competent teachers requires that we constantly appraise our staff hence we adopt techniques from T-tel workshops and other conferences we attend. We also mimic our mentoring institutions to help us reach their standard. (Interviewee AOM)

We do appraisal of tutors performance we check the strategies they use to deliver their lesson, the resources and the attendance and it is analysed so that we get the performance of each tutor after the analysis we make sure we adopt the culture from our mentoring institutions this is something we have copied from University of Cape coast mainly institute of education due to the constant workshops they organise for us.. (Interviewee QAK).

Formal appraisal is part of our everyday teaching and learning in so doing we make sure we learn from other well to do institutions apart what is given us by the institute of education, if we keep on teaching without appraisal then what is the benefit do we gain, we actually make sure we follow due procedure given us by our mentoring institutions. We are now tertiary so we press on to meet set standards (AOO).

The emphasis on accountability has become an important mechanism for policymakers' efforts to exercise control over productivity in higher education. An effective performance appraisal system is one of many methods that are useful for assessing and improving productivity (Mani, 2002)

Appraisal is a requirement for all institutions. As a result the colleges in an attempt to meet standards a tertiary adopt other cultures that is deemed fit to help them achieve their it is compulsory for all tertiary institutions to have an appraisal system to evaluate their performance and identify teachers who fell short of their standards and provided them with additional training. Linking the institutional theory to the finding, it is evident that the coercive pressures compel the colleges to pot up their best to achieve the quality expected from them. All colleges are required to have a good appraisal system to find out how effective they are and what can be done to improve upon their services.

4.3.3 QA strategy for professional development

The case colleges indicated that developing themselves professionally has become a basic requirement for them because of their status as tertiary. As result of changes in government and urgent change to tertiary system, all the tutors are required to undergo professional development as soon as possible so as to fit in the tertiary environment.

A Respond in KC had this to say

> *Staff development is a basic requirement for all of us in the tertiary environment as a result, our staff undergoe professional training from time to time and sometimes we organise workshops and conferences for them since it is mandatory for all tertiary institutions. Failure to provide professional training for our staff renders our tertiary status illegitimate. (QAK)*

Another respondent from OC made similar claims

> *Professional development is a key tool in quality assurance we do not joke with, it is also required by law which means failure to do so might render the institution illegitimate. For this reason we make sure that our staff are given needed training after careful examination. Some staff who do not meet requirement are encouraged and sponsored to upgrade themselves others too*

This finding is a basic requirements expected of all the colleges. Staff cannot be in the system for such a long time without having any form of professional development. Although it is mandatory for all the colleges which falls under the Coercive Isomorphism, it can also be deduced from the finding that it is a professional norm for all the colleges.

The findings is however in line with the NAB(2007) policy which states ,the quality of academic staff of tertiary education institutions is closely linked with the staff development plans of the institutions. The National Accreditation Board (NAB) does not grant institutional accreditation or programme accreditation without evidence of staff development plans of the applicant institution. Further, NAB will not process any application from a public tertiary education institution for programme accreditation, for instance, if approval has not first been obtained from the NCTE which assesses the programme based on relevance, alignment with mission of the institution, target market, staffing, and proof of funding.

Ramsden (2003) also reiterate that the emerging trend is that teaching academics are challenged to expand their range of skills and strategies) which will enable their institutions to meet national and international competitiveness as well as increasing student satisfaction with learning experiences. So professional development drives change for quality in children's learning experiences. In emphasising the need to optimize the cultural capital of all students

4.3.4 QA strategies for induction and orientation of staff

Almost all of the case colleges involved in this study indicated that through their registry they make sure induction and orientation of staff and students is done accordingly, they indicated further that their status as tertiary demands them to make the way clear for both students and staff to understand the environment they find themselves .Respondents in female college and male college gave these illustrations.

> *To belong to the tertiary environment as part of its professional norm, new staff members in our college are given orientation to equip them since they find themselves in a new environment. We make sure we show them the statute of the school and what is required of them. Each staff both old and new are given their set target to achieve. (Interviewee PM)*

> *Orientation is something we do for our newly admitted students, to belong to a tertiary environment certain strategies such as the orientation processes should be taken to heart, hence we organise orientation for our students (Interviewee VPO).*

These responses were crosschecked with the quality assurance policy of the colleges, example MC, but it appears orientation of newly qualified teachers was not captured but was practically done. This indicated respondent seem to be knowledgeable about this strategy even though it was not captured in the policy document.

The findings above affirm the claims of Caravella (2011) that, It is expected that organisations with a high number of memberships and with high level of evidence of genuine participation. To belong to a professional association you would have to exhibit values that resembles those of leading professionals. The normative pressures of the institutional theory supports the finding that staff members need to be oriented before they begin their duties in their new environment. This to enable the colleges to promote professionalism in the organisation.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN QUALITY

The emerging issues clearly demonstrates a highly dominants coercive isomorphic QA strategies in the participant Colleges. The discussions indicate that in some situations, these QA strategies are useful for the Colleges because they are relatively new in the higher education sector with little experience in higher education QA practices. The coercive and mimetic QA strategies compel them to maintain at least minimum standards in the practices as tertiary institutions. Nonetheless, the non-flexibility nature of coercive QA strategies could lead to a culture of compliance which though not necessary negative so far as what they are copying and complying to is robust enough. Notwithstanding, internal QA systems of HEIs are supposed to be rather resilient in addition to robustness because resilient systems pick up quickly when they breakdown due to flexibility but robust systems are not flexible and it takes longer time to recover when they breakdown. Given that all QA systems are susceptible to breakdowns, continuous improvement culture is preferred to compliance culture for internal QA culture in HEIs. The continuous improvement culture drives internal capacity building to recover and innovate internal QA systems breakdown in HEIs.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

Institutional theory describes how both deliberate and accidental choices lead institutions to mirror the norms, values, and ideologies of the organisational environment. In this study, participants expressed that their quality assurance strategies mirror those of their mentor institutions through choices that are considered deliberate but mostly coercive. Majority of the quality assurance strategies employed by the participant College were regarded as mandatory regulatory requirements, which must be complied with. Some of them were also deliberately copied from mentor institutions for reputational purposes with few of them developed based on professional norms. The study concludes that, QA strategies of the participants Colleges of Education appear to about obsession with compliance with little desire to promote internal culture of continuous improvement because everything is based on meeting regulatory requirements and copying for recognition. Based on the conclusion drawn, we recommend that the Colleges pay more attention to the normative isomorphism to balance the coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphism in order to promote the culture of continuous improvement, which is critical for teacher education delivery.

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