

Quality Assurance as a Catalyst for Technical-Vocational Education and Training Transformation in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Background - This paper was motivated by the relevance of quality assurance (QA) in enhancing the quality of instruction in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). It is in this context that we sought to gain insight into the function of QA procedures in catalysing the transformation of TVET in Zimbabwe, with a focus on the opportunities and challenges.

Research Urgency - QA is crucial in transforming Zimbabwe's TVET system to meet global standards and close skills gap. Thus, strengthened procedures will align TVET with industry needs and drive economic development.

Research Objectives - The purpose of the study is to examine the role of QA procedures as a catalyst in transforming Zimbabwe's TVET system for improved effectiveness and relevance.

Research Method - To gain an all-inclusive view of the issue under investigation the researchers opted to ground this paper in a systematic review approach. In this respect, the PRISMA 2020 checklist guaranteed uniformity and transparency in choosing the 50 sources from carefully chosen databases (WoS, DOAJ, and Scopus). The finding revealed that in TVET programmes QA procedures were implemented through curricula development, accreditation, and assessment.

Research Findings - Based on the results, it was revealed that in TVET programmes, QA procedures were implemented through curricula development, accreditation, and assessment. From the findings it was noted numerous opportunities existed in TVET programmes to enhance the implementation of QA procedures. Additionally, this paper identifies the challenges, such as resource limitations, the need for continuous professional development, and the configuration of TVET outputs with job market demands.

Conclusion - It can be concluded that QA procedures are an essential catalyst for the transformation of TVET in Zimbabwe. Thus, by embracing opportunities for improvement and leveraging best procedures, Zimbabwe can develop robust TVET programmes capable of producing competent human capital ready to meet the evolving industry's needs.

Research Novelty/Contribution - This paper uniquely frames QA procedures as a transformative catalyst in Zimbabwe's TVET system, linking it to industry relevance and national development agenda, an under-explored area in local research.

Keywords: Catalyst, Quality assurance, Technical-Vocational Education and Training, Transformation

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INTRODUCTION

Across the world, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes are recognized as a significant vehicle for promoting students' acquisition of competencies relevant to various sectors of life (Moustafa et al., 2023). Thus, TVET programmes encompass knowledge, practical skills, and values considered as key aspects in various trades and professions (Ajithkumar, 2017; Anudo & Awuor, 2020). These programs were designed to align teaching and learning with the real needs of the job market (Rawashdeh, 2019). Hence, TVET programmes offer various paths for career advancement, resulting in competent human capital with a sense of self-reliance to drive industry and commerce (Khoza, 2021). The conception of TVET programmes aims to bridge the gap between the needs of commerce and industry, and the demand for competent human capital (Muzari, 2023). In the same sense, the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science, and Technology Development has reviewed the TVET programmes through a 'Heritage-Based Education 5.0' doctrine in an attempt to make them more meaningful and approachable to the requirements of industry, commerce, and society (Chikuvadze et al., 2023). Thus, it aims to create a link between TVET programmes and the development of the necessary competencies, leading to enhanced work outcomes (Moustafa et al., 2023).

In spite of the reputation of TVET programmers, it enlightened both the formal and informal job sectors by equipping millions of students with relevant knowledge, skills, and values. However, in TVET policy review conducted in 2005 acknowledged the existence that major challenges in its infusion into teaching and learning activities (Dube & Xie, 2018). In contrast initiatives in Asia such as Singapore's Skills Future and South Korea's public-private partnerships which gave much value to lifelong learning and industry alignment. In addition, the Regional TVET Qualifications Framework in East Africa and the greening of TVET in Southern Africa underscore sustainability, entrepreneurial skills infusion and harmonization (McGrath & Russon, 2023). The above comparisons highlight a change from looking at TVET as a means for economic grounding to engaging it within social justice and human capability contexts. Therefore, these global and regional comparisons expose critical forms and theoretical understandings for developing situations like the TVET in Zimbabwe.

Despite TVET's promise in tackling unemployment and economic challenges, the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms particularly within Zimbabwe's higher education landscape remains underexplored. While TVET framework signals progress toward standardization, there is limited empirical insight into how such policies are enacted and experienced, especially in resource-constrained and diverse institutional contexts (McCowan, 2019). Thus, there is empirical evidence that this mode has not been fully embraced as a priority in some developing nations (Gachunga et al., 2020). Makochekanwa and Mahuyu (2021); Mudondo (2023); Mawonedzo and Banda (2024) identify the lack of more attractive programmes and poor working relations between TVET institutions and industry as some of the contributors to the scenario above. This highlights the necessity for the infusion of quality assurance (QA) procedures into TVET curricula, instructional methodologies, and assessment procedures. Therefore, quality needs to be expressed in terms of content, instructional delivery approaches, facilities, and human capital. This paper argues that vigorous QA procedures affixed in a framework like CBET are indispensable for transforming Zimbabwe's TVET landscape.

METHODS

This study was grounded in a systematic review approach, and this enabled us to interrogate comprehensively the available sources. This created a basis for interpreting the overarching issues concerning QA procedures as a catalyst for TVET programmes transformation in Zimbabwe. The review focused on key bibliographic databases including WoS, DOAJ, and Scopus, targeting sources published between 2015 and 2025. The research was done to identify the studies that were conducted around the conceptualisation of QA procedures, how these procedures are infused into TVET programmes, opportunities that existed to enhance the infusion of QA procedures in TVET programmes. Before selecting the various sources, the researchers established an eligibility criterion

(inclusion/exclusion criterion), guided by the following key search words: 'quality assurance,' 'quality assurance procedures,' 'TVET,' 'TVET programmes,' 'transformation' AND 'Zimbabwe.'

This produced 105 potential sources, and 30 duplicates were eliminated from the targeted bibliographic databases. The remaining 75 sources were screened taking into consideration the stipulated inclusion and exclusion criteria. This resulted in 25 sources not meeting the inclusion criteria and were then excluded. These were excluded because they did not report their findings/results in the English Language. We double-checked the full text of the 50 eligible sources to ascertain that they met the inclusion criteria. The review of the eligible sources covered contextual and methodological issues. Subsequently, the selected sources were evaluated with the aim of identifying how QA procedures were defined within Zimbabwean TVET programmes, the implementation of QA procedures in Zimbabwean TVET programmes, and the opportunities and challenges concerning the drive towards transforming TVET programmes in Zimbabwe. Figure 1 shows the source selection procedure used in this paper.

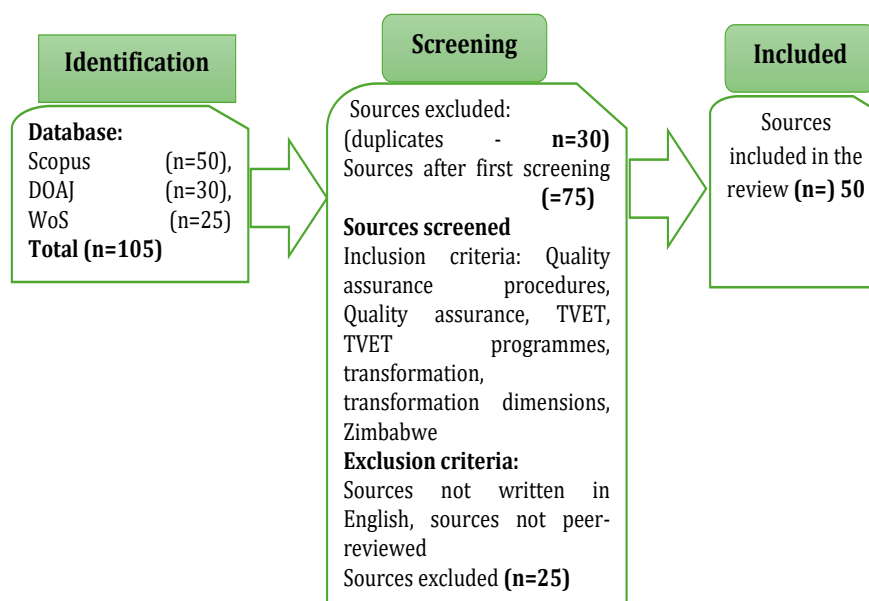


Figure 1: PRISMA flow diagram

The selected sources were critically scrutinized for convergences, parallels, and variations on how quality assurance procedures were defined within the Zimbabwean TVET programmes, how these were infused into TVET programmes, opportunities that exist to enhance QA procedures' use, and challenges that were faced in maintaining QA procedures in TVET programmes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides a concise and precise description of the salient issues derived from the interrogated sources under the following subheadings:

Theme1: Conceptualization of quality assurance procedures within Zimbabwe's TVET programmes

In this paper QA procedures in TVET are acknowledged as structured procedures such as standardized assessments, accreditation protocols and curriculum harmonization developed to promote relevance, align training with industrial needs and uphold training standards (Zuva & Zuva, 2020). In Zimbabwe's TVET programmes, QA procedures are systematic activities that are created to ensure that education and training outcomes meet established standards (Ncube et al., 2021). Thus, they assist TVET institutions in delivering high-quality outcomes that meet or exceed the expectations of industry, commerce, and society. In other words, these practices foster the creation of a culture of

continuous improvement, where institutions commit themselves to the national and international TVET standards (Mtotywa & Odebiyi, 2023).

It is in this context that this section centres on the key aspects of the QA procedures within TVET programmes: Regulation and accreditation: The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development oversee the regulation of TVET through the provision of relevant curricula, national examinations, trade tests, and the accreditation of independent TVET institutions (Munyoro & Mutula, 2016). Role of professional bodies: These play an important function in institution accreditation. They set industry-specific standards, curriculum development, and oversee the quality of instruction in learning activities in TVET institutions. This ensures the alignment of TVET programmes with commerce and industry's needs, thereby upholding high standards of education and training (Maireva et al., 2021). Competence-Based Education and Training (CBET): The current TVET system places much emphasis on CBET. This focuses on equipping students with competencies, which enable them to be functional in specific professions and trades. This approach aims to provide students with relevant knowledge, skills and values, thereby reducing the gap between how students are taught in institutions and industries' expectations (Rusike et al., 2024). Monitoring and evaluation: The ministry conducts regular monitoring and assessment of TVET institutions to ensure compliance with established standards. This includes developing and reviewing occupational competency profiles, qualification competency standards, and skills proficiency schedules in conjunction with industry and commerce (Christopher & Jones, 2024). Examinations and certification: The Higher Education Examinations Council (HEXCO) conducts examinations and issues certificates to successful candidates. This process ensures that the qualifications awarded are valid, reliable, and recognized by employers (Anna & Spencer, 2019). The above-mentioned aspects of QA are essential for maintaining the quality and relevance of TVET programmes in Zimbabwe, ultimately contributing to the country's socio-economic development by enhancing the employability of its youth.

Theme 2: Implementation of quality assurance procedures in Zimbabwean TVET programmes

In Zimbabwe, the Manpower Planning and Development Act 28:02 of 1984 (amended in 1996; 2020) regulates the planning, organization, and operations of TVET institutions and programmes (Dombofema, Mwenje & Musemwa, 2020). This necessitated the incorporation of quality assurance practices to ensure that TVET programmes equip students with the requisite competencies to meet industry and commercial standards (Makochekanwa & Mahuyu, 2021). Therefore, this section discusses some key aspects of QA procedures in Zimbabwean TVET programmes:

TVET programmes regulation by the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development

The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development, through its Department of Quality Assurance and Standards (DoQAS) and its units, is responsible for monitoring and controlling TVET programmes through the provision of relevant curricula, national examinations, trade tests, and the accreditation and monitoring (Mabhandu, 2017). Here are some key aspects of their involvement: Curriculum development: The DoAS, through the Curriculum Research and Development (CRD) Unit, ensures that TVET curricula are pertinent and approachable to industry and commerce requirements. They develop and review curricula every three years or in response to changes in industry and commerce. National Examinations and Trade Tests: The department, through the National Examinations Unit and Industrial Training and Trade Testing Department, conducts national examinations and trade tests to assess the competencies of students respectively. In addition, they maintain a database of examiners, examination registrations, and results, ensuring the reliability and validity of these assessments. Accreditation and monitoring: The CRD Unit is responsible for monitoring and accrediting independent TVET institutions and programmes. It ensures that these institutions and programs operate within the confines of the Manpower Planning and Development Act and other international standards' requirements. Quality assurance: The Ministry oversees the quality assurance of TVET programmes through the DoQAS and its units. This includes developing test items, maintaining databases, and issuing certificates to successful candidates. Policy development: The ministry, in consultation with key stakeholders,

formulates and implements policies related to competence development, promoting science, technology, and innovation (Pawandiwa et al., 2022).

A continuous assessment model has spurred this move, aimed at ensuring mastery of the competencies that enhance students or alumnae's performance in different tasks in line with their trades and professions (Magidi & Mahiya, 2021). These procedures help maintain high TVET standards and guarantee that the programmes are interconnected with the requirements of the industry, commerce, and society.

TVET programmes accreditation by professional bodies

In Zimbabwe's TVET programmes, professional bodies such as the Department of Quality Assurance and Standards' CRD Unit, under the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science, and Technology Development, play a significant role in accrediting TVET institutions and programmes (Zuva & Zuva, 2020). This unit, in collaboration with all the relevant practitioners and experts, sets industry-specific standards, develops curricula, and oversees the quality of instruction provided in different learning activities. This process involves the following aspects: Establishing standards and guidelines: Professional bodies set industry-specific guidelines and standards for different TVET programmes. These standards outline the knowledge, skills and values that students should be exposed to during their training. Curriculum development: They develop detailed guidelines regarding the content of training programmes, assessment methods, and the qualifications required for instructors. Accreditation process: Professional bodies engage in the accreditation procedures to ensure that TVET programmes align with industry needs and maintain high educational standards. Quality assurance: They oversee the quality of procedures guiding the education and training in TVET institutions, warranting that programmes meet established standards (Ajuonuma & Oguguo, 2015). These practices help maintain high educational standards and ensure that TVET programmes in Zimbabwe are responsive to the needs of the industry, commerce, and society.

TVET programmes' workplace-based training

QA procedures in workplace-based training are essential for aligning TVET programmes with industry, commerce, and society's needs. This ensures that students have hands-on experiences relevant to their trades or areas of specialisation (Edziwa & Blignaut, 2022). In this case, work-based training is considered an integral component of TVET programmes in Zimbabwe. This approach to education and training provides students with practical experiences that help bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world work expectations: Integration with curriculum: Work-based training is integrated into the TVET curriculum, enabling students to apply their classroom knowledge in a real-world setting. This hands-on experience is crucial for developing practical skills and understanding industry standards (Hindonga et al., 2021). Collaboration with industry and commerce: TVET institutions collaborate with various industries to secure attachment placements for students (Yunos et al., 2018). This partnership ensures that students gain relevant experience and are exposed to the latest industry practices. Assessment and evaluation: Students' performance during work-based training is assessed and evaluated by both the host organization and the TVET institution. This dual assessment ensures that students meet the required competencies and standards (Nzembe, 2018). Challenges and solutions: While work-based training offers numerous benefits, it also presents challenges, including securing placements, financial constraints, and ensuring high-quality supervision. Addressing these challenges requires collaboration between TVET institutions, industry partners and government bodies. These practices help ensure that TVET programmes in Zimbabwe produce alumnae who are well-prepared for the job market.

Theme 3: Opportunities for Enhancing Quality Assurance Procedures in Zimbabwean TVET Programmes

Even though there are challenges which have been noted with regards to infusion of QA into TEVET programmes to augment sustainable development, remarkable prospects have been mentioned

which includes that, Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE) conducts audits in both public and private higher education institutions (Garwe & Thodhlana, 2018). In these activities special attention given to the need to provide academic excellence with emphasis to staff levels, qualifications staff teaching at different levels, enrolment statistics per program, available infrastructure (lecture rooms, library facilities, hostels and recreational facilities and equipment) (Shizha, 2011) cited in Ncube (2021). Such verification exercises are done by using audit instruments and making audits visits to TVET institutions.

Garwe and Thodhlana (2018) pointed out that well-trained and knowledgeable peer reviewers make up audit teams and where necessary, foreign external reviewers are involved. In addition to external audits, ZIMCHE has also encouraged TVET institutions to create institutional QA units which carry out internal audits for the purpose of guaranteeing quality in their operations. Nilson (1997) cited in Ncube (2021) found that effective internal QA procedures can help TVET institutions improve their teaching and learning activities since it benefits both students and stakeholders. More so, Seletso (2012) cited in Sammy (2021) asserts that internal self-evaluation will ensure that the students acquire quality academic programmes from TVET programmes. This has enhanced professional accreditation through engaging professional bodies to set standards and accredits TVET institutions thereby ensuring proper alignment with industry needs and improving the credibility of qualifications.

ZIMCHE introduced the Minimum Body of Knowledge (MBK), which students must learn who undertake each study programme at higher education institutions in Zimbabwe (Shizha, 2011), as cited in Ncube (2021). This framework borrowed a leaf from frameworks like the Bologna Process, with the aim to standardize core competencies and ensure QA in curriculum development. Thus, it was an attempt to pit harmonisation alongside autonomy in academic discussions, and the need for clearer operational procedures for diverse contexts (Puthi, 2022). This provides thoughts of how QA procedures decode into lived experiences, contributing to empirical basis for notional images on TVET consistency and related reaction. The determination is done by experts in each of the study areas. The experts are called to a workshop where they spend some time working on the documents. This work will help achieve comparable standards in what is learned by students embarking on similar TVET programmes at different institutions.

The MBK project is identical to the 'tuning' project which offers the comparability and compatibility of higher education curricula for the global higher education community. This then becomes an opportunity to achieve quality assurance and sustainable development in higher education (Garwe & Thodhlana, 2018). In this regard, MBKs lead to the establishment of regional qualification frameworks thereby establishing frameworks that will facilitate and improve the comparability of qualifications as well as foster regional collaboration. On another stride, ZIMCHE strives to ensure quality in education and training by organizing the Research and Intellectual Expo (RIE) annually. RIE provides an international attempt to exhibit how investment in TVET is benefiting the country (Ncube, 2021). The event aims to harness QA procedures in leading innovations, research, and intellectual output from Zimbabweans and utilize these to spur quality assurance and development in the country.

Cognisant of the realisation that no nation can develop without exploiting the know-how and wisdom inherent in its citizens, ZIMCHE aims to pool and direct outstanding intellectual work, creativity and research outputs to create Zimbabwe and enhance the country's competitiveness. It has been established that each year, RIE provides researchers with an opportunity to present select, peer-reviewed research as well as artefacts and other creative works. From the presented papers, a selection of the best papers is made, and these are then published in the Journal of Zimbabwe Studies: Arts, Humanities and Education or the Journal of Zimbabwe Studies: Science, Technology and Health depending on the discipline (Ncube, 2021). As a way of ascertaining quality assurance, the Expo also provides a platform for the exhibition of prototype products developed by Zimbabwe's science, technology and innovation specialists. In other words, this is a platform where TVET institutions, students, industrialists and other stakeholders share feedback on impact of infusing QA procedures into TVET programmes (Nuffic, 2019). In the same vein, QA procedures in TVET programmes have also driven efforts to involve stakeholders, including communities, government, and other relevant parties, in curriculum review and quality assurance procedures that ensure programs meet societal and economic needs.

Therefore, through Research and Intellectual Expo (RIE) and industry partnerships, the infusion of QA procedures into TVET programmes is enhanced through strengthening ties with industries for curriculum development and workplace-based training. Technology integration into training, together with a consistent review of TVET programmes to align with industry standards and technological advancements, ensures the effective use of modern technologies in teaching and assessment (Satiya & Mberengwa, 2023). In the same vein, technology integration has enhanced the infusion of QA procedures into TVET programmes through the adoption of innovative teaching methodologies and continuous professional development. This will create a student who is suitable for employment in this technologically charged world not only locally but globally.

Ncube (2021) argued that TVET programmes lead to improved employability of alumnae, both locally and regionally, as quality assurance procedures align TVET programmes with job market needs, making alumnae more competitive and better prepared for employment opportunities. Furthermore, Ncube (2021) concurs with Mufanechiya et al. (2024), who pointed out that TVET institutions implement formative competency assessments, focusing on student outcomes, involvement, independence, and self-assessment. This has enriched the reputation and recognition of TVET in Zimbabwe, not only in terms of the employability of TVET products but also in job creation as stipulated by the 5.0 mantra. In addition to TVET's outcome-based assessment, Adams et al. (2024) highlighted the emphasis on practical and relevant skills, which are more attractive and beneficial for individuals and the nation. In this regard, many people have migrated from academic to TVET programs to acquire both soft and hard skills that they can utilize in occupational and survival circumstances. This highlights the importance of investing in and promoting quality in TVET, equipping individuals with hands-on and marketable skills that can address real-world problems.

QA and student feedback can also be ensured by implementing proper feedback methods, thereby building student confidence. Ncube (2021) highlighted that student confidence can be ensured through a robust QA procedure, which builds trust in the value of qualifications, motivating students to excel in their studies, as well as continuous monitoring and evaluation that allow institutions to address gaps and adapt to evolving educational and industry trends, directly benefiting students. On the same note as an opportunity to enhance QA in TVET programmes, boards such as the academic and student affairs committee which is responsible for informing the council of students' welfare in TVET institutions, also make the necessary recommendations that would help enhance quality assurance in the welfare of students. The ultimate objective of a proper feedback channel is to contribute towards the sustenance of environments conducive to TVET learning thereby improving the quality of human capital produced in Zimbabwe (Garwe & Thodhlana, 2018).

On the same note, consistency and equity in TVET programmes ensure uniformity in the quality of instruction across institutions, providing all students with equal opportunities to succeed in employment and contribute to job creation. Bello and Muhammad (2021) reiterated the importance of consistency and equity in TVET programmes in the sense that alumnae possess the requisite knowledge and skills to the demands of the labour market. Furthermore, Edidiong et al. (2023) noted that effective quality assurance procedures have reinforced standards in TVET programmes by producing alumnae with uniform competencies across TVET institutions.

This section highlights that QA procedures have a significant impact on the success of students in TVET programmes by ensuring the delivery of high-quality, industry-relevant education. It enhances employability, fosters confidence in the value of qualifications, and supports continuous improvement to meet evolving demands. Through these efforts, students are better prepared for the workforce, empowering them to contribute meaningfully to the economy and society.

Theme 4: Challenges Faced in Maintaining Quality Assurance Procedures in Zimbabwean TVET Programmes

It is critical to highlight that the TVET landscape in Zimbabwe is grounded in deep-rooted systemic challenges, which coerce its transformative potential (Yingi, 2020). The historical stigma attached to TVET remains a critical barricade, inherited from colonial-era orders that valorized academic paths over technical-vocational skills. In addition, Mufanechiya et al. (2024) pointed out that the adequate provision of TVET programmes has been affected by a lack of coordination, illegal operation and lack of regulation. Lack of coordination, among others, has subsequently led to a lack of

commitment on the part of most stakeholders including students, parents, industrialists, institutions and instructors. In this regard, a significant gap that needs to be filled to improve quality and effectiveness is widened as far as regulation, monitoring and coordination are concerned. The aspect of lack of coordination was also highlighted by Shava et al. (2021) who further indicated that top management should provide evidence of its commitment to the development and infusion of the QA management system and continually improve its effectiveness by communicating to the organization the importance of meeting customer as well as statutory and regulatory requirements is concerned. In this regard, limited monitoring and evaluation can lead to ineffective systems for assessing and improving programme quality, thereby further exacerbating the challenges.

Mukochekanwa et al. (2021) highlighted the challenge of TVET in Zimbabwe, caused by fragmented funding mechanisms that depend solely on student tuition fees to develop programmes. This led to the fact that TVET requires a separate budget from the central government to establish an effective, efficient, competitive, and flexible market-driven training system, which reduces bureaucratization of QA processes (Hondonga & Ramaligela, 2020). Limited financial support has prevented TVET programmes from getting the attention it deserves in human resource development discourses in most African countries, and Zimbabwe is no exception. The marginalization of TVET in the allocation of resources in education budgets has compromised the growth of opportunities to produce alumnae with competencies in TVET subjects (Mukochekanwa et al., 2020). In this regard, it can be argued that responsible ministries have not effectively spearheaded TVET programmes, treating TVET subjects as a subset of their budgetary allocation. Consequently, without adequate funding and relying on student fees, the TVET provision in Zimbabwe remains deplorable until the government commits to supporting it.

Therefore, the critically inadequate funding witnessed in TVET programmes leads to limited financial resources, thereby hindering the development of infrastructure, the procurement of modern equipment, and the training of staff. Mufanechiya et al. (2024) argued that poor funding to establish new infrastructure and equipment, in other words, to replace outdated facilities and human resources from the ministry has also militated against the effectiveness and efficiency of TVET as noted by many TVET institutions which struggle with ageing infrastructure and equipment, which affects the quality of training. In this way, TVET institutions have heavily relied on academic programs that depend on examinations, such as English, Mathematics, Science, and Indigenous languages, as TVET programmes cannot be taught in their schools, leading to the undermining of TVET programmes across the nation (Wallace et al., 2022).

Additionally, vocations such as nursing exclude subjects like woodwork, metalwork, and building from their requirements (Tshili, 2018). This imbalance in attention and resources between academic and TVET programmes has contributed to the slow and restricted growth of TVET establishments in Zimbabwean TVET institutions. In this way, TVET subjects were allocated to students with low aptitudes for academic achievements or intellectually ungifted aspirants in countries such as Zimbabwe, Zambia and South Africa, hence low educational status, which then led to the notion that TVET occupies a low status on the scale of academic subjects in Zimbabwe (Mosweunyane, 2013) cited in Mufanechiya et al. (2024). This disgrace has led TVET aspirants to be people with low entry qualifications, such as school dropouts or academically ungifted students, even today. Therefore, low uptake of TEVET courses and inconsistent standards as shown by the absence of uniform quality assurance frameworks across institutions result in varying levels of education quality and lack of quality assurance has been shown again by the exclusion of TVET subjects such as in nurse training, among others.

On the same note, Galen et al. (2015) states that if quality is to be embedded successfully in a university, then high-level management and leadership commitment and abilities will be crucial in achieving this. Furthermore, Adeyemi et al. (2020) also reiterated that the top management of an institution plays an important role in driving the organization to quality improvement and organizational excellence. Shava et al. (2021) further noted that top management should provide evidence of its commitment to developing and infusing a quality management system and continually improve its effectiveness by communicating to the organization the importance of meeting both customer and statutory and regulatory requirements. This, in turn, means that effective quality assurance depends largely on the availability of highly qualified lecturers and administrators within

institutions, as well as competent professionals and technical staff in national QA agencies. Pham, Newton and Macalister (2024) argued that the presence of senior staff with experience in TVET programmes is critical and necessary to provide QA in TVET.

Shava (2021) highlighted weak or inappropriate industry links, in other words, insufficient collaboration between TVET institutions and industries, which results in a mismatch between training and labour market needs. Ncube (2021) also indicated that TVET should be aligned with the National Development Strategy One (NDS1) to drive industrial recovery and development through TVET. In this regard, TVET programmes and industry should be viewed as a synergy, enabling TVET infusion to address problems in real-life situations. This implies that the lack of linkages between industry and TVET institutions hinders their potential to address gender disparities, inclusivity, and socio-economic problems, ultimately rendering them unable to contribute to innovation and industrialization. Thus, this section highlighted that maintaining QA procedures in Zimbabwean TVET programmes faces notable challenges, including inadequate funding, outdated facilities, shortage of skilled instructors, weak industry linkages, inconsistent standards, and limited monitoring mechanisms. Addressing these issues is crucial to ensure the delivery of high-quality education that meets the needs of both students and industry, ultimately contributing to national development and economic growth.

The role of QA procedures in transforming TVET in Zimbabwe cannot be overstated. A thorough examination reveals several key areas where these procedures have significantly impacted the effectiveness and relevance of TVET programmes (Shereni, 2020). QA procedures have facilitated regular updates and revisions of TVET programmes to align with industry standards and technological advancements (Satiya & Mberengwa, 2023). This ensures that alumnae possess the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the demands of the job market (Bello & Muhammad, 2021). The incorporation of stakeholder feedback, particularly from employers and industry experts, has been instrumental in this process, promoting a more dynamic and responsive education system (Nuffic, 2019). The infusion of QA procedures into TVET programmes has led to the adoption of innovative teaching methodologies and the continuous professional development of educators. By emphasizing competency-based education and infusing practical, hands-on training, TVET institutions can better equip students for real-world challenges (Omar, 2020). Additionally, ongoing assessment and evaluation processes help identify areas for improvement, fostering a culture of excellence in teaching and learning. Effective QA procedures have reinforced accountability and transparency within TVET programmes (Edidiong et al., 2023). By setting clear standards and benchmarks, these practices ensure that institutions adhere to best practices in governance and management. This has resulted in improved resource allocation, enhanced TVET programme performance, and greater stakeholder confidence. When compared with global QA procedures particularly UNESCO's TVET benchmarks and countries like Germany and Switzerland, Zimbabwe's QA procedures reflect a commendable intent to standardize and harmonize education and training outcomes, with emphasis on rigorous assessment, work-based learning, transparent governance, and stakeholder engagement. In other words, Zimbabwe aligns with these procedures through accreditation protocols and curriculum harmonization. However, a lot needs to be done in areas such as data-driven evaluation, inclusive access and continuous monitoring. These comparisons accentuate the need for Zimbabwe to evolve its QA procedures in TVET programmes not only for compliance, but as deliberate pedals for impartiality, significance, and transformation.

QA procedures have also driven efforts to make TVET more inclusive and accessible to diverse populations. By addressing issues such as gender disparities, socio-economic barriers, and geographical challenges, these practices have expanded opportunities for all individuals to benefit from TVET. Thus, this the infusion of QA procedures into TVET programmes has encouraged institutions to create a clear picture of roadmap to help inculcate 21st century skills in students crucial for fostering inclusivity in different sectors of the economy. Hence, the students through inspirational communication, supportive leadership, intellectual stimulation and personal recognition are able to be agile and adaptable to the dynamic nature of the global economy. QA procedures have fostered a focus on continuous improvement and innovation, enabling institutions to respond promptly to emerging trends and challenges (Appah et al., 2021). This adaptability is vital for maintaining the relevance and competitiveness of TVET in an ever-evolving landscape. Despite the progress made, several challenges remain in the effective infusion of QA procedures into TVET programmes. These include limited financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, and varying levels of commitment among institutions.

Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from policymakers, educators, and industry stakeholders.

However, some limitations were experienced in this paper for instance the predominant reliance on English-language sources, which may inadvertently eliminate rich insights from non-English speaking regions, particularly within indigenous context in Zimbabwe and beyond, Lusophone and Francophone. This linguistic bias menaces overseeing various QA procedures, which could have broadened the understanding of QA procedures and their impact on TVET programmes.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the adoption and infusion of robust QA procedures are expected to play a pivotal role in transforming TVET programmes in Zimbabwe. Thus, these procedures are expected not only to maintain high standards of education and training in TVET programmes but also to continue to be responsive to the developing anxieties of industry, commerce and society. Hence, there is a need to foster in TVET programmes a culture of continuous improvement, accountability, and stakeholder engagement, with a view to enhancing the curriculum relevance and effectiveness of instructional methodologies. As Zimbabwe continues to circumnavigate the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century, TVET programmes must be equipped with QA procedures that support innovation, inclusivity, and excellence. In this regard, QA procedures as drivers in the transformation of TVET programmes do not only enhance the graduates' employability but also position institutions as competitive players in the global knowledge economy.

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