

Towards Excellence And Assuring Quality In Higher Education

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Abstract—The higher education is going through a period of great change, fundamentally altering the relationship between students, government, funding and the private sector. More freedoms for institutes and absence of criteria or availability of adequate quality for higher education mean a greater risk of universities failing. The scope of this paper is to propose a set of recommendation to enhance excellence and assuring quality in higher education. Regulation is one of the major ways in influencing higher education to provide assurance that education is provided by institutions has an international reputation for quality and is at the same level of qualification standards. The main objective of this paper is to introduce new regulatory architecture as an independent national body, putting policies and rules in harmony with international standards and has full authority for full supervision and assurance the implementation these policies and rules in the educational process.

Index Terms—Regulation, Regulatory Bodies, Higher Education, Assuring Quality, Accreditation, Licensure Exam, Qualification Standards

I. INTRODUCTION

Regulation can be defined as kind of policymaking that uses the range of rule based tools for achieving public policy aims. Regulation as a style of governance, sets rules and standards to secure necessary levels of coordination and strategic drive, effective regulatory governance is about striking a balance between government, service providers and community, this balance will ensure the accepted levels of quality and excellence.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section II presents a review on different regulatory bodies in higher education from different countries and regulatory body that governs telecommunication system in Egypt, which is a success story and role model for regulation in Egypt. Section III describes the proposed regulatory architecture, mission, vision, objectives and functions, Section IV introduces Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis. Finally, Section V presents and discusses conclusions and recommendations.

II. REGULATORY BODIES

A. Regulatory Bodies in Higher Education.

The function of educational regulation for higher education is conducted by government or private regulation:

1) *Government Regulation*: In most countries around the world, the function of educational regulation for higher education is conducted by a government organization, such as a ministry of education, like Kenya and South Africa.

- Commission for University Education (CUE) in Kenya Commission of Higher Education is in charge of the programs accreditation and the award of charters to institutions of higher learning. CUE was established by an Act of Parliament, Universities Act, No. 42 of 2012 as the successor to the Commission for Higher Education which was established under Universities Act Cap 210B of 1985, to promote the objectives of university education, by regulating and accrediting universities and programs, among other functions[1].

- Functions and Roles:

- 1) Promote the objectives of university education.
- 2) Promote, set standards and assure relevance in the quality of university education.
- 3) Monitor and evaluate the state of university education systems in relation to the national development goals.
- 4) License any student recruitment agencies operating in Kenya and any activities by foreign institutions.
- 5) Develop policy for criteria and requirements for admission to universities.
- 6) Recognize and equate degrees, diplomas and certificates conferred or awarded by foreign universities and institutions in accordance with the standards and guidelines set by the Commission from time to time.
- 7) Undertake or cause to be undertaken, regular inspections, monitoring and evaluation of universities to ensure compliance with set standards and guidelines.
- 8) Collect, disseminate and maintain data on university education.
- 9) Accredite universities.
- 10) Accredite and inspect university program.
- 11) Promote quality research and innovation. [1], [2]

- The Council on Higher Education (CHE) in South Africa All qualifications are registered by the South African Qualifications Authority in line with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of CHE accredits programs leading to a NQF reg-

istered qualification. CHE is an independent statutory body established in May 1998 in terms of the Higher Education Act (Act No 101 of 1997), as amended and it functions as the Quality Council for Higher Education in terms of NQF Act (Act No 67 Of 2008). The CHE has executive responsibility for quality assurance and promotion and discharges this responsibility through the establishment of a permanent committee (as required by the Higher Education Act), the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC).[3]

- Functions and Roles:

- 1) To provide advice to the Minister of Higher Education and Training on request or on its own initiative, on all aspects of higher education policy.
- 2) To develop and implement a system of quality assurance for higher education, including program accreditation, institutional audits, quality promotion and capacity development, standards development and the implementation of the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF).
- 3) To monitor and report on the state of the higher education system, including assessing whether, how, to what extent and with what consequences the vision, policy goals and objectives for higher education are being realized.
- 4) To contribute to the development of higher education through intellectual engagement with key national and systemic issues, including international trends, producing publications, holding conferences and conducting research to inform and contribute to addressing the short and long-term challenges facing higher education.[3], [4]

2) *Private Regulation:* In the United States, the regulation process is independent of government and performed by private membership associations. The United States Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) (a non-governmental organization) both recognize reputable accrediting bodies for institutions of higher education. They also provide guidelines as well as resources and relevant data regarding these a creditors. CHEA was established in 1974, is a United States organization of degree granting colleges and universities. It identifies its purpose as providing national advocacy for self-regulation of academic quality through accreditation in order to certify the quality of higher education accrediting organizations. CHEA is an association of 3,000 degree-granting colleges and universities and recognizes 60 institutional and programmatic accrediting organizations.

- Functions and Roles:

- 1) National leader in identifying and articulating emerging issues in accreditation and quality assurance.
- 2) National forum to address issues of mutual interest and concern in accreditation.
- 3) Authoritative source of data and information about regional, faith-related, career related and programmatic accreditors.
- 4) Projects and initiatives to strengthen accreditation and

its role in serving the public interest.

- 5) Conferences and meetings.
- 6) Databases and directories of accredited institutions and programs and accreditation and quality assurance bodies.
- 7) Convener of international discussion of accreditation and quality assurance through the CHEA International Quality Group.[5]

B. Regulatory Body for Telecommunication in Egypt

The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector is a success story and a role model for regulation in Egypt. Egypt's ICT Sector roadmap started with Issuance of Law 19/1998 for separating operation and regulatory functions Establishing the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA). Presidential Decree 101/1998 for defining roles and responsibilities of the TRA for the first time in Egypt, a unified law has been articulated to allow the provision of public utility on competitive basis. National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (NTRA). NTRA was established in accordance with the provision of Law No. 10, for the year 2003 the Telecommunications Regulation Law as a national authority to administer the telecommunication sector, considering transparency, open competition, universal service and protection of user rights as a general outline for NTRA scope of work.[6]

The ideal commanding the activities of NTRA is to become an active pace maker within the telecom sector, building the capacity and the reputation, which allows it to be an independent and prudent arbiter among the different stakeholders in the sector; the industry, the state and the consumer.[7], [8]

- NTRA Regulatory Principles:

- 1) NTRA will ensure regulating with a clearly articulated and reviewed annual plan with stated policy objectives.
- 2) NTRA will strive to ensure its interventions will be evidence based, proportionate, consistent, accountable and transparent in both deliberation and outcome.
- 3) NTRA will consult widely with all relevant stakeholders and assess the impact of regulatory action before imposing regulation.[6]

- NTRA Objectives:

- 1) Ensure that telecommunication services reach all areas of the country.
- 2) Protect national security and higher state interests.
- 3) Assuring the compliance with the State-approved provisions of international agreements and the issued resolutions by regional and international organizations.
- 4) Monitor technical and economic efficiency programs for all telecommunications services.[6], [8]

III. THE PROPOSED REGULATORY ARCHITECTURE

Regulation is the authority to set standards and policies then monitor and ensure the effective implementation of these policies. However, we believe that the system as it is currently doesn't apply or benefit from the responsibilities or functions of the regulatory architecture.

A. The Current System Framework

The current system doesn't have any structure for assuring or monitoring the quality in higher education except the National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education (NAQAEE), it was established in 2006 by the Presidential Decree number (82), was founded to enhance the quality of pre university and higher education, but it doesn't be considered as a supervisory authority, it is a body of the accreditation for the educational institutions that can achieve national standards requirements, provides all forms of guidance and counseling and support to these institutions, helping to transform the continuous improvement of the quality of their outputs through objective and realistic mechanisms for self-evaluation and accreditation.[9]

This means that the current system does not have the full power to control or ensure the accepted levels of quality or criteria in the education process. So the main objective of this proposal is to introduce new regulatory architecture as an independent body has full authority for full supervision and assurance the implementation of policies and rules in the educational process.

B. The Proposed Regulation Framework

1) *Mission:* To regulate and ensure the quality of higher education through a proportionate regulatory architecture.

2) *Vision:* Promoting Excellence and Assuring Quality in Higher Education.

3) *Objectives:*

- To monitor and evaluate the state of university education systems in relation to the national development goals.
- To promote, set standards and ensure quality of higher education.
- To upgrade the quality of higher education institutions, programs and systems in the country towards achieving international standards.
- To link higher education with labour market demand.
- To link higher education with research and development activity and the innovation system.
- To establish collaboration between foreign organizations and local institutions.

4) *Functions of Regulation:* For a revised regulatory architecture to be successful, it must achieve following basic functions:

- Perform quality promotion and assurance through putting policy and licensing

Setting detailed regulatory policy in harmony with international standards to ensure that high-quality. Forming and developing a licensing framework for liberalized services to create a transparent, healthy and predictable sector and to stimulate growth.

- Monitor the implementation of the policy on higher education institutions

Conducting regular surveys and measures to ensure that all institutions meet and keep standards and rules and monitoring the performance in terms of approved technical criteria.

- Create robust mutual recognition schemes with international regulators

The regulator is committed to its international obligations, to build up global partnerships with successful regulatory authorities all over the world, especially which their environments are similar to our environment like African countries, for sustainable advancement and improvement of the quality of educational sector.

- Engage and consult with providers and higher education stakeholders to deliver quality higher education outcomes.

Regulation structure must include balanced representation from the higher education community and public and private stakeholders, this broad involvement is necessary to create regulatory recognition standards and processes and collect annual data returns from providers that address the needs of all stakeholders resulting in greater consistency and transparency across the system.

- Continue to grow organizational capability and achieve operational efficiency

The regulator is concerned with the planning and development of the education sector in Egypt, and to this end carries out technical studies and tracks new technologies. The regulator should conduct research on specific topics, maybe in cooperation with outside experts and specialized institutes, in order to enhance excellence in the education sector.

- Set and support a licensure exam for measuring student learning.

Create mutual cooperation schemes with international organizations dedicated to advancing professional licensure, to plan granting certificates and licenses in accordance with international standards and guidelines set by the regulator from time to time. Licensure exam will be used to measure and classify the proficiency level of students into specific levels, and then these classifications will be the criterion in employment opportunities. Examples of assessment organization, National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES), it is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing professional licensure for engineers and surveyors. It develops, administers, and scores the examinations used for engineering and surveying licensure in the United States like Professional Engineering (PE) exam [10]. Also Educational Testing Service (ETS), is the world's largest private nonprofit educational testing and assessment organization, it develops various standardized tests primarily in the United States and it administers international tests like TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)[11].

5) *Regulatory Principles:* To be recognized, the regulatory organization provides evidence that it has:

- Advance academic quality

Regulators have a clear description of academic quality and clear expectations that the institutions or programs which accredit have processes to determine whether quality standards are being met.

- Employ appropriate and fair procedures in decision making

Regulators maintain appropriate and fair organizational policies and procedures that include effective checks and balances.

- Demonstrate ongoing review of regulation practice

Regulators undertake self-scrutiny of their accrediting activities.

- Possess sufficient resources

Regulators have and maintain predictable and stable resources.

IV. SWOT ANALYSIS

A. Strengths

- The regulator will be legally established through law, which prescribes its mandate, and have strong corporate governance structures.
- The regulator has balanced representation from community and stakeholders resulting in greater consistency and transparency across the system.
- The regulatory architecture as an independent body has full authority for full supervision and assurance the implementation of policies and rules in public and private sectors.
- The regulator will have linkages with other similar bodies either regionally or internationally, for purposes of collaboration.
- The regulator will be committed to research and development.

B. WEAKNESSES

- Regulator is highly dependent on government subvention for its finances.
- There is insufficient experience in regulating higher education Institutions among the members, and there is no institutional history in the country to draw from.
- Weak enforcement mechanisms of accreditation programs.
- Inadequate structural and human resource capacity to carry out research on university education.
- Inadequate funding for development.

C. OPPORTUNITIES

- Regulator can collaborate with NAQAAE in fulfilling its mandate.
- Regulator can take advantage of existing NAQAAE protocols to establish linkages with other bodies performing similar functions.
- Regulator gets sufficient financial and political support from government.
- In collaboration with its key stakeholders namely, institutes of higher learning, regulator has the potential for fund raising.
- Improved higher education will contribute significantly to the economic growth of the country.
- Regulator can improve higher education in the country, through enhancing the quality of pre university education.

D. Threats

- Shrinking government funding.
- Inadequate enforcement of regulations and standards.
- Conflicting legislations.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Regulation is the proven method for assuring the maintenance of standards and quality in higher education. This study on regulatory frameworks presents main functions and principles of the regulation. In addition, explores the different regulatory authorities in the area of higher education in different countries. The following conclusions summaries our approach for successful regulatory architecture:

- 1) Regulatory architecture is independent national body, putting policies and rules in harmony with international standards and has full authority for full supervision and assurance the implementation these policies and rules in the educational process.
- 2) The regulator has linkages with other similar bodies either regionally or internationally, for purposes of collaboration.
- 3) The regulator has balanced representation from community and stakeholders resulting in greater consistency and transparency across the system.
- 4) The regulatory organization provides evidence that it has advance academic quality, demonstrate accountability, self scrutiny and planning for change and needed improvement, employ appropriate and fair procedures in decision making, demonstrate ongoing review of regulation practice and possess sufficient resources.

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