The Compliance-Improvement Paradox: Quality Assurance Mechanisms and Service Delivery Effectiveness in Resource-Constrained Higher Education Contexts

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Abstract: This study examines the effectiveness of quality assurance mechanisms (QAMs) in enhancing service delivery at the University for Development Studies (UDS), with particular attention to the tension between compliance-oriented and improvement-oriented approaches to quality enhancement. The study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, combining quantitative surveys with semi-structured interviews conducted with students, faculty, administrative staff, university administrators, and community members as participants. Data were analysed using regressions and thematic analyses. The analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between QAMs and service delivery effectiveness (SDE). Qualitative findings, however, uncovered a compliance-improvement paradox, as most respondents characterized the institutional quality assurance (QA) culture as reactive rather than improvement-oriented. The most significant barriers to implementation included resource constraints, bureaucratic delays, paper-based systems, and cultural resistance. Internal assessments were perceived as more effective than external evaluations, although both mechanisms suffered from weak stakeholder feedback integration. This study advances QA theory by demonstrating empirically that structurally robust QAMs can produce suboptimal outcomes when implementation is constrained by resource limitations and compliance-focused institutional cultures. This study extends Total Quality Management (TQM) theory to resource-constrained contexts by identifying contextual moderators that attenuate the QA-performance relationship. Higher education institutions in developing countries should transition from compliance-driven to improvement-oriented QA cultures, invest in digital QA infrastructure, and strengthen stakeholder engagement mechanisms to realise the full potential of their QA systems. This study provides the first comprehensive empirical examination of the compliance-improvement paradox in African higher education, offering evidence-based insights for QA policy and practice in resource-constrained institutional contexts.

Keywords: Quality assurance, service delivery, higher education, developing countries, Ghana

INTRODUCTION

Quality assurance (QA) has become a defining pillar of contemporary higher education governance, serving as the principal mechanism through which institutions demonstrate accountability, safeguard academic standards, and pursue continuous improvement (Harvey & Green, 1993; Stensaker & Harvey, 2011). Globally, the expansion of QA regimes reflects heightened stakeholder expectations, intensified competition for students and resources, and growing recognition that educational quality is neither self-evident nor automatically assured (Brennan & Shah, 2000). Despite this proliferation, the extent to which QA systems translate into tangible improvements in institutional performance and service delivery

remains contested, particularly in contexts characterised by persistent resource constraints and limited implementation capacity (Materu, 2007).

African higher education institutions (HEIs) operate within distinctive structural and historical conditions that complicate the enactment of QA. Rapid enrolment expansion has frequently outpaced infrastructure development, academic staffing, and administrative capacity, resulting in enduring quality pressures (Teferra & Altbach, 2004). Chronic funding limitations restrict investment in digital systems, staff development, and quality management infrastructure essential for effective QA implementation. Moreover, colonial and post-colonial governance legacies have entrenched externally driven accountability frameworks that often privilege formal compliance over substantive institutional learning and improvement (Tamrat & Teferra, 2021). These dynamics suggest that the relationship between quality assurance mechanisms (QAMs) and service delivery effectiveness (SDE) in African universities may diverge significantly from patterns observed in well-resourced institutions in developed contexts.

Against this backdrop, this study examines the effectiveness of QAMs in enhancing service delivery at the University for Development Studies (UDS), a multi-campus public university in Ghana established with a distinctive-development mandate. UDS provides an analytically rich case for examining QA in resource-constrained contexts: it operates across geographically dispersed campuses with uneven resource distribution; it balances external regulatory demands with internally articulated improvement priorities; and it integrates academic functions with community engagement objectives. Examining how QAMs function within this institutional context enables deeper understanding of the conditions under which QA facilitates (or fails to facilitate) meaningful service delivery improvements in HEIs.

For analytical clarity, this study employs four core constructs: quality assurance, quality assurance mechanisms, service delivery effectiveness, and contextual constraints. *Quality assurance* is conceptualised as the overarching institutional system of policies, principles, and governance arrangements designed to maintain and enhance standards across teaching, research, and administrative services (Harvey & Green, 1993). *Quality assurance mechanisms* refer more specifically to the operational instruments through which QA is enacted in practice. In this study, these mechanisms comprise internal assessments (such as self-evaluations, programme reviews, and internal audits), external evaluations (including accreditation and regulatory reviews conducted by bodies such as the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission), and stakeholder feedback systems (formal processes for capturing and responding to inputs from students, staff, and community partners). *Service delivery effectiveness* denotes the extent to which institutional services meet stakeholder expectations in terms of efficiency, reliability, responsiveness, and developmental relevance, encompassing academic programme quality, administrative efficiency, infrastructure provision, stakeholder satisfaction, and community engagement outcomes. Finally, *contextual constraints* refer to the institutional, cultural, and resource-related conditions—such as funding limitations, bureaucratic processes, staff capacity deficits, and organisational culture, that shape how QAMs are implemented and experienced within the university.

Building on these conceptual foundations, the study addresses two interrelated research questions. First, what is the relationship between QAMs and SDE at UDS? Second, what institutional and contextual factors mediate or moderate this relationship, and how do these factors manifest in practice? These questions are particularly salient given that

much of the existing QA literature is grounded in well-resourced systems, potentially limiting its applicability to institutions operating under developmental and resource-constrained conditions.

This study contributes to the QA literature in three principal ways. First, it provides empirical evidence of what is termed the compliance–improvement paradox, whereby structurally robust QAMs coexist with limited substantive improvement owing to implementation constraints and compliance-oriented institutional cultures. Second, it extends Total Quality Management (TQM) theory by demonstrating how contextual moderators in resource-constrained environments attenuate the quality assurance–performance relationship. Third, it offers empirically grounded recommendations for transitioning from compliance-driven to improvement-oriented QA approaches in African HEIs.

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature and establishes the theoretical framework. Section 3 describes the methodology. Section 4 presents the quantitative and qualitative findings. Section 5 discusses the theoretical and practical implications. Section 6 concludes with a summary of contributions and directions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Conceptual Foundations

Quality assurance in higher education encompasses the systematic processes through which institutions maintain and enhance the quality of education, research, and administrative services (Harvey and Green, 1993). The conceptual foundation of QA has evolved from compliance-oriented approaches emphasising adherence to predetermined standards toward improvement-oriented approaches emphasising continuous enhancement and transformation (Luckett, 2006). This evolution reflects a deeper understanding of quality as a dynamic, contextual concept rather than a static, universal standard.

Three primary mechanisms characterise QA in higher education. Internal assessments involve systematic self-evaluation of academic programmes, faculty performance, and administrative processes (Harvey and Williams, 2010); these mechanisms enable institutions to identify areas for improvement and ensure compliance with internal standards. External evaluations provide independent reviews through accreditation bodies and regulatory agencies, thereby enhancing credibility and accountability (Stensaker, 2011). Stakeholder feedback mechanisms capture the perspectives and expectations of students, staff, employers, and communities to inform quality enhancement priorities (Shah and Nair, 2012). Effective QA systems integrate these mechanisms in complementary rather than competing configurations.

The literature has extensively theorised (but unevenly evidenced) the relationship between QAMs and institutional performance. Proponents argue that systematic QA enhances teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and stakeholder satisfaction by establishing clear expectations, monitoring performance, and driving improvement (Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2003). Critics counter that QA can become ritualistic, a performative compliance exercise that consumes resources without generating substantive

improvements (Elassy, 2015). This tension between QA as an improvement driver and QA as a bureaucratic burden is central to understanding its effectiveness in practice.

Quality Assurance in African Higher Education

Quality assurance in African higher education operates within distinctive contextual constraints. Materu (2007) identified resource limitations, rapid expansion, brain drain, and limited QA capacity as persistent challenges affecting implementation effectiveness. The legacy of externally imposed quality frameworks that may not align with local priorities and realities exacerbates these challenges (Tamrat & Teferra, 2021). The dominance of compliance-oriented approaches, often driven by international accreditation requirements, can crowd out internally driven improvement initiatives that address context-specific quality concerns.

In Ghana, the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) oversees QA across HEIs through accreditation, programme approval, and periodic institutional reviews (GTEC, 2021). Although the GTEC framework provides important quality benchmarks, its implementation varies across institutions depending on their resources, capacities, and institutional cultures. Studies of Ghanaian universities suggest that QAMs are often structurally present but operationally ineffective, with persistent gaps between documented processes and actual practices (Boateng, Anyidoho, & Intsiful, 2023).

Total Quality Management as Theoretical Lens

This study employs Total Quality Management as its primary theoretical lens. TQM is a comprehensive management philosophy that emphasises continuous improvement, customer satisfaction, and organisation-wide involvement in quality enhancement (Deming, 1986). Adapted from manufacturing to service contexts, including higher education, TQM provides a framework for understanding how QAMs should function to enhance institutional performance (Sahney et al., 2004).

Four TQM principles are particularly relevant to this study. First, customer focus requires institutions to identify and address the diverse needs of stakeholders, including students, employers, and communities (Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2003). Second, continuous improvement emphasises ongoing enhancement of processes and outcomes rather than one-time interventions (Becket and Brookes, 2008). Third, total participation requires all organisational members to engage in quality improvement efforts (Quinn et al., 2009). Fourth, fact-based decision-making necessitates the use of evidence to inform QA activities rather than relying on assumptions or anecdote (Asif et al., 2013).

The application of TQM to higher education has yielded both achievements and challenges. Universities implementing TQM principles report enhanced student satisfaction, improved organisational efficiency, and stronger academic performance (Venkatraman, 2007). TQM implementation in universities, however, can encounter resistance owing to academic culture, disciplinary diversity, and concerns about the commodification of education (Morley, 2003). Resource-constrained contexts intensify these tensions, as institutions may lack the capacity to implement TQM comprehensively. This study examines how TQM principles manifest in practice at a UDS, with particular attention to the gap between TQM ideals and operational realities.

Conceptual Framework

Drawing on TQM theory and the QA literature, this study proposes that QAMs positively influence SDE through their effects on process standardisation, performance monitoring, and continuous improvement. This relationship is expected to be moderated by contextual factors, including resource availability, institutional culture, stakeholder engagement, and implementation capacity. The conceptual framework suggests that although QAMs establish the structural foundations for quality enhancement, their effectiveness depends critically on implementation quality and enabling conditions.
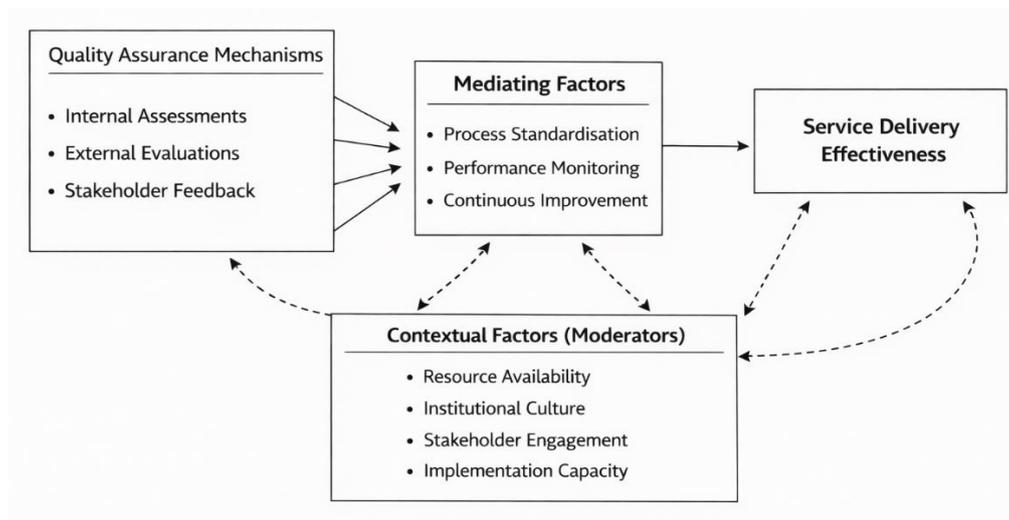

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Philosophy

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design grounded in pragmatist philosophy. Pragmatism recognises that both quantitative and qualitative methodologies yield valuable insights into complex social phenomena, thereby providing a philosophical rationale for methodological integration (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). The sequential design involved quantitative data collection and analysis in the first phase, followed by qualitative inquiry in the second phase to elaborate on and explain the initial findings. This approach enabled the study to establish the magnitude and significance of relationships between variables while illuminating the mechanisms and contextual factors shaping those relationships.

Research Context

The UDS was established in 1992 with a distinctive mandate to integrate academic work with practical community engagement, particularly in northern Ghana. Operating on a multi-campus system with facilities in Tamale and Nyankpala, UDS serves approximately 50,000 students across diverse programmes. The university's mission emphasises both educational excellence and community development, creating inherent tensions between external accountability requirements and developmental priorities. UDS has implemented various QAMs, including internal assessments, GTEC-mandated external evaluations, and

stakeholder feedback systems; the effectiveness of these mechanisms, however, has not been systematically evaluated.

Sampling and Participants

The accessible population comprised 1,140 individuals across five stakeholder groups: students (n = 393), faculty (n = 300), administrative staff (n = 267), university administrators (n = 80), and community members (n = 100). For the quantitative phase, stratified random sampling ensured representation across stakeholder groups, with sample sizes determined using established survey research formulae. After data cleaning to remove incomplete responses and outliers, the final quantitative sample comprised 1,082 participants. For the qualitative phase, purposive sampling selected 30 participants who could provide informed perspectives on QA implementation: eight students, seven faculty members, six administrative staff, five university administrators, and four community members.

Data Collection

Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires comprising validated scales measuring QAMs (10 items, $\alpha = 0.913$), service delivery effectiveness (6 items), and contextual variables. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire was pilot-tested with 50 respondents to assess clarity, reliability, and validity; modifications were made based on pilot feedback. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews lasting 45–60 minutes. The interview protocol addressed participants' experiences with QAMs, perceptions of effectiveness, barriers to implementation, and recommendations for improvement. Interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Data collection occurred between September 2024 and February 2025, with quantitative surveys administered first, followed by qualitative interviews.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and frequencies) characterised the sample and key variables. Relative Importance Index (RII) analysis ranked QAMs and service delivery dimensions by perceived importance. Simple linear regression examined the relationship between QAMs and SDE, with assumptions tested through residual analysis, normality tests, and multicollinearity diagnostics.

Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach: familiarisation with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. The analysis proceeded iteratively, with emerging themes from qualitative data used to explain and elaborate on quantitative findings. Integration occurred during interpretation, when quantitative and qualitative findings were synthesised to yield a comprehensive understanding of QA effectiveness.

Validity and Ethical Considerations

Validity was enhanced through multiple strategies. Content validity was established through expert review of the instruments. Construct validity was supported by using validated scales with strong reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha > 0.83 across all constructs). Qualitative trustworthiness was enhanced through member checking, peer debriefing, and audit trails. Methodological triangulation, comparing quantitative and qualitative findings, provided convergent validity while enabling identification of divergent patterns requiring further investigation. Formal permission was secured from the UDS to use the institution as a setting for the study. All participants provided written informed consent after receiving detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights. Confidentiality was maintained through pseudonymous reporting and secure data storage on password-protected devices.

FINDINGS

Sample Characteristics

The final sample (n = 1,082) comprised 47.9% male and 52.1% female respondents. Students constituted the largest group (36.4%), followed by faculty (27.7%), administrative staff (24.7%), community members (9.2%), and university administrators (7.4%). The majority of respondents (74.9%) were aged between 21 and 40 years. Educational attainment ranged from undergraduates to doctoral degree holders, with 43.2% holding postgraduate qualifications. Length of association with UDS ranged from less than one year to over 20 years, with a median of five to seven years. This demographic profile indicates adequate representation across stakeholder groups and experience levels.

Quality Assurance Mechanisms: Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 presents the Relative Importance Index (RII) analysis of QAMs at UDS. Internal assessments received the highest ratings (M = 3.59, SD = 1.12), followed by external evaluations (M = 3.33, SD = 1.15) and stakeholder feedback mechanisms (M = 3.28, SD = 1.18). The overall mean for QAMs (M = 3.40) indicates moderate perceived effectiveness, with substantial variation across respondents, as evidenced by standard deviations exceeding 1.0 for all items.

Table 1: Relative Importance Index of Quality Assurance Mechanisms

QA Mechanism	Mean	SD	Rank
Internal Assessments	3.59	1.12	1
External Evaluations	3.33	1.15	2
Stakeholder Feedback	3.28	1.18	3

Note: n = 1,082. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Service delivery effectiveness dimensions were similarly analysed (Table 2). Infrastructure and community engagement received the highest ratings (both M = 3.63), followed by stakeholder satisfaction (M = 3.55), academic programme quality (M = 3.48),

and administrative efficiency (M = 3.42). The overall mean for service delivery (M = 3.54) indicates moderate perceived effectiveness, with respondents perceiving greater effectiveness in physical and community-oriented dimensions than in administrative processes.

Table 2: Service Delivery Effectiveness Dimensions

Dimension	Mean	SD	Rank
Infrastructure	3.63	1.08	1
Community Engagement	3.63	1.10	1
Stakeholder Satisfaction	3.55	1.05	3
Academic Programme Quality	3.48	1.12	4
Administrative Efficiency	3.42	1.15	5

Note: n = 1,082. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Relationship Between QA Mechanisms and Service Delivery

Simple linear regression examined the relationship between QAMs (predictor) and service delivery effectiveness (outcome). The results presented in Table 3 indicate a statistically significant positive relationship (ß = 0.775, $p < 0.001$). The model explains 60.1% of the variance in service delivery effectiveness (R^2 = 0.601, Adjusted R^2 = 0.600). The F-statistic ($F_{(1, 1080)}$ = 1626.47, $p < 0.001$) confirmed the model's overall significance. These findings support the hypothesis that QAMs positively influence SDE.

Table 3: Regression Analysis - QA Mechanisms and Service Delivery

Variable	ß	R^2	F	p
QA Mechanisms → Service Delivery	0.775	0.601	1626.47	<0.001

Note: n = 1,082. ß = Standardised coefficient.

The Compliance-Improvement Paradox: Qualitative Findings

Although quantitative findings demonstrate a strong statistical relationship between QAMs and service delivery, qualitative analysis reveals substantial implementation gaps that attenuate the translation of QA structures into quality outcomes. Table 4 presents the thematic analysis of factors affecting QA effectiveness.

Table 4: Thematic Analysis of QA Implementation Barriers

Theme	% (n=30)	Illustrative Quote
Reactive QA culture	73.3%	*"We only think about QA when GTEC comes around."*
Bureaucratic delays	90.0%	*"QA reports take months to process."*
Paper-based systems	76.7%	*"Everything is manual; tracking is impossible."*
Resource constraints	96.7%	*"We know what to do but lack resources."*
Staff capacity deficits	70.0%	*"Most staff lack QA training."*
Cultural resistance	56.7%	*"QA is seen as fault-finding, not improvement."*
Student feedback ignored	66.7%	*"We fill forms but nothing changes."*
Faculty overload	80.0%	*"Teaching loads leave no time for QA."*

Community exclusion	93.3%	*"Community voice is absent in QA processes."*

Note: n = 30. Percentages indicate proportion of interview participants mentioning each theme.

The dominant theme emerging from qualitative analysis was the reactive nature of the QA culture. Nearly three-quarters (73.3%) of participants characterised QA as compliance-driven rather than improvement-oriented, with activities intensifying around external audit cycles but diminishing between them. As one administrator explained: "We scramble when GTEC announces an inspection. Then things return to normal until the next visit. It's reactive, not proactive."

Resource constraints emerged as the most pervasive barrier, cited by 96.7% of participants. Limitations encompassed funding for QA infrastructure, staffing for dedicated QA units, and time allocation for quality improvement activities. A faculty member observed: "We understand what needs to be done. We have policies and frameworks in place. However, without resources, implementation is impossible. QA becomes paperwork without substance."

Stakeholder engagement deficits were particularly pronounced among students and community members. Two-thirds (66.7%) of participants reported that student feedback was systematically collected but rarely acted upon. An even higher proportion (93.3%) noted minimal community involvement in QA despite the university's developmental mandate. A community representative remarked: "They come to our communities for field programmes, but when it comes to evaluating quality, our voice is never sought. We are recipients, not partners."

DISCUSSION

The Compliance-Improvement Paradox

The central finding of this study is the compliance-improvement paradox: QAMs at UDS demonstrate a strong statistical association with SDE ($\beta = 0.775$, $R^2 = 0.601$), yet qualitative evidence reveals pervasive implementation barriers that undermine the translation of QA structures into quality outcomes. This paradox illuminates why institutions can possess robust QA frameworks while struggling to achieve meaningful quality improvement, a phenomenon Elassy (2015) terms "ritualistic quality assurance."

Two complementary mechanisms explain this paradox. First, the strong quantitative relationship may reflect respondents' awareness of what QA should accomplish rather than what it actually accomplishes; survey items measuring QA effectiveness may capture aspirations and normative expectations rather than operational realities. Second, QAMs may contribute to service delivery through baseline standardisation and minimum threshold maintenance, even if they fail to drive continuous improvement. The distinction between QA as threshold maintenance and QA as continuous improvement is critical for interpreting these findings.

These findings align with and extend existing research. Harvey and Williams (2010) contend that QA effectiveness depends fundamentally on institutional culture, leadership commitment, and stakeholder involvement, domains in which qualitative findings revealed deficiencies at UDS. Tamrat and Teferra (2021) similarly observe that QA in African

universities often privileges documentation over transformation and compliance over improvement. The 73.3% of participants characterising the UDS QA culture as reactive corroborates this critique, suggesting that compliance-oriented approaches may be endemic to resource-constrained contexts where external accountability pressures outweigh internal improvement capacities.

Theoretical Implications

The findings carry significant implications for TQM theory as applied to higher education. TQM's core principles, customer focus, continuous improvement, total participation, and fact-based decision-making, assume institutional capacity for implementation that may be absent in resource-constrained contexts. With 96.7% of participants citing resource constraints, 80% noting faculty overload, and 70% identifying staff capacity deficits, TQM implementation evidently requires enabling conditions that cannot be presumed.

This study therefore proposes a contextualised TQM framework for resource-constrained higher education. Rather than pursuing comprehensive TQM implementation, institutions should prioritise selected TQM principles aligned with their available capacities. For UDS, prioritising fact-based decision-making through enhanced data systems may be more feasible than pursuing total participation among all stakeholders. Similarly, focusing continuous improvement efforts on high-impact domains identified through stakeholder prioritisation may prove more effective than spreading limited resources across all quality dimensions. This contextualised approach acknowledges resource constraints while preserving TQM's fundamental orientation toward systematic quality enhancement.

Practical Implications

The findings yield several practical implications for QA practice at UDS and similar institutions. First, transitioning from compliance-oriented to improvement-oriented QA requires both cultural and structural changes. QA should be reframed from fault-finding to capability-building, with emphasis on using quality data for improvement rather than merely documenting compliance. Second, investment in digital QA infrastructure could address the paper-based system deficiency reported by 76.7% of participants, enabling more efficient data collection, analysis, and feedback loops. Third, strengthening stakeholder engagement—particularly with students (66.7% reporting ignored feedback) and communities (93.3% reporting exclusion)—would align QA with TQM's customer-focus principle while honouring UDS's developmental mandate. For external QA agencies such as GTEC, the findings suggest reconsidering evaluation approaches that may inadvertently reinforce compliance cultures. Shifting from periodic inspections to capacity-building partnerships could help institutions develop improvement-oriented QA capabilities. Incorporating community impact indicators into accreditation frameworks would particularly benefit HEIs whose missions extend beyond conventional academic metrics.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inference; longitudinal research tracking QA implementation and outcomes over time would

strengthen causal claims. The single-institution focus limits generalisability; comparative studies across institutions with varying resource levels and QA maturity would enhance external validity. Self-reported data may be subject to social desirability bias; incorporating objective quality indicators such as completion rates, employment outcomes, and community development metrics would provide complementary evidence.

Future research should examine interventions designed to address the compliance-improvement paradox. Quasi-experimental studies evaluating digital QA systems, stakeholder engagement programmes, and quality culture change initiatives would generate actionable evidence for practice. Comparative research across African HEIs would illuminate contextual factors shaping QA effectiveness and identify transferable practices. Longitudinal studies tracking QA maturity trajectories could clarify pathways from compliance-oriented to improvement-oriented QA cultures.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated QAMs and SDE at UDS, revealing the compliance-improvement paradox that characterises QA in resource-constrained higher education contexts. Although quantitative findings demonstrate strong positive relationships between QAMs and perceived SDE, qualitative evidence reveals substantial implementation barriers, including reactive quality cultures, resource constraints, and weak stakeholder engagement, that attenuate the translation of QA structures into quality outcomes.

The study contributes to QA scholarship by providing empirical evidence of the compliance-improvement paradox in African higher education and extending TQM theory to resource-constrained contexts. Practical contributions include recommendations for transitioning from compliance-driven to improvement-oriented QA cultures through digital infrastructure investment, enhanced stakeholder engagement, and quality culture transformation.

For HEIs navigating resource constraints while pursuing quality enhancement, the findings indicate that QA effectiveness depends not only on structural mechanisms but also on implementation capacity, institutional culture, and stakeholder engagement. Addressing the compliance-improvement paradox requires moving beyond documentation and audit compliance toward systematic, evidence-based continuous improvement—a transformation demanding investment in the capabilities, cultures, and technologies that enable QA to fulfil its improvement potential.

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