Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education Institutions: An Overview of the Curriculum of University of Management and Technology {UNIMTECH] In Sierra Leone

Alhaji Bakar Kamara

University Of Management and Technology, Freetown, Sierra Leone

Abstract: **This paper gives a brief historical background of tertiary education in Sierra Leone and an overview of schools and colleges' curriculum. This research aims to improve quality work in the tertiary education Institution. The objectives were to examine the admission and service of the registry Department, identify the mode of assessment and evaluation of students, and determine the process and conditions of payment of school fees. Besides, the researcher used a descriptive study using the mixed method. The study targeted Sierra Leone's Universities, most importantly, the University of Management and Technology as a case study. The researcher used a sample of 100 respondents from the seven campuses of the University of Management and Technology countrywide. The researcher also used interview, observation, questionnaire, and discussion to collect the data. The parameters of the research revealed the operations of the registry, examination and finance offices. The finding discussed covered the processes of admissions, collection of the certificate, the rules of examination and the payment procedures. The researcher analyzed and discussed the findings qualitatively.**

Keywords: **Tertiary Education, Quality Assurance, Curriculum**

I. INTRODUCTION

The quality of education in Sierra Leone before and after independence, to some extent, was one of the best around the world. The Foray Bay College was established in 1827, and because of the base it provided within the sub-region, it gains the epithet "Athens of West Africa." It is said to indicate that, due to the negligence, mismanagement, and corruption, the educational system in Sierra Leone fell considerably over some time. Education quality is no more than that state before and years after independence in 1961 [1] [2].

Sierra Leone, which used to be called "Athens of West Africa," lost its glory in education for decades. The educational sector was given little attention in the National Budget, which is 12% in 2018. The Basic and Senior Secondary Education sector received inadequate funding and support. Its teaching standard went down below quality to just the quantity of graduates. The average learners' ability and capacity leaving the school are low and lack much prospect to perform in society. In reality, many schools lacked teaching and learning materials and accommodation of a conducive environment for learning.

The corrupt practices in many educational institutions of secondary and tertiary that exhibited multiple crimes of examination malpractice which started creating mixed feelings in people about the credibility of the certificate issued to many graduates who cannot express or perform when given a task to accomplish within the field claimed by a significant field indicated in their certificates. Sierra Leone faced problems in the quality of education. There was a significant shortage of trained and qualified teachers mainly to teach in remote areas or villages. Besides, the students lacked learning materials and textbooks. Two or three students used to share one book. There was a high rate of illiteracy rate and a higher number of dropouts. Secondary school attendance was low, with a net participation ratio from 2008 to 2012 of 39.9% for boys and 33.2 per cent for girls.

Another pending problem was child girl education, traditional belief, poverty, unemployment, ignorance, and illiteracy mounted to girls' deprivation. Many were subjected to sexual harassment, sexual penetration, and rape. Other girls were disposed of too-early marriage, and child labour and favoritisms take over the cycle of gender inequality [5].

Statement of the Problem

Education was under debate as there has been a considerable rise in the state of dropouts/failures, especially with the secondary and University education system. As it was eminent in the recent West Africa Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) outcome, it was realized by the Government that 95% of students in Sierra Leone failed to secure the accepted mark needed to enroll in University programs [9] smoothly. An additional indication of student failure was attributed to some teachers' behaviour who are no longer performing their duties genuinely because they entice them to buy pamphlets and handouts from them and do extra lessons with them. For extra lessons to be full of students, teachers teach minimal in school and concentrate more on the extra classes. Indeed, these lessons were organized to campaign for opportunities to augment their meagre salaries and sustain themselves in their teaching job.

Some papers spoke about quality education in school. In the title, "Financing Education: An Overview of Education in Sierra Leone" {12}, the author highlighted the funding of education and the running of funds in schools and colleges. Besides, the paper entitles,THE GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT TO QUALITY EDUCATION-AN OVERVIEW OF FREE QUALITY SCHOOL EDUCATION IN SIERRA{13}, there is more emphasis on the quality of education, with more explanation of strategies to develop education more in primary and secondary schools. There is a gap, in a sense, foundation of quality Assurance in universities that will show the quality work at the registry, examination and finance unclear. It is necessary to have a clear picture of quality Assurance in Sierra Leone universities so that students and other personalities will know their expectations.[9][10]

The Aim and Objectives of the research

This research aims to improve quality work in the tertiary education Institution. The objectives are:

1. To examine the admission and service of registry Department
2. To identify the mode of assessment and evaluation of students.
3. To determine the process and conditions of payment of school fees.

1.1 Background of the Study

1.1.1 Tertiary Education In Sierra Leone

Tertiary education in Sierra Leone consists of all formal education received after completing secondary schooling in an institution demanding entry qualification not lower than several general certificate ordinary, and \ or advanced levels or proposed senior secondary school certificate. The tertiary education level comprises the University of Sierra Leone with its Constitution College and institute, the Open University, polytechnics, the teachers' college, technical vocational institutes and professional schools like the national school of nursing and tourism. Tertiary education in Sierra Leone aims at the continuous widening and deepening of the education gained in school. It opens a goal of specialization in one or more disciplines of knowledge and technic for which the learners have the aptitude and already preparedness in school. More so, tertiary education contains the student's development in affective, cognitive, and psychomotor knowledge. Through tertiary education in Sierra Leone, the students enhance creativity, originality, empathy, good work habits, and positive moral value and soft reliance. The institutions' staff are attested to convey knowledge, skills, and foster attitudes relevant to Sierra Leone as a developing country and fixed update in curriculum and teaching methods in schools and colleges. Tertiary education empowers staff in researching the most relevant socio-economic and other needs of the country and other related problems that concern Sierra Leone – like publishing and release of knowledge that is valuable to Sierra Leone[1]. Tertiary Institution seemed to overlap in their offering. Still, each one has specialties of which it is known,

for instance, Foray Bay college of the University of Sierra Leone is known for its natural science, engineering, economics and art programs; The college of medicine and allied health science offers medical degrees the Institute of public administration and [3] management is renowned for its business and accounting programs, Njala university is known for its programs in education and agriculture; Institute of Advanced Management and Technology; an affiliate to Njala University [2].[4][.5][.6]

1.1.2 The Curriculum of Schools and Colleges in Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, the national curriculum research and development centre [NCRDC] is responsible for curriculum development. NCRDC is charged with controlling and evaluating the availability and use of curriculum, syllabus and textbooks within the educational system. The curriculum of primary schools emphasizes communication competence and the ability to understand and manipulate numbers. The junior secondary level curriculum is general and comprehensive, encompassing the entire coverage of knowledge, attitude, and skills in the cognitive-affective and psychomotor domains. At this level, English, mathematics, science and social studies are essential for all pupils. Its particular objective formulates the senior secondary school level curriculum in a more transparent view; however, learning is given the set of compulsory subjects with optional subject as may deem necessary for the area of specialization. The teaching process is controlled and guided by the teaching syllabus that is mainly influenced by the external international examinations that learners are expected to take at the end of the 3 – year course. As such, the vivid syllabus highlight the objectives of the lessons, support teaching \learning activities, materials, and assessment methods. The West African examination council [WAEC] produces the examination syllabus.

The tertiary Institution takes a different style from primary and secondary education. The curriculum at the tertiary level is not programmed by the Ministry of education science and technology. The tertiary education commission [TEC] has the task of ensuring that tertiary-level institutions offer programs and courses that have acceptable standard and quality and guide and direct the Government for the appropriate measure to be taken. Indeed, tertiary institutions have the opportunity to formulate relevant programs, yet still, the control of the curriculum should meet the minimum standard set by the tertiary education commission. The Government can also influence the courses to offer through a scholarship offer to specific interest courses. [2][3]. [7][8]

II. METHODS OF THE RESEARCH

2.1. Research Design

This research is a descriptive study using the mixed method.A survey conducted using interview, observation and questionnaire. The researcher carried out a qualitative analysis to analyze the Quality Assurance practice in the Institution in three departments- Registry, examination and Finance offices.

2.2.   Methods

The collective case study method covers various study cases in the University registry, examination and finance offices. This approach assumed that it would cover the number of departments that led to better comprehension and better theorizing.

2.3.   Coverage

The study area covered Freetown, Kono, Bo, Lunsar and Kambia districts in Sierra Leone. The used information from registrars, examination officers, Finance officers, administrators, students, lecturers and Deans of schools. The experiences revealed was directed to the subject of the research. The researcher selected the University of Management and Technology because it was the only University that operated and have satellite campuses all over Sierra Leone. UNIMTECH operate two campuses in Freetown – in the Western Area. Two campuses at Portloko District-Lunsar and Lungi. One campus each at Bo, Kono and Kambia districts.

2.4.   Population and Sample

The population comprises registrars, lecturers, deans of schools, examination officers, finance officers, University administrations, and Sierra Leone students.

The sample was compressed to 100 respondents in seven campuses of the University of Management and Technology in Sierra Leone. The research comprised 21 registrars, 14 finance officers, 14 examination officers, 28 students, 14 deans and Heads of departments and nine administrators.

2.5.   Instrumentation

The instruments used in this research were: Interview, observation, questionnaire and discussion of specific issues.

2.6. Sampling Techniques

Stratified sampling was initially done for the different campuses by the researcher, though the authorities implemented some simple random sampling.

2.7.   Data Collection Method

The researcher interviewed stakeholders like registrars, examination officers, finance officers, deans, heads of departments and student. The researcher also discussed with the respondents on specific issues. The researcher administered the exercises in collaboration with the University authorities. The questionnaires were distributed to the various respondents for completion.

2.8.   Analysis of Result

The researcher analyzed and discussed the findings qualitatively.

III. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS FORQUALITY ASSURANCE AT THE CURRICULUM OF UNIMTECH

3.1. Objective One: Examine the admission and service of the registry Department

The quality of the registry starts with the employment of a competent registrar to lead the office. Therefore, for the sake of quality, the requirement for UNIMTECH Registrar is at least a master's degree in educational administration or a related field. Possessor of at least five years' experience in senior administrative or management position(S) in a recognized university or other tertiary education institution. Possession of excellent written and oral communication skills. Sound knowledge and insight into the education sector that is committed to excellence in higher education. Also, good interpersonal relations and public relation skills.

Under the supervision of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, the Registrar performs the following roles:

- Serve as the University's chief administrativeofficer, responsible for the University's administrative business's day-to-day conduct other than that assigned to the University's court.
- Serve as the principal adviser to the Vice-Chancellor and Principal on administrative matters.
- Serve as Secretary to the court and the University's senate, Secretary of campuses, faculty and all other university committees.
- Maintain records and other legal and non-financial documents and symbol of the University, including the statutes, the university seal and the mace.
- Perform, subject to the university act; the statutes shall prescribe such other duties.
- Conditions of service are under the condition of service for senior members of staff.

3.1.1 Issuance of Transcripts and Statements of Results to Students

As a measure of quality assurance and control, here is an outline of clarifications on procedures:

1. All applications/requests for student transcripts and the Result statement should be directed to the registry for necessary checks and authentication.
2. Valid applications/request should be forwarded to the examinations unit to prepare transcripts/statement of Result.
3. It's important to note that, preparation of these documents is to be headed only by the examination unit.
4. Prepared transcripts/statements of Result should be forwarded to DVC (Admin) for vetting, validation for authenticity, and clearance.
5. The registry should make the final signature on cleared transcripts/statements of Result.

This process shows a clear picture of transparency, accountability, and quality of documents issued to students for quality assurance. All departments should have to keep a record of any document receive or forwarded to another.

3.1.2 Collection of Graduation Certificate.

For anybody to receive a certificate from UNIMTECH, She/he must have gone through the Institution and have graduated. The name of the student should be in the graduation book of a particular graduation year. Below is the process to collect a certificate at UNIMTECH:

1. Students present receipts of convocation or graduation to the registry
2. Fill in complete information of students
3. Registry usually checks for student name in the graduation book (process continues when the name is available at the graduation book).
4. Students take the form to finance for the checking of fees payments (Finance signs when free of arrears)
5. The student takes the form to the examination office to affirm complete grades with no reference, exams signs.
6. The student brings back the signed form to Registry (Registrar sign and takes the form from the student)
7. Registry forwards the filled and signed form from finance, examination and Registry offices to the Vice-Chancellor office that keeps the certificates.
8. The Vice-Chancellor confirms all Finance, examination and Registry signatures, picks out that certificate, and gives it to the registry. (V.C. keeps a record of certificates collected from the office)
9. The registry receives the certificates from Vice-Chancellor and records the certificate in the book.
10. The registry gives the certificate to students, and the students sign the certificate book.

3.1.3 How to Get an Application Form

Student Securing Application Form

Candidates who wish to enrol at this University starts by buying a form, filling it with the necessary information. The process of securing a form follows this line:

1. The candidate comes with a WASSCE/G.C.E O'Level result to the University Registry.
2. Registry checks to know the status of the Result and direct the candidate appropriately.
3. The registry offers a slip for bank payment to the candidate.
4. The candidate pays for the form at the prescribed Bank and collects paying slip from the Bank.
5. The candidate takes the bank slip to the UNIMTECH finance office for verification. The finance office provides two receipts for candidates.
6. A candidate goes back to the Registry office and presents the two receipts. The registry collects one receipt and gives one receipt to the candidate.

7. Registry finally gives the application form and one university prospectus. The registry then directs the student to the guidance and counselling office for more direction.

3.1.4 Guidance and Counseling Office

1. Candidates go to the Guidance and Counselor after receiving the application form.
2. The Guidance Counselor advises and directs the candidate on filling the form and course of study based on the Result.

3.1.5 An attestation is a tentative document to indicate completion while the student awaits the final examination.

1. The student comes to the registry and collects the bank payment slip indicating the Bank and its amount.
2. The student pays the specified amount in the specified Bank. The paying slip is collected from the Bank.
3. The student presents the Bank paying slip to the finance office for verification. The finance office offers a receipt for the payment.
4. The student brings the receipt to Registry; Registry then offers a form for student information.
5. The registry will tell the student when to collect it (at least one week).
6. Registry prepares the letter before the date shown to the student.
7. The student comes at the prescribed time to the registry and collects the attestation.

3.1.6. Recommendation Letter (Not Paid For)

1. The student meets the Registrar directly and requests a recommendation letter.
2. The Registrar will interview him/her to have precise information about the student and the office to guidance and counselling to render primary directives.
3. The Registrar will give time to the student to collect the letter.

3.2 Second Objective: Identify the mode of assessment and evaluation of students.

3.2.1. Evaluation of Quality and Relevance Of Examinations And Other Means Of Assessment;

Quality Examination is an essential basis for summative feedback for students and instructors.To certify achievement in a subject requires assessing students 'command of e knowledge and skills define and require by the syllabus. This assessment occurs through a set of assessments instruments. Assessment instruments include such devices as supervised examination, assignment, projects, practicals, orals, aural, observational schedules and portfolios. Assessment occurs under various conditions of supervision notice and access to resources, times, dates, handing-in procedures and acceptance

of late submissions. Each assessment instrument comprises one or more assessment items.In evaluating the quality of examination and other means of assessment, the evaluation will also need to make use of:

- Moderators', Invigilators', and markers' report
- External examiners report in the University.
- Student academic complaint reports.
- Accreditation is another form of external assessment.

3.2.2. Procedures for Handling Cheating

A. Identification of students in case of suspected impersonation- invigilators of any examinations may, when they have reason to believe that there is cause to do so, challenge to produce proof of identity in the form of the examination I.D. card. If there is clear evidence that impersonation has occurred, the individual shall not be permitted to continue the examination and shall be reported immediately to the supervisor. A student who cannot provide acceptable proof of identity may be permitted to continue the examination provided that he or she undertakes to verify identity later. If verification is not provided, the coordinator will refer the matter to the controller of the examination to consider further disciplinary action.

B. If an invigilator detects that a student has committed an examination offence, she or he shall impound any relevant material (s) and call a witness to this. The invigilator and witness will document receiving the material in detail and hold it securely and intact. Anything that may prevent a student from legitimately completing the exam shall not be impounded until the exam has been completed.

C. The invigilator will immediately inform the student that an investigative interview will occur after the examination assessment period.

D) The invigilator will make a formal report to the supervisor through the examination irregularity **(UNIMTECH EXAM FORM).** Attached to the form will be evidence such as the invigilator's exam report, notes of any unauthorized material found in the student's possession, any statements from eyewitnesses and other relevant information.

E) Suppose the leakage of a paper(s) is detected. In that case, the first step is to verify its extent, i.e. is it confined to a particular candidate, group of candidates or is it widespread? The supervisors can do this via the heads of the University. If the leakage is widespread, the University must arrange for the question paper to be rewritten following the examination's completion. Suppose the examinations office is convinced that the league is confined to a single or minimal number of candidates. In that case, the examination officer may recommend to the head of inanition that the action is limited to candidates at those particular departments.

F) When an external examiner suspects that there has been an irregularity, e.g. between candidates, he/she should consult with the examiner. If the examiner and the external examiner are convinced that an irregularity has taken place, the invigilator must write a report concerning the matter. The lecturer must mark the whole examination script/answer book in the usual way regardless of the suspected irregularity. The candidates should not, in any way, be penalized by the external examiner. The invigilators/supervisors should then hand the report and the marked script to the examinations office. Scripts, which are being investigated for possible irregularities, must be handled separately.

G) Sometimes, information regarding charting may reach the University through anonymous persons volunteering for the same through letters or telephone calls. The University is advised not to ignore the information but instead follow it up and verify the existence of cheating and its effects before taking the necessary action.

3.2.3 Penalties for Cheating

A range of penalties for controlling in examinations exists. Some of these are:

a) Written reprimand to the culprits
b) Rewrite work subject to a grade penalty
c) Grade work, or section/question, reduced (maybe down to O")
d) The final grade in the examination lowered.
e) Retroactive withdrawal from the examination
f) Complete failure in the examination.
g) Suspension of the culprit. The suspension does not imply automatic readmission. Somebody who has been placed under suspension is conditionally eligible to reapply for admission or registration at either the end of a specified period or after that.
h) Disciplinary action may include but not limited to the dismissal of an employee.
i) Cancellation of the particular paper in which irregularity is found
j) Cancellation of all theory papers or all practical papers.
k) Cancellation of all examinations.

Regarding the submission of questions, the authorities finally concluded that all lecturers should submit their questions and solutions at least two weeks before the examination starts. The questions and solutions are submitted to the Deans of schools, who will go through them and amend necessary points. The examination office will only receive questions from the Deans the day a paper is taken.

3.3 Third Objective: Determine the process and conditions of payment of school fees.

3.3.1 Finance

The Finance office makes a two-part provision payment of 50% per semester due to the corvid 19 fever. All payments are made at the UNIMTECH bank account; then, the student secures a finance office receipt. The student should pay at least 50% of the fees before attending classes. As for disrupting classes during lectures and embarrassment to students, there is continuous monitoring of all class for the unregistered student not to partake. Most students must have paid with that method before the examination starts so that no student is harassed or embarrassed during examinations.

IV. CONCLUSION

Tertiary Education in Sierra Leone is education above secondary schools. It differs from secondary education because the curriculum is harmonized in primary and secondary school, but, in tertiary education, institutions program their curriculum and present it to the Tertiary Education Commission for approval. The Tertiary Education Commission is responsible for scaling all tertiary education institutions' standards and affairs in Sierra Leone. The University of Management and Technology is a private tertiary educational institution in Sierra Leone that offer courses from Higher National to degree level. It has three school-School of Public Administration, School of Social sciences and School of Technology. The School of Social Science offers B.Sc. Banking and Finance, B.Sc. Accounting, B.Sc. Applied Economics and Marketing, B.Sc. Economics, B.Sc. Development Studies. School of Public Management offers B.Sc. Human Resource Management, B.Sc. Business Administration, B.Sc. Logistics and Procurement Management. School of Technology offer: B.Sc. Computer Science, B.Sc. Mining Engineering, B.Sc. Electronics and Telecommunication, B.Sc. Management Information System, B.Sc. Business Information Technology.

UNIMTECH is a new approved University in Sierra Leone. In a highly competitive global economy, quality assurance at UNIMTECH is essential in proving its capability and ability to perform to standard. Quality assurance includes all activities desirable to provide adequate facilities for students during the educational process in all features and other university spheres, including management, research, community service, public engagement and international cooperation. UNIMTECH is doing its best in implementing quality assurance in all sectors of the University. Most importantly, at the registry, examination office, Finance office, and the lecture processes. UNIMTECH provides practical teaching and learning scheme in line with a strategic opinion of learning and confirms the selection of suitable teaching methods by monitoring and guiding lectures to follow correct procedures.

REFERENCES

[1] New Education Policy for Sierra Leone 1995 Department Of Education, New England Free Town Sierra leone
[2] The World Bank, 2007. Education in Sierra Leone present challenges, future opportunities.;
[3] Dr. Minkailu Bah, 2017. Education Sector Plan, 2018-2020. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.Government of Sierra Leone.
[4] Lindsey Oh & Ray Rozycki, 2017. What Exactly Is Curriculum? Education element. https://www.edelements.com/blog/what-exactly-is-curriculum. Retrieved in November 2019.];
[5] Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, 2019. Curriculum. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curriculum. Retrieved in November 2019.
[6] AMANDA STOTT, 2018 Curriculum Development and the 3 Models Explained. TOP HAT.ps://tophat.com/blog/curriculum-development-models-design/?aliId=eyJpIjoiM0FLdVZuQnhhd2R1OG1SZCIsInQiOiJt N3JGdkJk. Retrieved on November 2019.][[7] "tertiary education." Definitions.net. STANDS4 LLC, 2019. Web. November 19 2019. <https://www.definitions.net/definition/tertiary+education>.][
[7] The World Bank, 2017. World Bank and Education. Driving Development with Tertiary Education Reforms. https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/tertiaryeducation. Retrieved in November 2019
[8] Sierra Leone Telegraph, October 3, 2019. Sierra Leone's broken education system-ten ways to fix it.Sierra Leone News.
[9] Night Watch SL, (By Admn), October 16, 2019. A Perspective on Sierra Leone's Declining Education. www.nightwatchsl.com/aperspective-on-sierra-leone-dectining-education/news.
[10] Alhaji Bakar Kamara, 2019. Financing Education: An Overview of Education in Sierra Leone. Education Journal. Vol. 8, No. 5, 2019, pp. 202-210. DOI: 10.11648/j.edu.20190805.15Received; Published: August 26, 2019.
[11] Alhaji Bakar Kamara, 2020. THE GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT TO QUALITY EDUCATION-AN OVERVIEW OF FREE QUALITY SCHOOL EDUCATION IN SIERRA LEONE. European Journal of Education Studies ISSN: 2501 - 1111ISSN-L: 2501 -1111, www.oapub.org/edu