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Internal quality management practices: A case study of Jimma University, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the internal quality management practices at Jimma University, Ethiopia, utilizing a qualitative case study design. Purposive sampling was employed to select sample respondents. The respondents included five quality enhancement offices, five deans, ten department heads, and one representative of the Student's Council. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and document review. Thematic and verbatim analysis techniques were used to analyze and interpret the data. The findings revealed that while quality enhancement offices exist at the university and college levels, there was no dedicated quality-focused unit or focal person at the department level. Moreover, the study identified shortcomings in the reward system, low levels of student, faculty, and stakeholder engagement, and insufficient physical resources. Despite these challenges, the university employs a range of quality management strategies, including student evaluations, program reviews, tracer studies, self-evaluations, and on- and off-the-job trainings. Student-centered approaches and continuous assessment are also utilized to improve teaching and learning. However, the study concluded that the existing internal quality management practices lack proper organization, effective coordination, and adequate resource allocation, potentially hindering continuous quality improvement. To address these limitations, it is recommended that quality improvement units be established at the department level, strengthened, and supported with ongoing professional training for faculty. Regular self-reviews should also be implemented to ensure leadership efficiency and improved student learning outcomes.

Keywords: Improvement, Internal quality, Management, Student learning

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) have a critical role in providing quality education to develop competent individuals capable of meeting the demands of national and international markets, especially in a rapidly changing economic, political, social, and technological landscape (Tadesse, 2015; Wondwosen, 2020). Having a quality management system is vital for HEIs, as it helps improve efficiency and enhances the overall quality of education provided and ensures institutions are producing a skilled and knowledgeable workforce (Materu & Righetti, 2010; Obasi & Olutayo, 2019). In the context of higher education, quality management encompasses the concepts of control, assurance, and improvement (Csizmadia, 2006). It involves the processes through which an institution fulfills its institutional responsibility in defining, maintaining, and enhancing the academic standards of its activities (Seyfried & Pohlenz, 2018). It is also concerned with the establishment and

maintenance of high academic standards, as well as the continuous improvement of the standards to meet the evolving needs and expectations of students and other stakeholders (Munikwa, 2022).

In HEIs, quality management encompasses internal and external processes (Csizmadia, 2006). Internally, institutions establish explicit quality enhancement procedures and academic standards that serve as benchmarks to be met by different relevant units. They provide a framework for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching, learning, and other academic activities. In addition to internal processes, quality management in HEIs also involves external processes developed by governments and agencies (Eymen et al., 2016). Governments and agencies establish frameworks, regulations, and standards to evaluate and assess the quality of education provided by institutions. Such external processes include accreditation, periodic audits, and evaluations carried out by independent bodies or regulatory agencies.

By implementing quality management practices, institutions can better align their educational offerings with the needs of students and the demands of the job market (Woldegiorgis et al., 2015). Effective quality management practice involves the implementation of processes and mechanisms that serve as instruments to assist institutions in fulfilling their quality management functions such as strategic planning, curriculum development and review, assessment and evaluation methods, feedback systems, and continuous improvement initiatives. By adopting a systematic approach to quality management, HEIs can identify areas for improvement, implement evidence-based practices, and monitor the effectiveness of their educational programs. This ultimately leads to better educational outcomes, student satisfaction, and the overall success of institutions in realizing the mission of providing high-quality education (Williams, 2016).

Quality management is conceptualized as the set of policies, systems, and processes that are put in place to ensure the continuous maintenance and improvement of quality within an institution. As referenced by Csizmadia (2006), ISO 8402 defines quality management as the management function responsible for determining and implementing the quality policy of an organization, which includes its intentions and direction. This definition aligns with the broader field of quality management and is supported by various concepts, instruments, and techniques used to effectively manage and enhance quality in HEIs. These tools and approaches help institutions foster a culture of quality, establish clear quality objectives, implement quality assurance processes, and continuously strive for improvement in all aspects of their educational services (Manatos, Sarrico, & Rosa, 2017; Mohammed, Azlan, et al., 2016)

Ensuring quality education requires a significant allocation of resources, which can be particularly challenging for developing nations to fulfill and sustain their educational activities. As highlighted by Materu (2007), providing quality education demands substantial investment, which can pose a significant challenge for developing countries. These nations often face resource constraints, limited funding, and competing priorities that make it difficult to allocate sufficient resources to higher education. Materu further states that Sub-Saharan African countries are experiencing growing concerns regarding the quality of higher education. Several factors contribute like rapid growth in student enrollment, declining public funding, the rise of private providers and pressure from transforming the labor market. The lack of financial resources can affect various aspects of educational quality, including infrastructure, staffing, instructional materials, research capabilities, and student support services.

To address this challenge, it becomes crucial for developing nations to explore innovative funding mechanisms and partnerships with governments, non-governmental organizations, private sectors, and international donors. Collaboration and resource-sharing initiatives can help bridge the funding gap and support the sustainable development of HEIs in these countries (Munikwa, 2022). Moreover, developing nations can benefit from adopting evidence-based policies, strategic planning, and efficient resource management to optimize the utilization of available resources (Haque, 2020), comprehensive strategies that involve government support, collaboration between public and private sectors, investment in faculty development and infrastructure,

quality assurance mechanisms, and continuous monitoring and evaluation of educational programs (Haque, 2020; Mohammed, Azlan, et al., 2016).

Ethiopia has encountered comparable difficulties in guaranteeing the provision of high-quality education. The matter of quality and its management has emerged as a crucial topic of discussion and contemplation for all involved parties, including the government. For instance, Geleto (2020) states that historically Ethiopian higher education experienced several challenges like inability to produce a skilled workforce irrelevance of the program, conservatisms of its institutions, lack of commitment to academic freedom and institutional autonomy as well as a scarcity of resources (MoE, 2002). Notably, the Ethiopian government and educational authorities have acknowledged the significance of addressing these concerns and enhancing the quality of higher education. They have prioritized efforts to revise curricula, improve graduate training programs, and align higher education with the developmental needs of the country.

The revised higher education proclamation 1152/2019 (FDRE, 2019) was also enacted in accordance with these measures, granting HEIs in Ethiopia the authority to manage and control their activities. This includes establishing a quality improvement system that involves setting standards, conducting program evaluations, and undertaking quality audits. The proclamation empowers HEIs to take responsibility for ensuring the quality and relevance of their educational programs. By giving autonomy to institutions in managing their activities and implementing quality improvement measures, the proclamation aims to enhance the overall quality of higher education in Ethiopia and make it more responsive to the needs of both students and society. It also aimed to encourage a culture of continuous improvement and accountability in higher education by promoting internal assessments and granting autonomy to institutions. Promoting internal assessments and granting autonomy to higher education institutions is essential for fostering a culture of continuous improvement and accountability (Wondwosen, 2020). However, internal and external mechanisms for ensuring quality assurance in Ethiopian HEIs are considered weak (Abebe, 2007; Wondwosen, 2020) which highlights the need for attention and improvement in the quality enhancement processes within the higher education system in Ethiopia.

Addressing the quality-related challenges in HEIs requires a concerted effort at institutional, national, and international levels. This necessitates the establishment of effective internal and external quality management systems to facilitate and oversee quality-related matters. These systems play a crucial role in ensuring that educational standards are upheld, curricula remain relevant, teaching methods are effective, and student outcomes align with societal needs. By prioritizing quality management, HEIs can work towards elevating the overall quality of education and enhancing graduates' preparedness for professional and societal engagement. The implementation of robust quality management systems within Ethiopian HEIs can contribute to improving the quality of education and enhancing their role in developing a skilled workforce capable of meeting the country's evolving demands.

Continuous improvement in the teaching and learning process is a key element of achieving this goal. By actively engaging in self-evaluation and adhering to quality evaluation criteria, HEIs can identify areas that require improvement and take targeted measures to enhance the overall quality of education they provide. By aligning quality enhancement and assurance efforts with the teaching and learning processes, HEIs can deliver high-quality education that meets national and international standards. Additionally, by creating a supportive learning environment and providing resources and assistance to students, institutions can enhance their learning outcomes.

Overall, prioritizing student learning and aligning quality improvement efforts with the teaching and learning processes is crucial for ensuring quality education. Ashcroft and Rayner (2011) reveal the tensions between conflicting issues like resources versus expansion, lack of alignment between quality enhancement and assurance efforts, and teaching and learning processes. Promoting internal assessments fosters a culture of

continuous improvement and responsibility. It allows institutions to regularly monitor and evaluate their teaching and learning processes, identify areas for improvement, and make necessary adjustments.

The present study is based on the theoretical assumption that student learning should be at the center of higher education institutions and can be enhanced through improvement-led quality improvement practices (Kis, 2005; Tam, 2002). Additionally, the study is driven by the ongoing debate surrounding quality management practices in HEIs and the relatively recent and under-researched nature of internal quality management practices at the university level in the Ethiopian context (Amare, 2007; Mulu, 2012). Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to explore the internal quality management practice of Jimma University. To achieve this purpose, the study was guided by the following research questions:

- How internal quality management is conceptualized at Jimma University?
- What are the challenges of effective internal quality management practice at Jimma University?
- What strategies are in place to effectively practice internal quality management at Jimma University?

2. Materials and Methods

This study adopts a qualitative approach and utilizes a multiple-case study research design. This approach allows gathering in-depth information about the complex nature of the problem under study. Multiple data sources were employed to explore the research problems from different angles, thus enhancing the validity of the study. For the study, data were gathered from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected from the quality enhancement office, college quality enhancement, assessment, and examination coordination offices, student council representatives, and selected department heads and college deans through interviews. These interviews provide firsthand information and insight into the quality management practices of the university. Additionally, various documents were used as supplementary sources of data. By utilizing multiple sources of data comprehensive data were generated for a deeper understanding of the internal quality management practices of Jimma University.

The researchers employed a purposive sampling technique to select interviewees for the study. This technique allowed the researchers to choose respondents who held positions related to quality management within Jimma University, a public institution located in Jimma town, Oromia National Regional State, Ethiopia, with a rich history dating back to 1952 which, having evolved into a comprehensive university in 1999, now offers a broad spectrum of undergraduate and postgraduate programs across colleges and institutes, i.e., Jimma institute of health , Jimma institute of technology ,college of agriculture and veterinary medicine , college of natural sciences , college of education and behavioral sciences , college of business and economics , college of law and governance , college of social sciences and the humanities.

The selection process involved several steps. Initially, the organizational structure of the university was reviewed to identify key informants. It was observed that the university has quality enhancement, assessment, and examination offices at colleges and institutes which are responsible for coordinating, facilitating, monitoring, and evaluating activities aimed at improving the quality of education. Based on their responsibilities, five education quality enhancement assessment and examination officers, five college deans, and ten department heads (two from each sample college) were selected for interviews. Additionally, a representative from the student council was purposely included to gather relevant information from a student's perspective.

In this study, interviews and document analysis were employed as data-gathering instruments. Interviews are considered a flexible tool for data collection, as they allow for the use of multiple sensory channels, such as verbal and non-verbal communication (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). To facilitate the interview process, an interview guide was prepared in advance. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in English with sample respondents whereby intensive field notes were taken during each interview which typically lasted

between 40-60 minutes. These interview notes were, then, transcribed, analyzed and interpreted verbatim to gain deeper insights into the research topic. Besides, by examining relevant documents, additional insights and details about the quality management practices of Jimma University were obtained. Once the data collection phase was completed, thematic areas were identified, and a list of coding categories was developed. Data were analyzed and interpreted thematically and verbatim. This method allows for a comprehensive exploration of the data while maintaining a clear framework for analysis based on the predetermined thematic areas. Ethical considerations were paramount in this study. Prior to conducting interviews, informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they understood the nature and purpose of the research. Participants were also assured that all data collected would be kept confidential and their identities would remain anonymous throughout the study.

3. Results

Regarding the concept, the finding of the study revealed that quality is conceptualized as “fitness for the purpose” which focuses on the relevance of education on mission and national development, and” value for money “which considers efficiency and rate of private and social return. In supporting this one interviewee stated, *“In our university quality is conceptualized in two ways: fitness for the purpose which focuses on the relevance of the education on our mission, and the national development and value for money which considers efficiency and rate of private and social return”*(Q#3,25/9/2022). However, it was found that harmonized quality assurance policy recommends considering quality as “transformation “which focuses on the outcome of learners.

Pertaining to the institutional arrangement, it was found that the university established quality enhancement at the university level and quality enhancement, assessment, and examination offices at colleges and institutes which are responsible for coordinating, facilitating, monitoring, and evaluating activities aimed at improving the quality of education. Regarding this one respondent expressed the following:

...the university has a quality assurance office at the university and college/ institute levels which is responsible for maintaining and monitoring the quality of education. However, there are no units at department levels because the assumption is that department heads play the role. That is, it is assumed that they coordinate, monitor, and assess the quality of education. In addition, there are permanent and ad hoc committees that assist their effort in maintaining and providing quality of education (Q#1,20 /9/2022).

As to the availability and adequacy of resources, the study revealed that there were shortages of human and material resources; weak involvement and commitment of stakeholders in initiating and implementing quality improvement initiatives and strategies, and a weak and unsystematic reward system to motivate university staff. In supporting this, one respondent reported

Academic staffs are not adequate. Besides, there are academic staffs with low motivation and commitment in some departments. On top of this, insufficiencies of resources are constraints in maintaining the quality of education and its management. Library, laboratories, computer, and language labs are not sufficient with implication on the quality intended for (D#4,15/9/2022).

Concerning quality strategies, methods, and procedures, the findings of the study revealed that the university has been implementing various strategies, methods, and procedures to continuously improve and manage the quality of education. One of the strategies was providing instructors with pedagogical and relevant skills through training. It was found that the university has been providing short-term training to improve the

professional skills of academic staff through its ADRC unit on continuous assessment, method of teaching, module writing, and others. As the data from one of the interviewees reported,

... to enhance the professional skills of academic staff, the university has an already established Academic Development and Resource Center (ADRC). This center is responsible for coordinating and providing various capacity-building trainings for the academic staff. The center is also responsible for coordinating the provision of Higher Diploma training specifically designed to improve the pedagogical skills of academic staff. Yet, despite its critical role, it was found that the center was not fully discharging what is expected due to such reasons as a shortage of resources including manpower and others. This affects the performance and contribution of the center in improving the quality of education (A#1,20/9/2022).

The university has implemented a first-day first class to minimize the wastage of time and to enhance the engagement of students in their learning. Moreover, need assessment and curriculum revision were conducted to improve the relevance of academic programs. Moreover, the majority of the classrooms were furnished with LCD and computers. Furthermore, there were efforts to provide blended learning through the university e-learning platform. On top of these, academic staffs were encouraged to attend HDP training to update their pedagogical skills.

Regarding the rewards, respondents expressed that there was inadequate reward system in the university that motivates academic staff to exert their maximum effort. For instance, one of the interviewees states that *“there is weak reward system in the university particularly for those who perform well”* (D#4, 23/9/2022). Similarly, another respondent explained the following:

... there is no reward system. Besides, there is no clear guideline to reward outstanding performance which implies an absence of differentiating between good and poor performances. As a result, academic staff who perform well are not rewarded or recognized which implies weak motivation and commitment (D#5, 26/9/2022).

Another respondent also expressed, *“... even in some situations promised incentives were not given to instructors which intern affect academic staff motivation and commitment to work on quality issues”* (D#3, 21/9/2022).

In summary, even though, they are not satisfactory the findings of the study revealed that first day first class was introduced at the beginning of each semester to minimize wastage of classes; classrooms have been furnished with LCD and networked computers (SMART classrooms); need assessment was conducted to develop and review program /curriculum; student and colleague performance evaluation was used; tracer study was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the graduates, institutional self-evaluation was conducted; short and long term training was provided; continuous assessment, student-centered and remedial actions (tutorial classless) were implemented across all colleges/Institutes to improve the quality of education.

4. Discussions

In this section, the results obtained from the data gathered through interviews and documents were presented and discussed. The presentation of results and discussions started by examining how the university conceptualizes the quality of education, as it is crucial for all stakeholders to have a shared understanding. This common understanding allows stakeholders to collaborate effectively and develop strategies to maintain and enhance the quality of teaching and learning processes at the university. As highlighted by Damme (2004), the definition of quality plays a significant role in shaping the overall quality improvement framework. Therefore, understanding the various definitions and their implications is essential for ensuring a comprehensive and

effective internal quality management system at the university. By delving into the discussion on the conception of quality, the research aimed to provide insights into how Jimma University perceives and approaches quality in its educational practices. This discussion serves as a foundation for further exploration of the internal quality management practices and their implementation within the university.

According to the findings of the study, quality is conceptualized as fitness for purpose and value for money in providing quality education. This means that the efficiency and effectiveness of the resources invested in maintaining quality education are assessed and linked to the university's quality management system and its achievement of institutional goals. This finding aligns with a previous research finding which suggests the quality assurance system needs to be designed to meet and ensure the education needs of the country; is efficient and cost-effective, and leads to the transformation and improvement of students' knowledge, skills, and behaviors (Mulu, 2012).

Similarly, the quality assurance policy of the university (JU, 2018) defined quality as fitness for purpose (the institution's purpose to the social and economic needs of the country), value for money (Efficiency and return to the investment) and Transformation (increase in the knowledge and skills or improvements in behaviors of students). The implication is that quality is broadly conceptualized in the university and constitutes the input, process, and output of the university. It mainly focuses on the quality of services they provide that satisfy internal and external stakeholders by meeting their explicit and implicit expectations (Cheng & Tam, 1997).

Regarding the institutional arrangement, the university has established a structure for a quality enhancement office at the university and college levels to facilitate the provision and management of quality education within the university. The offices mainly work on quality improvement as well as accountability-related issues within the university. However, it was found that there was no branch office or unit directly responsible for quality improvement efforts at the department level. As a result, department heads are burdened with the responsibility of monitoring and coordinating quality-related issues. As opposed to this finding, ENQA (2009) suggests that internal quality management practices need to have clear institutional arrangements that delineate responsibilities and accountability for quality at all levels.

The active involvement of stakeholders in the quality improvement efforts of the university is crucial to providing quality education for students. This demands HEIs to establish and implement various mechanisms and procedures that promote the involvement and commitment of stakeholders. The study also found that the university has different mechanisms in place to gather feedback from internal and external stakeholders, such as student and community satisfaction surveys, employer feedback, and staff performance evaluations. The feedback is mainly used to identify areas for further improvement and make necessary changes to enhance the quality of education and its management. The university also employs various committees such as the Senate Council, the Academic Standards and Curriculum Review Committee, college and department councils, and ad hoc committees to improve the quality of education offered by the university.

The data from the documents reviewed indicated that the university has been implementing various methods such as evaluation of instructors' performance and the teaching and learning process by students, colleague evaluation, program/curriculum review, tracer study, institutional self-evaluation, short-term and long-term training, and needs assessment. These approaches have been utilized by the university as major strategies to improve the quality of education.

In terms of instructors' performance evaluation, the results showed that students, instructors, and department heads participated in completing instructors' performance evaluation forms at the end of each semester. It was found that there is a weak system of colleague/peer evaluations used to enhance the teaching and learning process. Instructors were not actively involved in evaluating the teaching and learning process to improve the quality of courses and the delivery methods. Moreover, instructors were not provided with timely performance evaluation results and feedback, further hampering their ability to address areas of improvement.

Additionally, the absence of an effective performance appraisal system prevents the recognition and reward of good performance, thus impacting the overall effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. The study also revealed that the university conducted institutional self-evaluation which demonstrates its efforts to gather feedback on the quality of its programs and its alignment with institutional missions.

Motivated and committed employees are crucial for maintaining the quality of education in higher institutions. To ensure the provision of quality services, it is important for these institutions to have motivated and committed employees. However, the findings reveal that the university lacks an adequate reward system.

Besides, continuous updating of curricula is essential to keep up with evolving knowledge, skills, and emerging demands. Assessing needs and gathering input from relevant stakeholders is a critical step in this process. Peer discussions, meetings, and debates can provide valuable insights and diverse perspectives that contribute to enhancing the quality of the curriculum or program. Engaging educators, professionals, students, and other stakeholders in these discussions can help identify areas for improvement, emerging trends, and necessary updates. By establishing mechanisms for ongoing curriculum updating and involving various stakeholders in the process, the university can ensure that the programs remain relevant, effective, and responsive to the needs of students, the job market, and society as a whole.

The findings of the study also show that the university has been employing various mechanisms and procedures to develop, review, and approve the curriculum or programs offered. The process of curriculum revision/development is indeed a multi-step procedure that ensures thorough preparation before implementation. The university carried out a need assessment by an assigned committee or team to identify the necessary changes and improvements needed in the curriculum or program. Once the needs are assessed, discussions take place with internal and external stakeholders to gather feedback and input on the draft of the curriculum/program. Furthermore, validation workshops are organized to obtain additional feedback that contributes to improving the quality of the curriculum/program. These workshops offer valuable opportunities for refining and fine-tuning the curriculum based on the input provided by participants. Finally, the curriculum/program is reviewed and approved at multiple levels, including department, college, and university level. This ensures that the curriculum meets the required standards and aligns with the goals and objectives of the institution.

Learning assessment plays a significant role in continuously improving the quality of education. It has the potential to identify the strengths and weaknesses of students. This, in turn, enables instructors and students to take immediate and corrective actions to enhance their performance and overall learning outcomes. It was found that the university has implemented continuous assessment across all colleges/institutes. This is a positive step towards promoting a comprehensive evaluation of students' progress. Allocating 50% of the total evaluation to continuous assessment emphasizes its importance and highlights its role in measuring and monitoring student learning throughout the academic term. However, continuous assessment has not been appropriately implemented across all departments and instructors in the university.

The study also found that efforts are being made to implement a student-centered approach in the university. The adoption of a student-centered approach, where students are responsible for their learning and actively participate in the teaching-learning process, is indeed promising. This is consistent with the literature in this field, highlighting the need for an increased emphasis on improvements in pedagogical methods (Conn, 2014). Shifting the focus to the students and involving them in their education fosters a sense of ownership and engagement, which can lead to improved learning outcomes. These practices support a more personalized and student-centered educational experience, which can enhance both the students' engagement and the overall quality of education. The responses from interviewees and reports on the implementation of continuous assessment indicate that departments are making progress and students' performance has been increasing.

The implementation of "first-day first class" is a positive step towards improving the teaching-learning process in the university. Despite the common issues of instructors and student absenteeism, starting classes on

the first day of the academic calendar has several advantages. It enhances students' engagement right from the beginning and minimizes the waste of time. This initiative can contribute to improved performance and the overall quality of education. It is also worth mentioning the efforts of the university to make classrooms "smart." The majority of classrooms have been furnished with LCDs, whiteboards, and, to some extent, networked computers to facilitate the teaching-learning process by creating interactive and engaging learning environments.

The introduction of an e-learning platform within the university is another important aspect of the quality improvement system that aims to enhance the accessibility of learning materials and promote self-learning. The university has taken various steps, such as providing training to instructors, selecting and uploading sample courses, and establishing an e-learning team to support the effective implementation of technology-supported learning. However, several challenges hinder the effective implementation of e-learning efforts. The lack of adequate computer labs, insufficient follow-up and commitment from management, weak commitment and competence of instructors to use the platform, and weak ICT skills of students negatively impact the success of the initiatives.

5. Conclusions

Organizations need to have policies that provide direction and enable them to effectively achieve their goals. The quality management policy, in particular, offers general guidance for systematic and regular efforts to improve quality and ensure the university's assurance systems are in place. This policy serves as a framework for continuous improvement and the provision of high-quality education. Furthermore, the quality enhancement and assurance structure does not reach down to the department level where the actual teaching and learning process occurs. There is no established office or unit at the department level to coordinate, facilitate, monitor, and evaluate quality improvement practices. This lack of coordination and oversight hinders the continuous improvement of education quality. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the existing internal quality enhancement and or assurance system at the university does not significantly contribute to improving the quality of teaching and learning.

The presence of resources (such as human, material, financial, and information) plays a critical role in enhancing the quality of the teaching and learning process. These resources enable the implementation of various approaches and techniques that support quality education and its management. Above all, the involvement of stakeholders, who are the human resources, is crucial. They need to be motivated and actively engaged in the teaching and learning process to uphold quality standards. Additionally, material and other resources should be adequately provided and effectively utilized. Systematically organizing activities is essential for improving the quality of education. However, the study findings indicate that there is a lack of an effective system for rewarding individuals, and the involvement and commitment of students, instructors, and other stakeholders in the teaching and learning process are low. Furthermore, the strategies, methods, and procedures used for self-reviewing and assessing learner performance do not seem sufficient to support student learning. In conclusion, thus, the existing quality management practice seems inadequate, less effective, lacks strong coordination, and may have a weak impact on continuous improvement in student learning outcomes.

6. Recommendations

To address the identified problems and improve the quality of education, the university needs to create and implement a comprehensive internal quality management policy framework for ensuring and enhancing the quality of services. This policy framework should clearly outline the objectives, strategies, and processes for maintaining high standards of quality services across all levels. Firstly, the university needs to establish a well-defined framework for internal quality management that extends to each department. This involves creating a dedicated office/unit/team responsible for coordinating, facilitating, monitoring, and evaluating quality

management and assurance practices within each department. This will ensure that efforts to maintain quality are integrated into the daily operations of teaching and learning. Secondly, the university should prioritize the allocation of resources to support teaching and learning quality. This includes providing adequate human, material, financial, and information resources to effectively implement teaching and learning approaches. Addressing these challenges and ensuring sufficient resources, infrastructure, and support for e-learning initiatives, class size reduction, libraries, and laboratories is essential. This would contribute to creating an environment that supports effective teaching and learning, improves student access to resources, and enhances the overall quality of education.

Moreover, a system of recognition and incentives need to be put in place to acknowledge and motivate the involvement and commitment of students, instructors, and other stakeholders in the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, the university is advised to review and update its methods and procedures for curriculum development, teaching, learning, and assessment. These processes need to be designed to facilitate student learning and align with best practices in education.

On top of these, to ensure continuous quality improvement, Jimma University needs to establish a robust monitoring and evaluation system. This system should involve regular assessments and evaluations to identify areas for improvement and track the progress of quality enhancement initiatives. Besides, cultivating a new institutional culture that values quality as a core principle and actively seek to maintain it is crucial. This necessitates a shift towards a culture of shared responsibility, ownership, and cooperation among the university community in general. A system that promotes professional accountability and fosters a collective commitment to quality need to be institutionalized, ultimately elevating the quality of education provided by the university.

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Authors' Contributions

1. Desalegn Beyene Debelo: Conceptualized the project, collected, analysed, and interpreted the data served for this manuscript.

2. Mebratu Tafesse Teferi: Collected, analysed, and interpreted the data served for this manuscript.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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