



**Perspectives and Practices of Quality Assurance in Public and Private Host Universities at Work with Cross-border Higher Education Providers in Ethiopia**

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**October 2020**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

# Perspectives and Practices of Quality Assurance in Public and Private Host Universities at Work with Cross-border Higher Education Providers in Ethiopia

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A PhD dissertation submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Addis Ababa University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the International and Comparative Education.

Addis Ababa University

October 2020



## **Declaration**

I, the undersigned candidate declare that this dissertation entitled: (Perspectives and Practices of Quality Assurance in Public and Private Host Universities at Work with Cross-border Higher Education Providers in Ethiopia.) is original research I conducted under the supervision of (Professor Marianne Dovemark and Dr Mekasha Kassaye). The full or any part of this dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination in this or any other university and therefore, it is not by any means replication of a work done. Further, I declare that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references in this dissertation.

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I (we) Tefera Ayano's dissertation supervisors testify that this dissertation has been developed under my (our) supervision and I (we) approved it to be submitted to the department for evaluation as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## Abstract

Perspectives and Practices of Quality Assurance in Public and Private Host Universities at Work with Cross-border Higher Education Providers in Ethiopia.

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*This research set out with the aim of exploring perspectives on quality and practices of quality assurance, and enhancement of host institutions at Work with CBHE in Ethiopian. The research has collected essential data from internal participants who are involved in quality assurance. These participants of private and public higher education institutions intended to pinpoint some of the major problems and challenges faced and has forwarded some mitigating implications for the challenges. To meet these objectives, extensive reviews of the literature were made and as well, theoretical and conceptual frameworks were formulated. Two host university cases, one public, and one private were operating in collaboration with CBHE. The selection was based on the participants' lived experience with CBHE. An in-depth exploration of the problem was conducted through a comparative case study approach using a qualitative research design. This design was selected because it enables us to see through "a wide-and deep-angle lens" and explore the quality assurance systems in the case study universities. The research has involved, twenty-two participants from two selected host universities, (6) quality assurance officers, (6) academic staff, (4) supporting staff, and (6) students. The selection is purposely done from the two case study universities. The data were gathered through using carefully prepared interview protocols, semi-structured interviews, document reviews, and observation field notes. To complement the interviews, a review of essential documents and site-visit of host universities, particularly, resource centres were seen. Within case analysis data followed by the cross-case analysis were undertaken. Thus, The findings of the study revealed the fact that there are diverse quality conceptions among participants, both in public and private cases, and this implies that quality conceptions are not conclusive. Some of the internal university challenges, for case-1, that influence quality assurance and enhancement practices, pinpointed by the research were: lack of writing skill, plagiarism, centralized QA structure. While, for case-2, student absenteeism in tutorial sessions, a decline in reading culture, and resource constrictions are identified. Concerning the external environment, many of the participants in case-1, do not have awareness about the CBHE guideline of HERQA, whereas, in case-2, participants are aware of the guidelines. Additionally, the CBHE partner of case-2 is accredited conversely, the CBHE partner of case-1 works without accreditation. Thus, lack of awareness and doing in favour of one may affect the quality assurance practices in case-1, than case-2. Therefore, it should be implied that both case study universities revisit their academic support services, quality assurance structure, and HERQA needs to treat both private and public partner CBHE equally, in the accreditation process. Moreover, MoSHE should provide facilities and financial support to case-2.*

**Keywords:** Cross-Border Higher Education, Quality assurance, Host-universities & Quality enhancement, Quality, Contingency theory and Institutional theory.

## **Acknowledgements**

First and for most, I thank my Creator and Designer who supported me throughout my journey up to this PhD level, the end of My PhD study in International and Comparative Education is drawing near. The study has taken comparatively a prolonged time, nearly six years, reading and writing day in and day out. Hence, it is reasonable to express my deepest gratitude to a long list of professors, colleagues, friends and families who have supported my research to come to an end.

Let me begin with Dr Teshome Neketibeb (Associate Professor) and Dr Alebachew Kemisso who opened the bridge and the opportunity to my studies. Besides, I would also like to mention the unforgettable contribution of Stockholm University colleagues.

My regards also go to Professor Marianne Dovemark (PhD), my supervisor from Gothenburg University (Sweden), Department of Education and Special Education who has always been patient with me in guiding my research from the design up to its completion. Her meticulous and generous guidance has also enabled me to enrich my academic knowledge, and also, impacted my personal outlook.

I also thank Doctor Mekasha Kassaye, Addis Ababa University, and Director for Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Office, and the Center for Comparative and International Education staff who supported my research being co-supervisor. His critical comments on the first draft of my study throughout the process to completion have helped to crystallize the most important ideas of my research.

I am indebted to SIDA that sponsored me to have a study visit at Gothenburg University, and also my home institution, Dilla Univesity that sponsored me to study at AAU. Hossana College of Teacher Education (HCTE) which was my former college has offered me ample opportunities. Particularly, Dr Birhanu Mekonnen, Adugna Temesgen, Evangelist Fikadu Kebede, and Ato Lemma Gole, are among the people who unselfishly and willingly shouldered to ease the brunt of responsibilities during my studies at the very critical times

Finally, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my lovely families Mrs Belyou Fantaye my spouse, and also to my children namely, Samson, Abenezer, Amanuel, Elshadi and Rediet. Had it not been for their kind support and encouragement, I would not have made my research come to an end.

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## **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

<b>AAOU</b>	Asian Association of Open University
<b>ASQEO</b>	Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Office
<b>CBHE</b>	Cross Border Higher Education
<b>CHEA</b>	Council of Higher Education Accreditation
<b>CEIQA</b>	Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance
<b>CSIC</b>	Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas
<b>EQA</b>	External Quality Assurance
<b>EUA</b>	European University Association
<b>FDRE</b>	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
<b>GATS</b>	General Agreement on Trade in Services
<b>HERQA</b>	Higher Education Quality Assurance and Relevance Agency
<b>HEIs</b>	Higher Education Institution
<b>IAU</b>	International Association of Universities
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>IIEP</b>	Institute of International Educational Planning
<b>IGNOU</b>	Indira Gandhi National Open University
<b>IQA</b>	Internal Quality Assurance
<b>INQUAAHE</b>	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
<b>MoSHE</b>	Ministry of Science and Higher Education
<b>NAAC</b>	National Assessment and Accreditation Council
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organization
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>QAA</b>	Quality Assurance Agency
<b>SMU</b>	St. Mary University

<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Program
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
<b>UNISA</b>	University of South Africa
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organization

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# **Chapter One: Introduction**

## **1.1Background**

This introductory chapter begins with the background of the study in which the concept of CBHE, quality and quality assurance of higher education and critical, challenges are introduced beginning from its earlier form vis-à-vis the international organizations and some regions of Africa followed by a discussion of quality regulation guidelines of Ethiopia. These challenges of quality assurance in higher education in the international and national landscape are then briefly analyzed followed by the current status of CBHE guidelines and some empirical studies presented. This is again pursued by the purpose of the research and the presentation of the research problems which explores QA challenges in public and private host universities operating with CBHE. Finally, the chapter winds up by presenting a set of research questions formulated for the research and the scope of the study, limitation of the study and operational definition of terms.

### **1.1.1 Definition and Forms of Cross-Border Higher Education.**

Cross-border higher education is a term that refers to the movement of education across national jurisdictional borders. Global organizations such as UNESCO and the World Bank define cross-border education as “the movement of people, programs, providers, knowledge, projects and services across national boundaries” (Hou 2014, p.135; Knight 2008, 2011; UNESCO, 2007, p.17; World Bank, 2007).

Cross-border education is one part of the complex process of internationalization and is often used interchangeably with other terms such as transnational education (TNE), offshore and borderless education. The term Cross-Border Higher Education (CBHE) is adopted for this study for two different reasons. Firstly, it acknowledges and emphasizes the existence of borders and highlights that geographical borders have growing importance chiefly when the focus turns to the regulatory responsibilities of quality assurance and accreditation (Knight, 2005). Secondly, the Higher Education Relevance and Quality Assurance (HERQA’s) guidelines of CBHE of Ethiopia recognizes and employs this term (HERQA, 2011).

Cross-border higher education, through students and teachers' movement across borders, is not a new phenomenon. Except for some traditional forms of distance education using print media, cross-border higher education has a longer history than other forms of CBHE through the mobility of programs and branch campuses, which are relatively recent modalities (Chapman & Sakamoto; 2011; Knight, 2008; Olcott, 2009; Van der Wende & Middlehurst, 2004).

In parallel to the recent CBHE modalities, new modes of delivery and cross-border providers have appeared (OECD, 2004a, 2009, 2014a, & 2015). As the number of student population changes, so does the delivery of these services. Currently, cross-border higher education can take broadly three forms: student and/or academic mobility, program mobility and institution mobility (Knight, 2003; Naidoo, 2006). According to the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQUAAHE, 2015) cited in CHEA (2016), the prevailing trend of cross-border higher education is moving from the mobility of students and teachers to different forms of program mobility, provider mobility and more recently to the development of the education hubs (Knight, 2012). Asia and the Middle East are particular regions experiencing a boom in higher education. Among Asian countries, with the emergence of new middle classes in countries such as China and India, the demand for cross-border higher education is likely to continue rising. Concerning its purpose of the provision, cross-border education undertakes a broad range of activities, some of which are commercial in nature and some of which are not, both of which move across borders (Knight, 2003). However, with developments in information and computer technology, CBHE delivery has become more complex, thereby increasing the risk of stakeholders falling victim to low-quality provisions and qualifications of limited value.

Concerning North-South partnership research conducted by the British Council and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) employing a quantitative analysis of a survey on CBHE with 1900 respondents revealed that the majority of research, discussion, and debate on cross-border higher education has been from the providing countries' perspective. However, to find out the true impact of CBHE on receiving/host countries it is important to get their opinions and understand their views (McNamara, Knight, & Fernandez-Chung, 2013; McNamara & Knight, 2014). According to Leiber, Stensaker and Harvey (2015), the aspect of context and how it influences IQA is widely under-researched from an empirical point of view. In particular,

previous literature has not paid sufficient attention to empirical evidence on QA from universities in developing countries. Thus, a study on the host country's perspective, which is scant in the existing body of knowledge, needs investigation.

### **1.1.2 Challenges of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education.**

International guidelines and standards developed by OECD and UNESCO's (2005) joint guidelines for quality provision of cross-border higher education aimed to protect students and other stakeholders from the low-quality provision of CBHE programs and institutions. The increased mobility of CBHE creates different challenges for existing national QA and accreditation frameworks that play a critical role in the curriculum development, instruction and assessment of a course. In the first case, the national capacity for quality assurance and accreditation often fails to include CBHE in its responsibility or recognize the strange challenges posed. This, in turn, increases the risk of students falling victim to deceptive guidance and information, consequently, terminating with low-quality provision. In the second case, national systems and bodies accountable for the quality of HEIs may have limited knowledge and experience in dealing with cross-border higher education. In some cases, the challenge becomes more complicated as cross-border higher education providers may deliver qualifications that are not of comparable quality to those, which they offer in their home country. Moreover, the increasing possibility of obtaining low-quality qualification could harm the standing of professions themselves, and might, in the long run, undermine confidence in professional qualification. On the other hand, it is also important to stress that the project consortium shared the view that CBHE does not only pose challenges but also creates great opportunities for students by broadening access to higher education, addressing skills gaps, and furthering global citizenship (The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education 2015).

Since the 1980s, owing to the permutation of factors such as globalization, mass higher education and diversity in its provision, alongside a decline in public investment in higher education, and the adoption of digital technologies by promoting the provision of cross-border higher education, a significant concern for quality assurance and regulation emerged (Altbach, 2013; Mohamedbai, 2008; OECD, 2008; UNESCO, 2004). For instance, the World Bank report reveals that, compared to the rest of the world, public funding of developed countries has kept

pace with the increase in the number of higher education students. However, Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world that experienced a budget decline in the volume of current public expenditure per student at the tertiary level (30% over the last 15 years). Per unit, costs varied from US\$6800 in 1980 to US\$1200 in 2002 and US\$2000 in 2006, in the context of rapidly rising enrollments (World Bank, 2009).

Additionally, concerning rising enrolments, the previously unquestioned quality of universities when serving a small number of the elite was interrogated. Enrolment expansion represents one of the many new pressures that raised quality issues in both advanced and developing countries (Salmi, 2002). Mainly, in developing countries governments often cannot satisfy the social demand for higher education to keep pace with continuous economic development, modernization and demographic pressure fueling the demand for inexorable expansion of higher education. In the same vein, Bashir (2007) and Maitra (2007), point out that neither local institutions nor governments will have enough resources to deal with the mass expansion of students in many countries, leaving unmet demand, with its concomitant social resentments and tensions. For example, projections of enrolment of students based upon twenty-five selected countries, conducted by IDP Education Australia estimates that the number of international students seeking HE in or from a foreign country has reached 1.4 million in 2010 and expected to rise to 3.1 million in 2025 (Blight, 1995). On the same issue OECD and UNESCO forecast, the demand for international education to increase from 1.8 million international students in 2000 to 7.2 million international students in 2025 (OECD, 2007; UNESCO, 2007). Continuously escalating enrolment of students presents enormous challenges as well as opportunities. Among the challenges in the local context is the need to meet the increase in demand for accessing higher education by encouraging private for-profit higher education providers (Lewis, 2009). The opening up of the higher education landscape to private and cross-border providers including a spread of unrecognized, fly-by-night and rogue local and cross-border providers driven by commercial interests at the expense of maintaining quality and integrity of academic offerings aggravated the challenge (Helms, 2008). Concerning commercial provision, Njuguna and Itegi (2013) argued that cross-border higher education has risks of misinformation, low-quality provision and questionable qualification. More cases were being reported of questionable

providers who collect fees but are unreachable when students find out that they have been deceived. Thus, the issue of learner protection was needed and governments have been pressurized to take steps to protect the public (Stella, 2006).

Besides, QA has also gained attention in developing countries, this attention is motivated by the challenges universities face, many of which link to changes in the HE market globally, to which these institutions have to adjust (Lim, 2001; Matiru, 2007). In the developed world, the trend of CBHE has been accompanied by the emergence of transnational providers on the higher education market and the lobbying of some developed nations to include higher education under the World Trade Organization's (WTO), General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) arrangements, a development that implies liberalization of the higher education systems. Concerning opportunities CBHE aids in local skill development, in increasing access to the higher education system, and while students acquire foreign qualifications at home this opportunity contributes to reducing the likelihood of brain drain (Garwe, 2015).

### **1.1.3 Purposes of Quality Assurance.**

The literature categorizes quality assurance systems based on their fundamental purpose concomitant to the purpose of quality assurance. Nair, Webster, and Metrova, (2010) define quality assurance under two broad headings. On the one hand, quality assurance (QA) has a managerial focus and stresses fitness for purpose and accountability. In line with this, it is argued that many of the trends in higher education quality assurance have been management-driven, underpinned by a desire to develop a range of mechanisms of control Nair et.al (2010).

Quality enhancement, on the other hand, which is collegial, is concerned with the purpose of academic dialogue, self and peer reflection, an enhancement not necessarily linked to managerial targets but a deeper quality of knowledge or processes. Hodson and Thomas (2003) further elaborate the distinction between quality assurance and quality enhancement as the former is retrospective and stresses compliance and accountability which contrasts with the latter one which is prospective and involves continually striving for improvement in teaching and learning. One approach that of Martin and Stella (2007), distinguishes three discrete objectives of quality assurance that shape QA frameworks, namely quality control, accountability and improvement.

Accreditation is a process designed to determine whether or not an educational program has met or exceeded the published standards of the accreditation agency, whereas the purpose of internal quality assurance is to develop a quality culture within an institution and to implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality. Internal quality assurance is thus a route to accreditation.

In Africa, CBHE dates back to the age before the colonial period of the African continent (Njuguna & Itegi, 2013). Traditional institutions like the University of Timbuktu located in ancient Mali during the 12th century, Karawiyyinn of Morocco in 859 AD, and Al-Azhar in Cairo Egypt in 970 AD, served as education hubs of their time and run scholarly activities (Njuguna & Itegi, 2013). However, the arrival of the colonial regime made those home-grown institutions history by replacing them with modern western higher institutions. In this region, the majority of quality assurance (QA) agencies were established after the 1990s. By 2012, about 21 African countries had established QA agencies, and a dozen other countries were moving in this direction (Shabaniet et. al., 2014). Owing to QA agencies are in their infancy, financial scarcity, and trained human resources, assuring the quality of CBHE was challenging compared to developed countries.

As part of this movement, the government of Ethiopia has embarked on prioritizing quality concerns at all levels of education and the higher education proclamation took steps and established Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA). Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency as an autonomous agency was established through the Higher Education Proclamation (HEP351/2003).

#### **1.1.4 Status of CBHE in Ethiopia.**

According to (Tesfaye, 2015, p.55) Foreign higher education institutions (FHEI) working in Ethiopia need to meet some requirements:

- (1) FHEI should offer programs that have been properly accredited by an accreditation authority in its country of origin, (2) A local partner that seeks to operate in a collaborative arrangement with a FHEI shall be required to seek accreditation from

HERQA, and (3) the accreditation permit to operate as a FHEI shall be renewable, subject to review, within a given period depending on the levels of programs.

Moreover, intending to meet the needs of its stakeholders, HERQA has taken the initiative and developed guidelines for the accreditation and quality assurance of cross-border higher education in Ethiopia (HERQA, 2011, 2012). This legal framework entitled: “The Guidelines for the Accreditation of Cross-border Higher Education in Ethiopia” outlines the need and conditions for quality assurance and accreditation of cross-border providers (HERQA, 2011, p.1). Based on this CBHE guideline which has given the agency to play the role of collecting and disseminating information about the status, standards, and programs of study offered by foreign institutions HERQA was expected to take practical measures (HEP, Article 89.13). Linked to this issue, Wondosen (2015) argued that the guideline requires, foreign institutions must subscribe to some conditions before they operate within Ethiopia. This, among other things, includes the condition that their programs must be accredited in their country of origin; and they must subscribe to the severities of the quality assurance schemes laid down by the Agency.

According to (HERQA, 2007) one of the quality indicators for a HEI is its ability to link itself with the international community, particularly with world-renowned academia. Such linkages enable the HEIs’ academic staff to share their research outputs to the national and global community as well as learn from them. However, HERQA’s audit report revealed that “Sixty-two % of Public university HEIs and Seventy-two % of Private HEIs in Ethiopia did not have any national and international link at the time of the audit” Tesfaye (2015, p.73). Conclusively, the drawback reported about both public and private HEIs shows that the lack of link with regard to private/public HEIs with CBHE (foreign institutions) highlights a gap and is worthy of further investigation.

Contextually, the frame for this exploration is set by two hosting higher education systems in Ethiopia. For this reason, quality assurance systems of two institutions (case-1 and case-2) that operates with cross-border universities FH-Mainz and IGNOU respectively were explored using the comparative design (Bryman, 2012).

Conventional universities still predominate but face challenging increases in volume, innovation, and influence from commercial providers and from corporate universities OBHE (2004a). This comparative case study is thus oriented towards exploring conceptualizations of participants about quality, challenges internal and external university environments encountered linked to QA and enhancement practices followed by the analysis of similarities and differences. Experiences gained in this way could be taken as a benchmark and may be scaled up eventually to cascade throughout the organizations and into other organizations as well potentially having a transformative effect on the societal level.

### **1.1.5 Previous Research in the Ethiopian Context.**

As far as Ethiopia is concerned, existing studies on the issue of quality in education have focused on those domestic universities, examining issues related to the concepts of quality (Rayner, 2006), and methods and procedures of carrying out the quality evaluation (Abeya,2014; Adamu, 2012; Melaku, 2008; Weldemariam, 2008). Adamu's research (2012) discusses the current trends of quality assurance procedures and practices in higher education in Ethiopia. The researcher collected data through document review from Bahirdar University, which is one of the public universities in Ethiopia. Adamu's research has employed a document review that generates data from different reports, manuals, procedures, case studies, and working papers. The result of this research revealed that both accreditations of program and institution, including institutional audit are the emerging principal types of quality assurance in Ethiopia. However, there is an inclination to accreditation of program and institution in private universities, whereas institutional audit was a common quality assurance practice in both public and private higher education institutions (HEIs).

The main purpose of Adamu's study (2012) was to explore the practice of higher education quality audits in Ethiopia, and the problems being encountered in the course of action. Specifically, his study attempted to examine the employed methods and procedures used by the Ethiopian Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency, HERQA. In assessing the quality of public higher education institutions, HERQA used a qualitative research method. In the study, both documentary analysis and interviews were conducted and the findings of the study, in general, showed that the methods and procedures used to assess the quality of higher education

by external experts were in line with the general model of higher education quality assessment. Whereas, institutional quality audits were conducted based on the institutions' self-evaluation reports. Thus, quality assurance of public and private HEIs operating with CBHE was not included in Adamu's study.

Other relevant researches were also conducted on: The Organization and Practices of Education, Quality Assurance in Undergraduate Programs (Mulu, 2012; Regassa et al., 2013; Seyoum, 2011), and Stakeholders' Perceptions of Service Quality Improvement (Solomon, 2012). Solomon's study aimed at, exploring stakeholders' perceptions, regarding the service quality improvement initiatives of public higher education institutions in Ethiopia. The researcher employed a mixed research method to collect data from academic staff and students. Briefly, the research findings indicate that both academic staff and students perceptions were poor in line with all dimensions of the service-quality improvement initiatives. The contributing factors highlighted by the study include the high expectations of the stakeholders, the government's intention to expand higher institutions, lack of adequate knowledge, regarding the implementation of the business process re-engineering (BPR), the lack of motivation by service providers, poor management, the lack of good governance by the universities, and the presence of not well-organized universities operating in Ethiopia. On the other hand, Mulu's study critically examines quality and quality assurance in the Ethiopian higher education context. The study explores both the internal and external university environmental factors; those either facilitate or hinder quality assurance practices for the improvement of student learning. In this study, terms and concepts like quality and its assurance, quality assurance models and their underlying assumption were the core of the study. Additionally, institutional and contingency theories were used to explain how internal and external environmental factors influence existing QA and enhancement practices. Mixed-methods were applied based on pragmatism. Mulu's research finding shows that the major challenge for the adoption and enactment of internal quality assurance at universities are not the result of a shortage of laws, policies and structures, but rather, lack of professional capacities, integrity and commitment. Thus, the human element is the major challenge of universities. This reveals the fact that introducing laws and regulatory

bodies are necessary, but not sufficient enough to deliver quality assurance practices in universities, without a supportive environmental context (Mulu, 2012).

Melese (2014) studied the role of cross-border distance education institutions that provides access to quality postgraduate education in Ethiopia, using IGNOU as a case study. The purpose of the study was to explore the policy gap between conventional and distance education linked to international postgraduate distance education. The study employed interviews and documents, as instruments of data collection followed by three quality indicators, such as coherence, efficiency, and the impact of distance education. Melese (2014) focused on access to the quality of postgraduate CBHE programs in Ethiopia, however, quality issues were not touched in the study. Hence, based on the gaps identified, the domestic research reviewed so far could be argued that there is a knowledge gap about current trends of host universities working with CBHE, concerning their status of quality assurance, and this gives an impetus to carry out this study which is timely and important.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Contemporary researches conducted on quality assurance in Ethiopia by (Adamu, 2012; Mulu, 2012; Solomon, 2012) were similar in their focus on public higher education institutions at the undergraduate level. The conceptualization of quality and challenges of quality assurance linked to CBHE was not studied by the above-mentioned researches. Differently, Melese (2014) focused on access to the quality of a post-graduate CBHE program (IGNOU) that operates in collaboration with Saint Mary's University in Addis Ababa. However, a comparative study of public vis-à-vis private university at work with CBHE is the concern of this research, for it lacks full coverage in those previous researches.

Currently, Ethiopia needs MBA programs that could be responsible to train high-quality entrepreneurs in order to fill the unemployment gap. According to Habtamu's (2015) research, only 19% of Ethiopian entrepreneurs believe that they have the right skills to start new firms. Thus, to fill these skill gaps in entrepreneurship, the country looks at its universities, technical and vocational institutions, to graduate students with well-equipped skills and competencies that can help them establish their own business. Hence, it is this initiative that has influenced this

research to focus on the quality assurance of host institutions working with CBHE on MBA programs. Because of these issues of unemployment, lack of good governance, and their management, has become serious challenges in Ethiopia.

Concerning the regulation of the quality of HEIs, the Ethiopian government policy environment has been emphasizing that higher education institutions should focus on assuring the quality of education and training programs aligned with the policy. In response to this quality problem, the Higher Education Proclamation 650/2009, article 22 directs, HEIs to establish an internal quality assurance system. Accordingly, a strategy, to implement this policy the development of growth and transformation plans (GTP II) was developed and implemented from 2016 to 2020, which aspires to make Ethiopia a middle-income country by 2025. Both the public and private higher institutions, including their partner CBHIs, together with host universities are expected to ensure quality education, as well, to contribute knowledge and technology transfer to Ethiopian HEIs. However, HERQA's assessment report of the first growth and transformation plan (GTP-I), carried out in 2012 shows that the assessment was limited to the public and private universities alone, excluding the CBHE providers (Tesfaye, 2015).

This issue of quality has not been the concern of only researchers and HERQA, but also of some media that have big audiences. For instance, the Amharic newspaper named Reporter has reported several cases. In this regard, for example, HERQA's report following a surprise visit to oversee some selected private HEIs revealed that out of 167 visited private higher institutions, the agency took corrective measures against 15 private higher institutions in April 2019. The agency took measures ordering the closure of campuses and educational facilities. As well, warning letters were given for those who do not fulfil the regulatory requirements that undermine the quality of education (Reporter Media and Communication Centre, 2019).

Finally, based on (Johnson and Christensen, 2017, p.203) that argued “researchers would have built on, or extended the original research in some way, thus improving the research literature.” Hence, this research has focused on exploring host universities at work with CBHE providers, aimed at extending knowledge, concerning the conceptualization of quality and challenges related to internal and external university environments.

### **1.3 The objectives of the Study**

The main purpose of this research is to explore perspectives of participants' understanding of quality and challenges influencing quality assurance and enhancement practices of the host universities of IGNOU and FH-Mainz CBHEIs.

As specific objectives, the research set out to:

1. Explore the conceptualization of participants (students, academic & management-staff) regarding quality in hosting institutions,
2. Explore the conceptualization of the main internal factors that influence quality assurance practices in the two hosting institutions;
3. Explore the conceptualization of how the institutional environment influences quality assurance and enhancement practices in the host institutions under consideration.
4. Draw lessons linked to perceived contributions of CBHE to hosting universities.
5. Analyze the similarities and differences between the two case hosting institutions.

To achieve these objectives, the following research questions are formulated.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. How do participants (students, academic and management staff) conceptualize quality in hosting institutions?
2. What are the challenges of the internal university environments that affect QA and enhancement according to the different participants?  
  
- How do these challenges of host institutions influence quality enhancement practices according to the different participants?
3. How does the institutional environment of hosting universities influence quality and QA practices according to the different participants?
4. How does CBHE contribute to hosting institutions according to the different participants?
5. How are the two cases different and similar in line with the aforementioned research questions?

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Nowadays, the status of QA of higher education in general, and the cross-border higher institutions in particular, within the context of teaching activities and learning processes is a question that is widely discussed among policymakers, planners, and stakeholders. This question is particularly pressing considering future invitations of cross-border universities in scaling up initiatives in cross-border education. The findings of this study are expected to provide an insight that can inform policy decisions, including policy alternatives, at the Ministry of Science and Higher Education in Ethiopia and the case universities. As a result, case universities could develop relevant QA systems that include CBHE in the implementation of educational policy, plan and initiatives. In addition, the study is significant, because it will provide explicit information about current conceptualizations of quality in higher education and the constraints faced in implementing appropriate QA mechanisms in host universities at work with cross-border higher institutions in particular. This will enable practitioners, as well as decision-makers to offer timely feedback to bring about relevant changes in the quality of institutions under investigation. Furthermore, this study will be a good source to contribute to the literature by providing up to date knowledge about challenges that emerge within the hosting institutions. Finally, it will serve as a springboard for further researches that are carried out in-depth in the future.

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The study is conducted within the field of Comparative and International Education. Covering comparative entities around each and every corner is beyond the scope of this study. However, the study attempts to gain a comparative perspective on conceptualizations of quality and the challenges of both the internal and external environments of host institutions. The local public and private institutions are hosting institutions of the two CBHE providers.

The study covers twenty-two sample sizes of participants drawn from MBA students, academic staff, library heads, registrar officers, and the management (different level university representatives). Particularly, higher officials of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and participants from home universities abroad are not involved in the study, because of limited

finance and time constraints. The research design is also limited to a qualitative comparative case study of the host institution for the same reason noted above. In terms of instruments of data collection, an attempt was made to include the main qualitative data collection instruments, such as semi-structured interviews, observations and document reviews. In this study, a comparison of the two host universities operating in collaboration with CBHE was selected, because the focus was on exploring data in-depth rather than in breadth.

### **1.7 Limitation of the study**

As it is common to qualitative research designs, the main limitation of the research is that the findings are not generalizable to all higher education institutions. In this research, the findings of the study are restricted to the public and private case study host universities. Another limitation of the study is the lack of prior research studies on CBHE that could have analyzed the data gathered from the case study universities more profound. Nonetheless, the researchers and the informants' rich experience in the higher education sector were made to fill the information gap. The shortage of the research fund has also enforced the researcher to limit the case study to the host universities rather than extending the study to home institutions of CBHE. Thus, the research was limited to the two case universities, and pertinent data was collected through interviews, document reviews, and observations. Some participants were not willing to be voice recorded with electronic media during the interview session. Consequently, the interview data of participants who refused the voice-recording were collected through field notes to replace the electronic media. Subsequently, there could be an information gap due to a lack of data, collected in their voices during the event. Hence, this event could be the reason for the data decline.

### **1.8 Definition of Key Terms**

Some terms that have been employed in this research are operationally defined to make clear the contextual meaning they have in this research as follows:

**Accreditation:** refers to the processes by which the national Higher education quality and relevance agency (HERQA) gives a permit to CBHE working in collaboration with host institutions in Ethiopia.

**Quality:** is a set of characteristics of services that meet or exceed the minimum standard set by HERQA (HERQA, 2011).

**Quality Assurance:** In the context of this study, it is viewed as a collective process by which HEIs including cross-border providers ensure the quality of the educational process is maintained to the standards set by HERQA (for the purpose of the assessment of EQA) and/or set by institutions themselves for IQA (HERQA, 2011).

**Cross-Border Education:** Refers to the movement of education courses/programs across national geographical border provided by an external institution particularly IGNOU and FH Mainz foreign institutions working in partnership with a local host institution.

**Internal Quality Assurance and enhancement:** in the context of the study it refers to the University's or program's policies and mechanisms for ensuring that it is fulfilling its own purposes as well as the standards that apply to higher education in general (IIEP, 2006).

**Quality assurance and enhancement Practices:** Accreditation of HERQA and other activities related to student support services that contribute to assuring quality within IQA structures.

**Institution:** refers to the regulatory structures, government agencies, rules, laws and professions, which are considered as mechanisms of environmental control over organizations (Oliver, 1997).

**Host institution:** refers to the institution located in the receiving country that operates with the CBHE University.

**Home institution:** refers to the institution located in the sending country.

**Student support service:** academic services such as academic advising or tutorial services provided to MBA students while attending their regular or distance courses.

**Organizational structure:** refers to the quality assurance unit and its branches operating in Host University.

**Organizational Capacity:** refers to academic, management and material resources used in the host institution.

## **Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses an overview of works of literature related to the study that has been reviewed from a range of sources. At first, the paper presents a glimpse at concepts of cross-border higher education and quality assurance. Then, external quality assurance, accreditation and internal quality assurance were highlighted. An attempt was made to widely discuss factors that influence internal quality assurance practices. Finally, the contexts of internal quality assurance practices of typical cross-border universities are reviewed from a comparative dimension. The review ends up with a discussion on quality assurance and higher education context in Ethiopia. Below is a detailed presentation of what shed light on these and related thematic areas.

### **2.2 The Concept of Cross-Border Higher Education and Quality Assurance**

In this section overview of Cross-border higher education was reviewed regarding the diversity of the CBHE provisions based on experiences of different countries. Following the CBHE review, quality assurance practices of five modalities of provisions are also treated.

#### **2.2.1 Cross-Border Higher Education.**

With regard to the historical development of universities in Europe, Altbach and Knight (2007, p.302) noted that “universities have been international institutions from their medieval European origins, attracting students and faculty from many countries. Subsequent to the rise of nationalism and the nation-state after the Protestant Reformation academia focused inward.” In Africa, CBHE dates back to the age before the colonial period of the African continent (Njuguna & Itegi, 2013). Traditional institutions like the University of Timbuktu located in ancient Mali during the 12th century, Karawiyyinn of Morocco in 859 AD, and Al-Azhar in Cairo Egypt in 970 AD, served as education hubs of their time and run scholarly activities (Njuguna & Itegi,

2013). However, the arrival of the colonial regime made those home-grown institutions history by replacing them with modern western higher institutions.

Cross-border education is one part of the complex process of internationalization and is a term that refers to the movement of education across national jurisdictional borders. Cross border is often used interchangeably with other terms such as transnational education (TNE), offshore and borderless education (Healey, 2015). Many universities in so-called developed countries run branch campuses abroad and have students who perused learning in different modalities such as face-to-face, blended and e-learning in countries that are different from the country of the academic institution. This approach of internationalization in higher education is referred to as transnational education (Allport, 2002; Good fellow, Lea, González, & Mason, 2001). Transnational education includes not only the provision of educational programs and services that transcend national borders but also the policies and scholarship that have links to these provisions.

The term Cross-Border Higher Education (CBHE) opted for this study; firstly, for it acknowledges and emphasizes the existence of borders and geographical borders have a growing importance when the focus turns to regulatory responsibilities of quality assurance and accreditation (Knight, 2005). Secondly, the Higher Education Relevance and Quality Assurance (HERQA's) guideline of CBHE of Ethiopia recognizes and employs this term (HERQA, 2011). Supranational organizations such as UNESCO and the World Bank as well as some scholars, attempt to define the concept of cross-border higher education. According to them, cross-border higher education is the movement of people, programs, providers, knowledge, projects and services across national boundaries (Daniel, Kanwar & Uvalic-Trubic, 2009; Knight, 2008; UNESCO, 2007; World Bank, 2007). Cross-border higher education may include higher education by public/private and not-for-profit/for-profit providers (UNESCO, 2005). In parallel, new delivery modes and cross-border providers have appeared (OECD, 2004a, 2009, 2014b, 2015). As to its mode of delivery, the different modes through which cross-border programs are provided is specified to be face to face, distance or a combination of these modes a wide range of modalities, in a continuum from face-to-face taking various forms such as students travelling

abroad and campuses abroad to distance learning using a range of technologies that include e-learning (Council of Europe, 2013; IAU, 2005; UNESCO, 2005).

One of the growing roles of higher education institutions is to internationalize and integrate an international/intercultural dimension into the three pillars of university objectives: teaching, research, and community service in order to enhance their academic excellence and the relevance of their contribution to societies. Higher education institutions have long experience in this area and are rapidly growing their cooperation with their counterparts around the world. The second trend is the growth of market-driven activities, fuelled by increased demand for higher education worldwide, for instance, institutionalists have documented how worldwide tertiary education enrolment grew incredible by 2000% between 1900 and 2000, and continue to swell to extraordinary levels (Schofer and Meyer, 2005). The third tendency in declining public funding in many national contexts, the diversification of higher education providers, and new methods of delivery enhanced the fast growth of CBHE (IAU, 2005).

Additionally, multiple and bilateral partnerships among countries of the world which used to be the trend before the 1990s diversified its options into varied mechanisms of advancing cross-border higher education following the arena of globalization which paved the way widely than ever before. Jean, Avoseh, and Griswold (2016) argue that transnational higher education programs exist and play a role associated with perspectives, which can be philosophical, pedagogical, and delivery mode oriented. The philosophical oriented perspectives are concerned with theories, concepts, methods, approaches, and models of transnational education and pedagogical perspectives cover issues related to curriculum and instructional practices in transnational higher education. Whereas, perspectives with the mode of delivery discuss aspects or cases of the mode of delivery in transnational higher education related to specific countries. Thus, the quality aspect of transnational higher education is an unexploited area that needs further exploration.

Longitudinal research in the U.S.A. discloses that the contrast between the beginning of the 20th century, and the end is striking. In line with this (Schofer & Meyer, 2005, p. 3) discuss: "In 1900, less than 1% of the world's population was enrolled in higher education, after a century in 2000,

about 20% of the world population was enrolled.” Thus, in countries like the U.S., enrolment rates are now above 60% of the relevant age cohort, so that one can reasonably speak of “mass” higher education. The largest host countries of CBHE are the United Arab Emirates (UAE), China, Singapore, and Qatar, whereas the largest source countries are the United States of America (U.S.A.), Australia, and the United Kingdom (UK) (Becker, 2009). In Asia, “China built almost 1000 new HEIs from 2000 to 2010, and India will establish 1000 new universities in the next 10 years. Many of these institutions seek quality, western-trained scholars to teach and conduct research” (Levin, 2010, p.845).

The policy framework that guides cross-border education has gradually shifted from a development cooperation framework to a partnership model, and now to a commercial and competitiveness model (INQUAAHE, 2015 cited in CHEA, 2016). Regarding provision modality, the academic mobility has proceeded from people (students, faculty, and scholars) to program (twinning, franchise, virtual, joint venture) and provider (branch campus) mobility, and now to the level of education hubs (Knight, 2012). With regard to those countries that serve as higher education hubs, it has been noted that “as of 2012, there are six countries around the world that are earnestly worked to position themselves as education hubs and two of them are situated in the Gulf region (the United Arab Emirates and Qatar), three in Asia (Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore), and one in Africa (Botswana)” (Knight, 2011a, p. 14). In terms of categories, cross-border education can take three forms such as student/ academic mobility, program mobility and institution mobility (Knight, 2003; Naidoo, 2006). Program mobility is the second most common form of cross-border higher education next to cross-border student mobility (OECD, 2009).

### **2.2.2 New Modes and Models of Delivery.**

Cross-border mobility of programs is the movement of individual education courses and programs across national borders through face-to-face or distance learning models or a combination of both models of delivery. In the 1980s, many developed countries reduced funds for higher education to alleviate economic pressure. Therefore, universities collaborated with foreign colleges by providing paid courses to survive (Yang, 2006). These major delivering

modes are noted below as Franchise, Twinning, and Double/Joint Degree, Articulation, and Branch campus.

### ***2.2.2.1 Franchise.***

A franchise is the first arrangement whereby a provider in source Country 'A' empowers a provider in Country 'B' to deliver its course/program/service in Country "B" or other countries. The provider in Country "B" awards the qualification to students in Country 'A'. Arrangements for teaching, management, assessment, profit-sharing, awarding of credit/qualification, and so on are customized for each franchise arrangement and must conform to national regulations in Country "B". Franchising is a form of transnational modality through which a higher education institution from a provider country approves a hosting provider in another country to offer academic programs and services to learners in the host country. The degrees or diplomas bear the seal and signatures of the provider institution (Jean, Avoseh, & Griswold, 2016). The provider in this modality accredits learners far from its involvement based on trust in host-country professionals. Hence, the question is what makes these awards different from home universities' awards. However, many foreign providers offer their programs under a franchise agreement, where the accountability of the local HEI varies from providing the facilities to joining in curriculum design, teaching, quality control, and assessment and certification (International Institute for Educational Planning, 2007).

### ***2.2.2.2 Twinning.***

The second arrangement or a modality where a provider in source Country "A" collaborates with a provider located in Country "B" to develop a delivery system that invites students to take course credits in Country "B" and/or source Country "A". Only one qualification bestowed by provider in source Country "A". Arrangements for twinning programs and awarding of a degree usually conform to national regulations of the provider country "A" Knight (2007).

### ***2.2.2.3 Double/Joint Degree.***

A Joint (double) degree refers to an arrangement whereby providers in different countries work together to offer a program for which students receive qualifications from both providers or a joint award from the collaborating partners. Provisions for program delivery and criteria for awarding the qualifications are adapted for each collaborative initiative by national regulations in each country. For many academics and policymakers, double degree programs are received as a natural extension of exchange and mobility programs. For others, they are perceived as a difficult development leading to double counting of academic work and the thin edge of academic deception. There is a broad range of responses due to several different motives such as the diversity of program models and the uncertainty related to quality assurance and qualifications (Knight, 2011c). Generally, the joint degree is a single diploma issued by two or more institutions offering an integrated study program. The single diploma (Bachelor, Master, and Doctoral) is signed by the presidents of all participating universities and recognized as a substitute for the national diplomas.

### ***2.2.2.4 Articulation.***

Various types of articulation arrangements between providers situated in different countries permit students to gain credit for courses/ programs offered by all of the collaborating providers. This arrangement allows students to receive credit for work done with a provider other than the provider awarding the qualification.

### ***2.2.2.5 Branch campus.***

Provider in Country “A” establishes a satellite campus in Country “B” to deliver courses and programs to students in Country “B” (may also include Country “A” students taking semester/courses abroad). The qualification awarded is from a provider in Country ‘A’.

## **2.2.3 Challenges and Opportunities of CBHE.**

While the quality of universities was unquestionable when they were serving the small elite, institutions in today’s massified higher education systems are under tremendous pressure to

change and adapt. Due to the change in policy, CHEA (2016, p.24) has recommended that “institutions need to find means to ensure that everyone has access to higher education, not just the elite”. However, access and quality have to be hand in a glove, this is for the reason that, the domination of one at the expense of the other may lead to crisis. The key challenge faced by quality assurance and accreditation systems is to develop appropriate procedures and systems to cover foreign providers and programs (in addition to national providers and programs) to maximize the benefits and limit the potential drawbacks of the internationalization of higher education (OECD, 2004b, 2008,). The increased cross-border mobility of students, academic staff, professionals, programs and providers brought about challenges for existing national quality assurance and accreditation frameworks and bodies as well as for the systems for recognizing foreign qualifications.

The national capacity for quality assurance and accreditation often failed to cover cross-border higher education. Furthermore, the pressure on higher education systems to provide access can be expected to increase massively in the years to come due to the catching-up of developing countries, in particular in Asia and Africa (Bloom, Canning, and Chan, 2005).

According to Kosmutzky and Putty (2016)cited in QinandAlice(2016) a systematic literature review on transnational, offshore, cross-border, and borderless education captured 640 journal articles covering the years 2004–2014 in the western research community. This research is an indicator of the maturity of the thematic field in the west. On top of providing a descriptive analysis of the literature, it provides a review of the most recognized work in this thematic area. However, one of the limitations of the review of the western perspective is the lack of reviewing journals with Asian language. For instance, a deficit of the review is that journal articles published in Chinese were usually omitted due to the language barrier.

Regarding study on CBHE impacts on the host country to date, a major survey study was undertaken and analyzed over 1,900 respondents, by the British Council and DAAD revealed that the majority of research, discussion and debate on cross-border higher education have been from the sending country perspective. However, to find out the true impact of CBHE on receiving/host countries it is important to get their opinions and understand their views

(McNamara and Knight, 2014). Thus, the study on host countries perspective, which is scant, needs investigation. CBHE is a collaboration or partnership program between two independent HEIs in sovereign countries, therefore, terms such as sending and receiving used in literature would need revision.

In line with beneficiaries of CBHE research suggests that the majority of the learners in borderless education are not the typical 18 to 21 year-olds who have just completed secondary education and are entering higher education (Cunningham et al., 2000). The most significant group of learners likely to be accessing borderless education through technology are those who are currently employed and are wishing to re-train to enter another profession or to gain further qualifications within their area of expertise. On the same issue, Knight (2003), for instance, noted the merits of program mobility as the program attracted students for the potential benefits it has on the part of receiving countries and, these benefits include: increased access to higher education and continuing education, greater diversity in the program, less brain drain of brighter students to foreign institutions and exposure to foreign teaching and educational management system. In line with merits scholars from China point out that cross-border education comes with various additional benefits including international security, maintenance of economic competitiveness, nurturing understanding across nations, the spread of technology, promotion of knowledge economies, and creation of regional network (Njuguna and Itegi, 2013).

Fang (2012), another scholar from China, pointed out the contribution and divided the impacts of transnational higher education into national, institutional, and student levels. At the national level, Transnational Educational Institutions (TEIs) may promote the receiving countries of CBHE programs to stop the brain drain and currency loss, develop human capital, produce income, promote the reputation of domestic institutions, and form strategic coalitions with the sending countries (Garrett & Verbik, 2004; Gu, 2007; Huang, 2003, 2007; Knight, 2003, 2006; Marginson & McBurnie, 2004; R. Yang, 2006; Zhang, 2003). For students, cross-border programs offer the possibility of obtaining foreign qualification at a relatively reduced cost, compared with travelling overseas. In the host country, fees are usually lower than for the same program offered in the foreign institution's home country and living expenses are also lower. Jean, Avosehand Griswold (2016) contend that in CBHE programs, the immigration policies do

not apply to the student, what matters are the academic and the financial requirements only. Therefore, lack of permission for entrance and temporary residence into the national border of country “A” cannot prevent the student from country “B” from earning a degree from an institution located in country “A”. For mature students, studying in their own country means remaining attached to one's family and continue to work while studying part-time. Concerning source countries, CBHE is attractive to sending countries as it provides opportunities for increased market expansion, and for raising their international profile (McBurnie and Ziguras, 2001).

In the African context adequate mentoring and supervision systems are required at masters and doctoral levels to improve the quality of research Moses and Eva (2015). These systems are developed through mentoring and tutoring of the junior faculty by the experienced senior staff. Some regions have their experts to provide mentorship and supervision services whereas other regions can tap into this service through the opportunities presented by cross border education. Regarding the issue of mode of delivery and its contribution, OECD reported that “Cross-border education and the diversification of teaching and learning modes may contribute to the improvement and innovations in higher education systems” (OECD, 2004, p.2). On the contrary, Knight (2007) pointed out that the potential risks accompanied by program mobility as an increase in low quality or rogue provider, unsustainable cross-border of higher education, if profit margins are low and foreign qualifications that are not relevant to the domestic employers. The establishment of quality assurance systems has become a necessity, not only for regulating quality in higher education delivered within the country but also for engaging in the delivery of higher education internationally. However, existing national quality assurance capacity often focuses exclusively on domestic delivery by domestic institutions (OECD, 2015).

#### ***2.2.3.1 Challenges to Quality Assurance in CBHE.***

The term challenge refers to all those constraints that harmed the overall process of undertaking quality assurance. (OECD, 2005, p.11), argues that the increased mobility of CBHE programs and institutions create challenges for existing national QA and accreditation frameworks. These challenges are:

In the first case, the national capacity for quality assurance and accreditation often fails to include cross-border higher education. This condition, in turn, increases the risk of students falling victim to misleading guidance and misinformation, consequently, terminating with low-quality provision. Secondly, national systems and bodies responsible for the quality of HEIs may have limited knowledge and experience in dealing with cross-border higher education. In some cases, the challenge becomes more complicated as cross-border higher education providers may deliver qualifications that are not of comparable quality to those which they offer in their home country. Finally, the increasing possibility of obtaining low-quality qualification could harm the professions themselves, and might, in the long run, undermine confidence in professional qualification.

On the other hand, it is also important to stress that the project consortium shared the view that CBHE does not only pose challenges but also create great opportunities for our societies, such as widening access to higher education, addressing skills gaps, and furthering global citizenship (The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, 2015). Jean, Avosehand Griswold (2016) pointed out one key contribution CBHE programs may have purposes to train graduates who will have transcultural knowledge and skills that can contribute and work on issues at the local, regional, national or transnational levels. In addition, the researchers assume positions with a capacity to lead local, regional, national, international or transnational organizations; or critically study, and analyses CBHE programs to contribute scholarly outputs(i.e. theories, research, and critiques) about such programs. Though the challenge seems to outweigh the benefits obtained from CBHE, the issue of CBHE demands further investigation.

There are several different viewpoints pro and against the contribution of CBHE. First, some support public policies that foster internationalization in higher education and they defend cross-border education in all forms of academic, cultural, social and political grounds. Second, academics who support the view that education should not be treated as a tradable commodity, argue that cross-border education would always have a revenue-generation approach that would be to the disadvantage of the developing countries. Third, there are trade enthusiasts who are convinced that commercialization of higher education at the global level is unavoidable soon and it is up to the countries to prepare themselves to benefit from the new opportunities of the global market. Fourth, some suggest that the implications of CBHE would not be serious shortly, due to the low volume of program or institution mobility. Despite their different positions, there is a

consensus linked to the interest of stakeholders should be protected and that quality assurance frameworks have to pay attention to the quality of CBHE (Stella, 2006).

According to the study findings by (Carroll & woodhouse,2006; Stella & Liston,2008) the critical challenges for CBHE provision of higher education by Australian universities working with non-university partners include: ensuring correspondence in academic standards and student outcomes; ensuring comparability in student learning; ensuring adequate pastoral care and academic skills support; limited facilities, especially the library and social facilities; often limited opportunities for students to develop their English language proficiency; and regulatory compliance. Other issues include the lack of strong scholarly cultures at some offshore partner locations, therefore; offshore students need to be exposed to the academic and broader culture of the home country or a wide mix of cultures during their studies, the last of these leading to a discussion of possible cultural colonization in scholarship and teaching (Ziguras, 2008).

### **2.3 The Conception of Quality and Quality Assurance**

In this section, various definitions of quality were treated first and perspectives of quality assurance were reviewed following from various perspectives of quality.

#### **2.3.1 Quality.**

Webster dictionary use synonyms such as calibre, first-class, awesome, banner, classic, five-star, keen, noble, and top-on the shelf to define quality. On the contrary, to describe low quality uses antonyms such as: awful, lousy, pathetic, poor, rotten, vile, and wretched (Webster dictionary, 2019). The concept of 'quality in higher education is unclear, often difficult to define, and has remained elusive, especially in the context of higher education from time to time (Tammaro, 2005; DAAD, 2010; Mulrooney et.al, 2018). Martin and Stella (2007) argue that the dilemma of defining quality in higher education is not merely a question of setting standards; it is also an issue of who defines it because of what interests. There is a wide variety of interpretations depending upon the views of different stakeholders (Bobby, 2014; Campbell & Rozsnyai, 2002; Cullen, Joyce, Hassall, & Broadbent, 2003; Harvey&Green, 1993; Kemenade, Pupius & Hardjono, 2008; Martin & Stella, 2007; Newton, 2010; Vlăsceanu, Grünberg & Pârlea, 2007).

A comprehensive review of quality and quality assurance literature by Mulu (2012) documents the existing lack of clarity and vagueness about the concept of quality in higher education. The indeterminate and ambiguous nature of the quality concept in higher education has also been discussed by various researchers (Williams, 1990). Quality is a term that is elusive of prescription and value-laden because it is associated with being worthwhile and good (Pfeffer and Coote, 1991). In view of Harvey and Green (1993), quality is often referred to as a relative concept. Beckford (2002) as well as Harvey and Green (1993), based on sustaining the stakeholders' views of quality and review of various attempts at defining quality identified five discrete but interrelated conceptions, which are linked to excellence, distinctive, embodies in excellence, and passing a minimum standard. These five perspectives were explained as:

1. Quality as an exceptional (something special and linked to excellence, distinctive, embodies in excellence, passing a minimum standard).
2. Quality as perfections (consistent or flawless outcomes focus on process as opposed to inputs and outputs. This view fits well with the output of the industrial production line, it sees quality as consistent or flawless outcomes).
3. Quality as fitness for purpose (fulfilling a customers' needs or desires, relate quality to a purpose, defined by the provider).
4. Quality as values for money (return on investment), and a focus on efficiency and effectiveness, measuring outputs against inputs.
5. Quality as transformation (enhancement or empowerment of student) is about doing something to the student as opposed to something to the consumer.

On the other hand, quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional, multi-level, and dynamic concept that relates to the contextual settings of an educational model, to the institutional mission and objectives, as well as to the specific standards within a given system, institution and program (Vlasceanu, et al., 2007). Vroeijenstijn (1995: xviii), for instance, has described quality assurance as “systematic, structured and continuous attention to quality in terms of quality maintenance and quality improvement.” This condenses the two most used definitions of quality, namely fitness for purpose and continuous improvement. Thus, many degree programs and many departments attach advisory boards to their activities to have a continuous dialogue with the

business community about the profile of knowledge and skills of their graduates (Nair, Webster, and Mertova, 2010). In the same vein, the authors have given further analyses as quality is a multi-dimensional notion.

At a broader level, quality of education can be viewed in relation to teaching and learning processes which can be influenced by the following dimensions, including quality input, quality process, and quality outcome. Explained further quality of input embraces teachers, teaching materials, learning environment, physical resources, and more others. In addition, teaching activities, managerial and administrative duties as well as student support services are considered as process aspects of quality. Lastly, the quality output is a quality dimension used to measure quantitative aspects such as courses delivered, the number of graduates passed and a qualitative aspect as level and usability of competencies acquired.

### **2.3.2 Quality Assurance in Higher Education.**

Martin and Stella (2007) argue that the understanding of the term 'quality, its conceptualization and operationalization, have obvious implications in an attempt to assure it. In the words of Wilger, (1997) quality assurance program in higher education is an integral part of the working definition of quality. Thus, before employing quality assurance mechanisms, it seems advisable to have clarity of ideas about quality and QA. In addressing the same issue, Ellis et al. (2007) state that quality has to be conceptualized to improve it, and awareness of quality in the organization is an important starting point for the enhancement of educational quality and a well-functioning quality assurance system. According to Charles (2007), the origins of quality assurance in higher education can be traced back to several higher education milestones in the Western context. Medieval institutions of learning maintained institutional quality through various means. Quality control as a practice was there in some form and guilds were formed by students that prescribed specific regulations that their professors should follow in holding classes (Nair et.al, 2010). These regulations aimed to ensure that the service provider of the students as learners was not a neglected area. At the same time, professors themselves formed master-guilds that sought to safeguard the quality of teaching. The quality of the institutions of higher learning as a whole was overseen by the government, which granted charters and helped universities

develop their capacity to revisit their academic programs and evaluate the effectiveness of their operations Mishra(2007). Quality control, in a more formal way such as inspection, measurement, and testing came to the forefront as a professional practice only at the beginning of the twentieth century, accompanying industrial mass production of materials. In the same line, after four decades high demands for higher education provisions is one of the causes that triggered quality assurance mechanisms to the forefront in assuring quality. Thus, it seems as massification in material and human resources were the point of origin for emerging changes in quality issues.

Quality assurance as a concept originally emerged from the manufacturing industry, which then spread to other sectors and higher education over time (Mishra, 2007). Quality authorities like Joseph Juran and Edward Deming in the 1950s followed by Philip Crosby in the 1980s have put forward various mechanisms to improve company performance (Nair et.al, 2010). These mechanisms are exemplified in a set of quality management practices, known as Total Quality Management (TQM). On account of these policies, different approaches have been adopted for the introduction of quality management in universities, such as self-assessment and external assessment of the institutions, accreditation, and certification systems. Over the last 20 years, many countries have created quality assurance (QA) bodies to assist, check, or regulate their higher education institutions (HEIs). These bodies exercise their QA responsibility through various modes and methods that essentially fall under one of the three basic approaches – accreditation, assessment, and quality audit. Of these modes and their combinations, accreditation is the most widely used term in many countries around the world and many QA bodies have some form of accreditation practices. Accreditation is the predominant mode of QA and is used in the following pages to denote all forms of QA (Stella & woodhouse, 2010).

The concept and practices of quality assurance have been in existence since the industrial age, in which the mass production of different goods required that there be some mechanisms in place for checking that each of the goods produced was fit for public consumption (Dill, 2010). However, it was only during the latter half of the 20th century that this concept and its practice found its way to the operation of higher education institutions (Barnabas, 2007; Dill, 2010).

With regard to a broader definition of quality assurance Campbell and Rozsnyai (2002; see also UNESCO, 2004) define quality assurance as an all-embracing term referring to an ongoing, continuous process of evaluating, monitoring, or guaranteeing the quality of a higher education system, institutions or programs. In the words of Bobby et al. (2009) quality assurance is a term used to describe a variety of mechanisms intended to control, guarantee and promote quality, including quality in higher education institutions. According to Okebukola (2010) quality assurance is an umbrella concept for a host of activities that are designed to improve the quality of inputs, processes, and outputs of the higher education system. Contrary to these broader definitions, quality assurance is also narrowly defined as nothing more than securing that one is offering the quality one promises to offer (AEC, 2009). Thus, it is the process of verifying whether products or services meet or exceed customer's expectations. For Lewis (2009), quality assurance is the standards that have been agreed on, usually with a national body, about what requirements and levels are necessary for a study program to be awarded a degree. Lastly, quality assurance refers to explicit commitment and practices of higher education institutions to the development of an institutional culture that recognizes the importance of quality and the continuous enhancement of quality of services (Defensor, 2010). Based on varied definitions noted above it can be concluded that quality assurance is a broad concept encompassing a spectrum of definitions in which there is a lack of consensus among scholars.

Concerning the purposes of quality assurance, literature usually reflects two major purposes: accountability and improvement (OECD, 2008b). In this vein, Lomas (2000) pointed out that there are two major approaches to quality improvements: quality assurance and quality enhancement. In his view, quality assurance is oriented mainly towards the product or services being of standard. It is a preventive measure, which is regarded as a means of improving the overall quality and it relates to the notion of fitness for purposes. Quality enhancement, on the other hand, is directly concerned with adding values, improving quality, and implementing transformational change. Hodson and Thomas (2003) further elaborate as the management of quality can be considered under two broad headings: Quality assurance (QA), which has a managerial focus and stresses fitness for purpose and accountability; accountability focuses on what is happening and does not necessarily focus on improvement (Royse, Thyer and

Padgett,2010). Furthermore, quality as accountability does little for learning in higher education as it cannot help to develop an understanding of processes, which is necessary to understand how to improve Biggs(2001).On the other hand, Quality enhancement, which is collegial in nature is concerned with quality improvement. In addition, the distinction between quality assurance and quality enhancement relies on time orientation in that, the former is retrospective and stresses compliance and accountability which contrasts with the latter one quality enhancement (QE) which is prospective and involves continually striving for improvement in teaching and learning.

Empirical evidence shows that the most effective quality improvement seems to occur when external quality arrangements mesh with internal processes (Harvey and Newton, 2004). For instance, in the UK most higher education institutions surveyed showed a combination of top-down and hybrid quality approaches(mix of top-down and bottom-up) (EUA, 2014). Conversely, (Adamu, 2012) conducted a study on current trends of quality assurance procedures and practices in Ethiopian higher education, at Bahirdar University (BDU), employing document review revealed that the existing QA system was a top-down approach. Additionally, the study showed that the initiation and procedures of quality assurance come from HERQA and passed to institutions. Thus, the QA system inclines to external QA, which focuses on accountability rather than on IQA and enhancement, which focuses on quality improvement. The imposition policy of HERQA needs to be amended by re-establishing an independent agency whose decisions are free from influences of the Ministry of Education Adamu (2012). One more empirical study linked to quality assurance in Ethiopia focused on the assessment of science education quality indicators in Addis Ababa, Bahirdar, and Hawassa Universities. Findings of the study indicate that “(1) a large number of the academic staff of Addis Ababa University has a rank of assistant professor and above than their correspondences in Bahirdar and Hawassa universities are relatively young and inexperienced,(2)The students and in some cases the instructors themselves tend to have problems of English language proficiency, (3)Learning and teaching resources are not adequately matched with the size of enrolment in the Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Mathematics programs, (4) the universities have no well-developed quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that the students' performance is as per the graduate profile prescribed in the curricula.”Ayalew, Dawit, Tesfaye, and Yalew(2009, p.253-254). Even though these studies glimpsed above were

interested in the quality of higher education in the Ethiopian context, postgraduate programs and CBHE providers were not included in their studies.

### ***2.3.2.1 Quality Assurance in Cross-Border Higher Education.***

The liberalization of the global economy, which is disregarding business and commercial barriers around the world, has made it increasingly possible and rewarding for higher education providers to run across borders. These providers are often not accountable to the jurisdictions of the national regulatory systems of users, nor are they fully controlled in the countries where they work. Even in systems where quality assurance and accreditation agencies function well, they often lack clear obligations on matters of program delivery beyond regional or national borders. Besides, most countries have limited resources and regulatory backing to cope with the emerging issues related to distance education, and diploma mills, and take appropriate measures to control dishonest practices and providers (Kimani, 2008). Most of the universities are still untested in carrying out the activities of quality assurance and have many problems to face. Some of the hindrances were mentioned in DAAD (2010) included: lack of quality innovations; staff resistance because of a lack of awareness and change in culture; resistance to a perceived threat, and lack of communication between staff and management.

The driving force conveyed change in quality assurance mechanisms over the years were factors like rapid enrolment growth to meet increasing social demands, significantly decreased public funding in higher education, and the effect of brain drain. UNESCO document noted that social demand for higher education has been growing over the past decades, in particular in developing countries. Systems are therefore expanding, while the financial capacity to respond to this demand is often inadequate. On top of these, Mishra (2007), added to the list four forces of quality concerns in higher education as follows: increased competition following globalization and GATS, customer satisfaction, accountability to stakeholders, improving employees' morale and satisfaction, and credibility prestige and status. Thus, the alternative post-secondary sector has developed and increasingly courses are taught through distance education. As a result, national authorities have found it more difficult and more complex to assure quality through

traditional mechanisms. In many countries, the national quality assurance agency was established to respond to emergent challenges such as the expansion of HEIs and increased competitiveness.

In Africa, even though, the quality issue as a key national HE steering policy is a new phenomenon, the majority of quality assurance (QA) agencies were established after the 1990s. Empirical research on the issue revealed that by 2012, about 21 African countries had established QA agencies and a dozen other countries were moving in this direction (Shabani et al., 2014). Since the establishment of QA, agencies are a recent phenomenon assuring the quality of CBHE becomes difficult for many African universities due to financial scarcity and trained manpower.

#### ***2.3.2.2 Quality Assurance in Distance and Open distance Learning.***

Maitra (2007) noted that a few years ago, universities could not have been imagined without classrooms or a library without books nor could we imagine a university existing 10,000 miles away from students. Currently, distance and time are no longer barriers to attending education. This is for the reason that opportunities for distance and cross-border delivery of educational programs are growing rapidly through the use of new technologies (Knight, 2008). Distance education is the education of students, who may not always be physically present at a school. McManus and Nnazor (1994) revealed that QA in distance teaching universities has focused on two key areas: the processes and production of course and program materials and the delivery of distance education to learners. The American Council on Education (ACE) recommended the following major dimensions that focus more on learning support and outcomes: learning design, learner support, learning outcomes, and technology (cited in Stella & Gnanam, 2004). Due to technological advancements, higher education is not only available through face-to-face conventional mode, but also available through distance education and e-learning modes. There are many variants of educational provisions today Stella and Manam (2004). Distance education can be accessible through twinning arrangements, study abroad semesters, branch or satellite campuses set up in other countries, franchised operations, partnership arrangements, and corporate universities. Of these, the distance education provision is major with the virtual or the e-learning option gaining momentum due to the availability of computers and internet access. Nowadays, it is possible for students to take part in the program

through e-learning mode remaining on the campus or away from it. Whatever method of delivery on use, it is worthy, to assure the quality of these alternative forms of delivery of education, or else, the similarity of courses and programs will be lost and distance education and e-learning programs would be of low quality.

### ***2.3.2.3 Accreditation of Cross-border Higher Education.***

To assist, check, or regulate their higher education, institutions of many countries put in place quality assurance bodies. These bodies practice towards accomplishing their responsibility, employing diverse modes and methods that can be categorized into three approaches such as accreditation, assessment, and quality audit. Of these approaches and their combinations, accreditation is the most widely used term in many countries around the world and many QA bodies have some form of accreditation practices (Stella and Woodhouse, 2010). Accreditation is a process of external quality review created and used by higher education to scrutinize colleges, universities, and programs for quality assurance and quality improvement (Eaton, 2009a; Ewell, 2008b). The quality assurance procedure is designed to determine whether or not an institution has met or exceeded nationally published standards for accreditation and is achieving its mission and stated purpose.

In several countries, the term accreditation is used to refer to public universities that were established by acts of parliament, by statute, or by decree. They are “accredited” de jure (by law) but not as the result of peer review, a site visit, and a report assessing the institution. Ethiopia, Cameroon, and Kenya are examples of such de jure accreditation (Hayward, 2006). Critics often assail accreditation’s structure and design as anti-competitive and resistant to change. Secondly an assessment approach “analyses output whereas, academic audits focus on the processes used by a higher education institution to monitor its academic standards” (Stella &Liston, 2008, p. 7). Quality assurance is the basis for both recognition and accreditation. Recognition refers to the acceptance of education qualifications from abroad as suitable to replace a domestic qualification about particular further education or employment activities, while accreditation is the process where institutions or the programs they offer are accepted as adequate according to a common set of norms (OECD, 2005).

In Ethiopia, the role of accrediting CBHE providers is the responsibility of the national Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency which is entrusted with the task of supervising the quality and relevance of higher education provided by any institution (HEP, 2003). The Agency is given the mandate ‘to ensure that foreign institutions or their branches operating in Ethiopia are accredited in their country of origin and comply with the relevance and quality standards set by the Proclamation’ (Article 89.12).

The purpose of the guideline has also been identified as(a)providing a framework for quality provision in CBHE;(b)protecting students and other stakeholders from the low-quality provision and disreputable providers;(c) enhancing the development of CBHE that meets the nations human, social, economic and cultural needs;(d) supporting and encouraging international cooperation and enhancing the understanding of the importance of quality provision in CBHE; and(e) providing a scheme of application, accreditation, monitoring, and evaluation of programs delivered by a Foreign Higher Education overseas through CBHE (HERQA, 2011, p.6-7).

## **2.4 External Quality Assurance (EQA)**

Quality assurance in higher education embraces external and internal elements. Namely, external quality assurance includes quality assessments, benchmark activities, external audits, or external quality assessments and accreditation while internal quality assurance involves activities such as monitoring instruments, evaluation instruments, and activities for improvement Kassahun (2015). To Mulu (2012) accreditation, assessment, and audit are the three main approaches to quality assurance. The three approaches of EQA as discussed in many kinds of literature include accreditation, auditing, and assessment, which are further elaborated hereunder.

### **2.4.1 Accreditation.**

Accreditation is the process by which a government or private body evaluates the quality of a higher education institution as a whole or a specific educational program in order to formally recognize it as having met certain pre-determined minimal criteria or standards (IIEP, 2006:19; Sanyal and Tres, 2007). Accreditation is an important accountability instrument with which quality is confirmed to the taxpayers so that they are convinced of the service quality of a

university. The United States of America already has a long practice in this field but the rest of the world adopted this concept as late as around the millennium shift (DAAD, 2010). Accreditation evaluates whether an institution or program qualifies for a status or threshold level and accreditation decisions are usually limited to a fixed period, after which the institution or program is required to engage with a more, or less, rigorous re-accreditation process. One of the principal means of providing accountability for HE Institutions and programs is accreditation, the most critical part of quality assurance in higher education. In Ethiopia where accreditation focused on private higher institutions (Kassahun, 2015, p.14) pointed out its purpose as follows:

The general approach of the accreditation procedure is geared towards establishing whether the minimum standards expected of a higher education institution are sufficiently met. During the inspection process, the inspection panel members make recommendations, which contribute to improving the quality of private higher education programs. The whole procedure is aimed not only at checking the PRHEI's compliance with HERQA's standards but also at the enhancement of quality and support for the further development of the institution.

The accreditation process in the Ethiopian HE context used by HERQA aimed at checking and controlling the private sector leaving the public universities untouched which seems like a biased approach in the same environment.

#### **2.4.2 Self-assessment and Peer Review.**

Self-assessment and peer review are the backbones of internal quality assurance that should be implemented at both institutional and program levels to foster continuous improvement. Self-assessment examines whether the objectives are being achieved whereas “Peer review brings an independent and objective perspective into the process” (CHEA, 2016, p.10). Self-assessment may include bias, thus the objective perspectives of peer reviewers could complement the weakness of self-assessment. While employing a self-assessment approach members of quality assessment could be more subjective while collecting data from their departments. Thus, the peer review hopefully could balance the bias when bringing as objective perspectives as possible in the auditing process.

### **2.4.3 Academic audits.**

In general, an audit is the evaluation of a project, a system, a process, a product, an institution or an organization in any context, including industry, public administration, and health care. Auditors concern themselves more with the “processes that faculty use to think about their curriculum decisions and how they carry out these activities in the best interests of the discipline and student learning. Academic audits review the processes used by a higher education institution to monitor its academic standards and provide quality education within departments. An audit is a supportive measure for the enhancement of quality management in all areas of a higher education institution. In the Ethiopian higher education context, HERQA commences the institutional quality audit of public and private HEIs both at the institution and program levels. According to IIEP (2006a) quality audit refers to the process of quality assessment by which an external body guarantees that the institution or program quality assurance procedures are acceptable, or the overall (internal and external) quality assurance processes of the system are adequate and are actually implemented. Moreover, the opportunity is taken to endorse to the managing body ways in which enhancement of quality might be made that will improve standards and quality (Tesfaye, 2015).

### **2.5 Internal Quality Assurance**

Internal quality assurance refers to those policies and practices whereby academic institutions themselves monitor and improve the quality of their education provision, while external quality assurance refers to supra institutional policies and practices whereby external bodies assure the quality of higher education institutions and programs (Dill, 2007). HERQA define internal quality assurance (IQA) as: “a planned and systematic monitoring and review processes established by an HEI to determine the quality and relevance of its programs and appropriateness of its infrastructure” (Tesfaye, 2015, p.42). Internal quality assurance concentrates mainly on academic issues and lies in collecting evidence and information about meeting the objectives, the efficiency of activity, and ways of ensuring quality within the institution.

For Martin and Stella (2007), IQA is referred to the policies and mechanisms implemented in an institution or program to ensure that it is fulfilling its own purposes in the classroom. In the same

vein, Sanyal and Martin (2007, p. 5) contend that “IQA comprises all the internal mechanisms, instruments, and systems for quality assurance within a higher education institution (HEI) which ensure that the institution is meeting its own general and program-specific standards and objectives.” In this line of thinking, education quality mainly refers to the achievement of planned education goals particularly in terms of students’ education outcomes. Internal quality assurance also refers to the efforts for improving the internal environment and processes such that meeting the standards that apply to higher education in general or to the profession or discipline in particular. In the specific context of higher education institutions, IQA is the totality of systems, resources, and information devoted to setting up, maintaining, and improving the quality and standards of teaching, research, and service to the community (ADDA, 2010). Based on the above definitions of IQA there is room to understand higher education institutions as autonomous to set their policies and strategies and monitor their activities accordingly.

There are thousands of universities in the world and most of them more or less engaged actively in the development and implementation of IQA approaches (CEU, 2016). A key argument in favour of placing IQA at the centre of higher education is that IQA contributes to institutional research by providing data for analysing and reorganizing structures, programs, and ideas in order to bring them in line with the paradigm of effectiveness and efficiency. IQA creates evidence through qualitative and quantitative evaluation and helps to promote institutional development and enhancement by fostering a quality culture (UNESCO, 2017). Another argument is that only self-understanding institutions can lead to improvement (Mulu, 2012).

### **2.5.1 Approaches to Ensuring Internal Quality.**

In the words of Cheng (2003) there may be two different approaches that can be used to ensure education quality or effectiveness in the classroom. They are the component quality approach and the relationship quality approach. According to available evidence, the former approach focuses on improving the quality of some components of the structure with the hope to enhance or ensure the quality of student learning outcomes. For example, many improvement initiatives take teacher competence as the key factor for internal quality and make effort to improve teacher competencies such as language skills, pedagogic knowledge, subject knowledge, use of

information technology in education, etc. In the past years, there have been different types of improvement efforts for internal quality assurance in education such as school management improvement, classroom environment improvement, teaching improvement, learning improvement, curriculum improvement, evaluation improvement, and teacher education and quality improvement. All these efforts focus on the improvement of the quality of certain components with aims to achieve planned education goals. Currently, university approaches to IQA are considered as more improvement-oriented, and they tend to focus more on the quality of teaching and learning aspect and the concept of organizational quality culture. Among experts, it is the IQA system that is considered key to effective and successful quality assurance processes (CEU, 2016). According to Leiber, Stensaker, and Harvey (2015), there is a lack of methodologically more comprehensive and empirically more reliable knowledge about the effects and mechanisms of action of QA measures. Also, the aspect of context and how it influences IQA is widely under-researched from an empirical point of view.

### **2.5.2 Implementation of Internal Quality Assurance.**

Establishing effective internal quality assurance structures is an efficient way by which an institution manages the quality of the education it provides. Internal quality assurance ensures that an institution has policies and mechanisms in place to make sure that it is meeting its purpose and standards. More elaborately, the fundamentals of the IQA system consist of clear goals and objectives at an organizational level as well as a program level, the support in implementing all the objectives, the regular quality evaluation, and the clear procedures and support about the follow-up of evaluation activities (Berrings et al., 2010). Accordingly, the process of internal quality assurance in universities can be distinguished into these following phases: defining an institutional mission and strategic goals and knowing what quality means in the light of its own goals, setting up processes to ensure that quality is reached and monitoring progress in this regard, and finally being able to react when all is not well, and willing to improve continuously even when things seem to be working properly (Loukkola&Zhang, 2010). Furthermore, to be well operated, this process always needs support from the specially established institutional structure to make the internal quality processes more systematic (Reichert, 2008). In this regard, according to Materu (2007), the establishment of a quality

assurance centre in each higher education institution will provide a central focus and contact point for institutional accreditation, audits, or program evaluation. Additionally, it is also expected to create a base of information and institutional memory from one accreditation to the next. Based on this, the responsibilities of internal quality assurance units summarized and suggested to include among other activities such as (1) co-ordination of all quality assurance related activities within the institution, (2) implementation of QA, reviews/audits and follow-up action,(3) provision of advice on quality assurance to all faculties and departments,(4) monitoring and guidance in faculty level quality assurance activities,(5) facilitation of identification and sharing of good practices between academic departments and preparation of quality assurance-related guidelines and manuals for use within the institution (Collin & Samantha, 2013).

In general, quality is primarily the responsibility of the higher education institution itself. Therefore, each university needs to develop an efficient Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) system. No one model fits all. It is up to the university to decide what model fits it best. However, some basic conditions have to be met. Of course, experiences at other universities may also be used in developing an IQA system equipped with the basic elements for monitoring, evaluation, and improvement.

## **2.6 Aspects that Influence the IQA Implementation in Higher Education.**

Indeed, quality assurance is the primary responsibility of the universities, and it has demanded experts much effort on trying to examine its nature, the effective internal quality process, and the influential factors that affect its implementation at the local level. UNESCO pointed out the success of internal quality assurance activities to be influenced by many internal and external factors, such as organizational structure, the alignment of the quality assurance system to organizational culture, and legal frameworks (UNESCO, 2017). Inline with this issue, factors that can promote or hamper the internal quality assurance process include organizational capacity, student support service, organizational structure, and institutional factors.

### **2.6.1 Organizational Capacity.**

Organizational capacity encompasses resources such as human, intellectual, and finance, and other organizations' characteristics such as mandate, management, and leadership that influence an organization's performance (De Grauwe, 2009). Capacity has to do with both human and institutional abilities to set objectives, design strategies, and perform functions. The commitment of the institution's leadership, the well-organized data collection, and analysis of staff's expertise and resources are other aspects of organizational capacity with the impact that can promote the process of internal quality system (EUA, 2006). With the organizational capacity, leadership in the institution is emphasized as a very important factor influencing the success of a quality assurance process. Leadership is needed to explain the essence of internal quality processes and to create the conditions for introducing the processes by clarifying the responsibilities, developing frameworks, and ensuring the appropriate follow up of internally organized quality reviews first. Secondly, the senior leadership is in charge of the strategic direction of the institutions. Leaders are responsible for setting guidelines to guide the activities of staff in the institution. After setting the basic strategies, the third responsibility of the leadership is to promote and communicate the strategy, quality goal, and related decisions to staff members, students, and external stakeholders. The leadership is also needed to create conditions for quality culture in the institution and to ensure that staff members can perform well in a way that is in line with the values of the organization. The fourth central task of the senior leadership, which has been highlighted in EUA is to monitor quality and integrate quality monitoring results in the decision-making process of the institution (EUA, 2006). In line with this Sursock (2011) stated that management is essential to provide a university with the initial steer and the broad frameworks of quality assurance devices. According to Sursock (2011), leadership is needed to facilitate internal debate in order to generate the intrinsic motivation to implement internal quality assurance and to make sure that quality assurance processes do not end up being bolted on. However, leadership is not only needed at the senior management level. Because the quality assurance process mainly implemented at the faculty level, the commitment of bottom-up leadership will play a more important role in sustaining the process of an internal quality system. From the top, the senior leadership (deans/vice deans) are responsible for opening steer like

monitoring, making decisions, or facilitating the process, and the lower-level leadership (department heads) will take the lead in increasing the quality system process. Therefore, as argued by Sursock (2011), to manage the process of quality assurance in institutions successfully, it is crucial that the leadership – at all levels of the university – is pulling in the same direction and able to influence the staff that they are important players in achieving the strategic direction of the institution.

In addition to the factors of leadership and staff's expertise in data collection and analysis, the availability of financial and human resources (including staff development arrangement) is also an influential factor towards the implementation of internal quality assurance. Predominantly, the institutional commitment to the issue of quality entails a continuous investment in financial and human resources (EUA, 2006). As all staff members must take quality assurance as a concern, it is important to devote to building the capacity of the staff to avoid internal quality assurance arrangements becoming unforgiving (Sursock, 2011). European Union of Universities commented that academic workers are an important part of the higher education institute since they act as intermediaries both from department to students and students to department (EUA, 2014).

### **2.6.2 Student Support Service.**

Thorpe (2002, p. 108) has stressed a function-related definition and defined learner support as "... all those elements capable of responding to a known learner or group of learners, before, during and after the learning process". Alan (1995) of the Open University of United Kingdom (OUUK), which was founded in 1969, define the term student support as the range of activities that complement the mass-produced material which makes up the most well-known elements in Open and Distance Learning (ODL). In the same vein, Tait's (1995) definition does not refer explicitly to support for students in online learning because it was intended for use in the context of systems employing print-based and pre-prepared study materials. Following the ICT innovation, the concept of student support has changed its earlier definition in distance education.

Earlier before ICT development in the period of correspondence distance education, the emphasis of student support was focused on reducing the rate of dropout. With the development of communication technologies, student support has been updated to meet the needs of current beneficiaries. However, the nature of learner support services varies depending on the academic needs and problems of the students, arising due to many factors. Scant interaction with counsellors, limited access to information and services, financial constraint, time constraint, late receipt of study material, geographical remoteness are some factors to mention.

According to Street's study (2010) that examined evidence gathered from students, regarding their understanding of the major causes of failure or progress in online learning, findings reveal time pressure, self-management, family care, logistics and support, curriculum relevance, and preparedness as factors contributing to the failure in online learning. The researcher further noted that the area of student support services is central to the success of any distance-learning program. Though it is often overlooked, student service policy issues directly impact prospective and current distance-learning students. Thus, the researcher recommended that particularly institutions need to develop distance-learning policies on student advice, counselling, libraries, marketing, materials delivery, textbooks, and training (Street, 2010). When distance education institutions fail to plan for the provision of appropriate learners' support services, systematic learning support is adversely affected and the most likely outcome is distance learners are forced to drop out of their program.

### **2.6.3 Organizational Structure.**

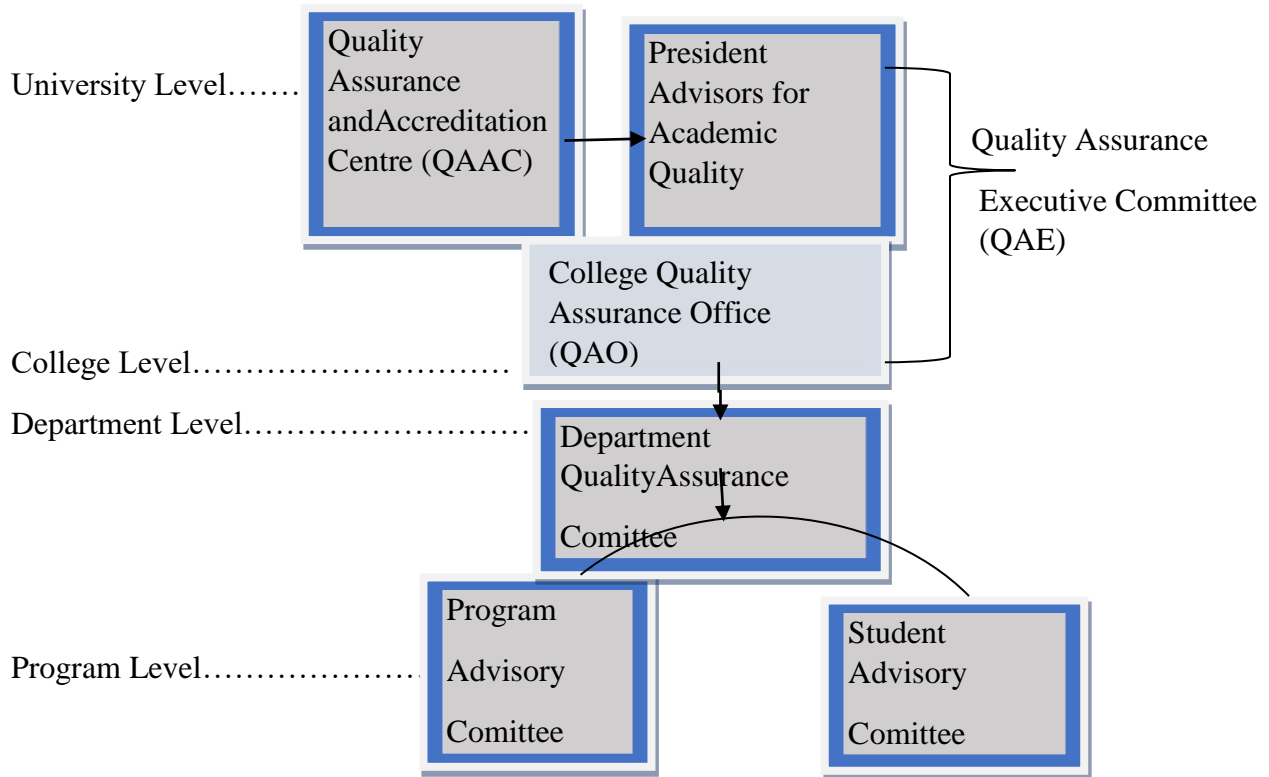
An effective organizational structure facilitates the management and clarifies relationships, roles and responsibilities, levels of authority, and supervisory or reporting lines. By reviewing an organization's structure, a manager will be able to determine which human, financial, and technical resources are available, how they should be allocated, and which resources are lacking. One of the key influential factors for a well-functioning internal quality assurance system is the appropriate organizational structures for quality assurance, particularly the decentralisation of responsibility and the degree of centralization in the university (EUA, 2006; Surssock, 2011).

As indicated in the final report of the quality assurance for the higher education change agenda project (EUA, 2009), quality assurance activities should not be considered as a separate activity of particular individuals, but that concern for quality should be the responsibility of every member of the university. There are not only the senior managers responsible for the institutional quality but also there should be the participation of academic, other staff and students. This situation leads to the notion that the university structure with clear responsibilities and accountability lines at all levels of the university will ensure the quality assurance process to be simple and easy for closing the entire gap (Sursock, 2011). At the same time, the quality assurance system chosen should not be a bureaucratic burden but a system able to inspire and motivate all participants.

QA organizational structures in the mega universities can be categorized into three types: a centralized QA structure, a collective QA structure, and a dispersed QA structure. A centralized QA structure belongs to several mega universities has set up a centralized total quality management system to coordinate and oversee the implementation of QA activities university-wide based on policies and guidelines formulated by QA-related boards or committees. Those centralized units are operated based on university revenue. Thus, the organizational structure, particularly the degree of centralization and the devolution of responsibility in the university were just proved to be one of the factors that can affect IQA implementation in the institution. These two elements can also be related to the perception of bureaucracy and democracy, which requires a balance in quality management at the local level.

Alhamid and Aldwan (2016) explain that the QAAC (Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre) is an executive committee for quality assurance in charge of coordinating and monitoring overall quality assurance activity at the University of Bahrain (UoB). Though they are led mainly by the QAAC, the internal quality assurance processes at UoB are managed by a university-wide structure. At a decentralized level, colleges and departments have the full authority and responsibility for the implementation of IQA tools in improving their programs. Decentralization helps colleges and departments to maintain the quality of their programs autonomously, through the improvement cycles, while centralization helps to maintain quality across colleges and

departments. Figure 1 below shows the centralization and decentralization of the quality assurance structure of UOB.



**Figure. 1: UOB Quality assurance structure**

Source: Alhamid and Aldwan (2016)

#### 2.6.4 Institutional Factors.

Newton (2007) argued that any quality assurance system will always be affected by situational factors and by context. The arguments from institutional theorists also suggest that university organizations are not islands that are free of the influence of their institutional environment in undertaking quality assurance practices (Mulu, 2012). Targeting these study learners' support services, organizational structure, and capacity of the University from the task environment, and the legal/policy issues and socio-cultural elements from the institutional environment will compose forces of the organizational environment. About achieving legitimacy in cross-border

higher education of Ethiopia quality assurance guidelines and rules of HERQA play an important role (HERQA, 2011).

Since higher education has many characteristics, public policy always wants to seek to determine some of these characteristics for certain performance expectations (Blackmur, 2007). According to this authority, there will be a problem of defining and setting standards in the regulation of higher education quality, leading to confusion on whether the quality regulation is conducted by the government or by universities or by the combination of both. Accordingly, quality assurance seems not to be implemented effectively in institutions, due to the pressure from the government. Public or private universities may begin working with international organizations or universities beginning with the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). A Memorandum of Understanding or MOU is a type of agreement. It's a non-binding agreement between two parties or more. An MOU template contains an outline of the details and terms of the agreement. It would also include the requirements and responsibilities of each party. Making a Memorandum of Understanding template is usually common practice.

## **2.7 Higher Education in Ethiopia**

Looking at it from a geographic point of view, Ethiopia is a land of contrasts. Its landmass is one of the worlds earliest formed, with much volcanic activity still lurking on the eastern rim of the Afar lowlands. The country has deep gorges, high moorlands and plateau, and long-range rivers, including the Blue Nile, which provides 86 per cent of the water and all the silt that Egypt requires for its survival.

Public universities are age-old higher education institutions of the world (Jamjoom, 2012). Modern higher education in Africa was mainly imported from the west and relatively recent (Varghese, 2004). The first third-level educational institution opened in Ethiopia was the French Canadian-run University College of Addis Ababa, which started operation on December 11, 1950. The University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA) founded in 1950 under the auspices, and on the initiative, of the imperial government, and in partnership with, Canadian Jesuit educators who were delegated with the responsibility of running it for almost a decade. Besides assigning foreign intellectuals to manage the Chancellor of UCAA was Emperor himself until 1974.

During the 1960s, the second university in the country, the University of Asmara, opened. This university is now the major institution of higher learning for independent Eritrea (Solomon, 2010).

Regarding cross-border education in Ethiopia started in 1960, with 8,134 young Ethiopians pursuing their studies abroad, most of them in Canada and the United States. Since 1974 following the revolution more and more students went to the then united soviet socialist Republic USSR and the soviet bloc countries starting after the 1974 revolution when Marxism-Leninism was declared as an ideology of the Ethiopian military regime. Then, the World Bank (2010) documents that 3,033 Ethiopian students were studying abroad between the years 2001- 2006. Despite its benefits, this modality has also been the major cause of a significant share of brain drain from the country. Anecdotal evidence suggests that most of the students that study abroad do not return. The study made by Sethi (2000), as cited in Teferra and Altbach (2003), indicated that out of 22,700 Ethiopians who left for studies abroad between 1980 and 1991, only 39 per cent returned. This is perhaps an indication that, despite its advantage, this form of mobility can have its shortcomings for developing countries like Ethiopia.

Structurally, the higher education landscape in Ethiopia is categorized into two types of higher education institutions: public universities and private universities which each have a different legal basis. Public universities are by far the biggest sector, as measured by the number of students as well as government expenditures. This sector still dominates the public perception of higher education as well as public discourse. On the other hand, many of the private institutions of higher education were new and operate with a few numbers academic staff. One of the unique features of private universities was that they had very few regular staff. Varghese (2004) found that reliance on part-time teachers is common irrespective of their location and orientation.

In summary, the review of literature opened with defining Cross-Border Higher Education (CBHE) to be one part of the complex process of internationalization that refers to the movement of education across national jurisdictional borders. Through time, academic mobility has moved from people (students, faculty, and scholars) to program (twinning, franchise, virtual, joint-venture) and provider (branch campus) mobility, and now to the development of education hubs

(Knight, 2012). Next to the definition of CBHE Quality and quality assurance reviewed consecutively Martin and Stella (2007) argue that understanding of the term quality, its conceptualization and operationalization, have obvious implications in an attempt to assure it. Thus, employing quality assurance mechanisms seems advisable after having clarity of ideas about quality and QA. Despite diverse definitions, the concept of quality in higher education is unclear, often difficult to define, and has remained elusive, especially in the context of higher education (DAAD, 2010; Mulrooney et.al, 2018). Subsequent sections of the paper examined general challenges of quality assurance in CBHE for higher education, QA in distance education, and QA, and accreditation. Following the varied definition of quality assurance and its link with CBHE and its assuring mechanisms scholars of the field categorized QA into two basic components noted that quality assurance systems in higher education were established in many countries into two basic components such as internal quality assurance and external quality assurance. External quality assurance (EQA) is further categorized into four components: accreditation, self-assessment, peer-review, and audit, on the other hand, based on the conceptual framework internal quality assurance challenges are explored based on four components influencing IQA. The four components reviewed are organizational structure, organizational capacity, and student support service, and institutional environment. Finally, a historical review of Ethiopian higher education concludes the chapter.

## **Chapter 3: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

### **3.1 Theoretical Framework of the Study**

This chapter is dedicated to highlighting the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guide this study. Below is, therefore, a description of each framework in line with the aim of the study stated as an exploration of perspectives on the conceptualization of quality and practices in quality assurance systems in a private and a public hosting institution of CBHE providers. Institutional and contingency theories are presented first followed by the conceptual framework.

#### **3.1.1 HEIs as open-system organizations.**

In the post-war era, it has been more common to view “organizations as open systems and HEIs are described as open systems in the literature” (Kezar& Eckel, 2004, p.394). Open systems refer to organizations strongly influenced by their environment. Open system theory recognizes that institutional forces shape the structure and behaviour of organizational systems. Organizational environments have both external and internal features and the external environment provides key resources that sustain the organization which leads to change and survival. Thus, the open systems approach views organizations as systems that take inputs from the external environment and through a series of activities transform these inputs into outputs and provide the outputs to the external environment in the form of goods and services. In higher education, for example, inputs include curriculum, teachers, libraries, ICT facilities, and academic knowledge. On the other hand, information producing graduates, research publications, and community services are the outputs (Abiye, 2014). An organization is considered an open system and for the organization to be viable, it must be able to visualize and incorporate the contingencies of its environments into its premises. With regard to this issue Owens (2004, P.147) pointed out some instances as follows:

Legislations of minimum competency, standards for graduation and promotion can have a powerful impact on what schools seek to achieve and political processes, such as approving budgets and levying taxes or electing school board members has an impact in influencing the goals of schools set by educators in the school.

### **3.1.2 Institutional theory.**

Concerning the institutional environment, schools are organizations influenced by the cultural, legal, political, and economic environment they are working in. For instance, school budgets needed to run various activities could be influenced by a higher body of management or political figures that approves its legitimacy for use. Along with the economic environment, the institutionalist approach to organizations such as schools claims that there may be certain elements of each nation, religion, or culture that will influence the character of schooling both in structure and process for better or worse.

Isomorphism is a product of national legitimacy-seeking efforts and leads national educational systems to develop relatively similar elements of structure and policy, although the implementation and outputs of education may vary considerably at the regional or local levels. Through isomorphism, organizations copying practices from the wider environment and over time becoming more structurally similar or become the same within an organizational field.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) distinguish three mechanisms of institutional isomorphic change: coercive isomorphism, mimetic isomorphism, and normative isomorphism. These three mechanisms cause organizations to become increasingly alike. Isomorphism can be clarified with the saying 'birds of a feather flock together' which implies that if any bird with a unique feather joined the group of birds it may easily identify by predators and become easy prey in the journey. In the same way, organizations, which differ from the prolonged industry norm may face a similar fate as the unique bird in the flock and challenged to lose the battle within the same environment. The pressure of globalization and internationalization forces African higher education systems and institutions to adopt quality assurance frameworks from the higher education systems in the developed world so that they will remain viable and gain acceptance and credibility of the end-users (Altbach, 2013).

Organizational adaptation to the demand in society is determined by external forces for reasons of legitimacy and survival (Stensaker & Norgård, 2001; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Sharing the former conception, Owens (2004) contends that the environment of the school organization affects the internal functioning of the organization; in response to the imposed pressure, the organization either adapt smoothly and easily, or it may resist.

Several studies have shown that institutional theory can be a useful framework for studying higher education institutions' response to external demands. Beliefs about organizations and institutions are created and reinforced by a wide range of actors and forces, including universities, professional groups, public opinion, the mass media, the state, and laws. Gornitzka (1999) states that the institutional theory is an organization's life chances significantly improved by an organization's demonstrated conformity to the norms and social expectations of the institutional environments. Thus, environments are sources of legitimacy and support.

Many of the environmental forces that affect organizations are not based on the values of efficiency or effectiveness, but instead on social and cultural pressures to conform to a prescribed structural form. Organizations thus act to gain certainty and legitimacy, emphasizing the stability of organizations while operating in that environment. Organizational adaptation to the demands in the society is determined by external forces for reasons of legitimacy and survival (Stensaker & Norgård, 2001). According to Czarniawska (2009) institutional theory is employed in studies focused on how organizations are affected by (and affect) their surrounding and how they will follow rules, formal as well as informal, rather than being rational.

### **3.1.3 Contingency theory.**

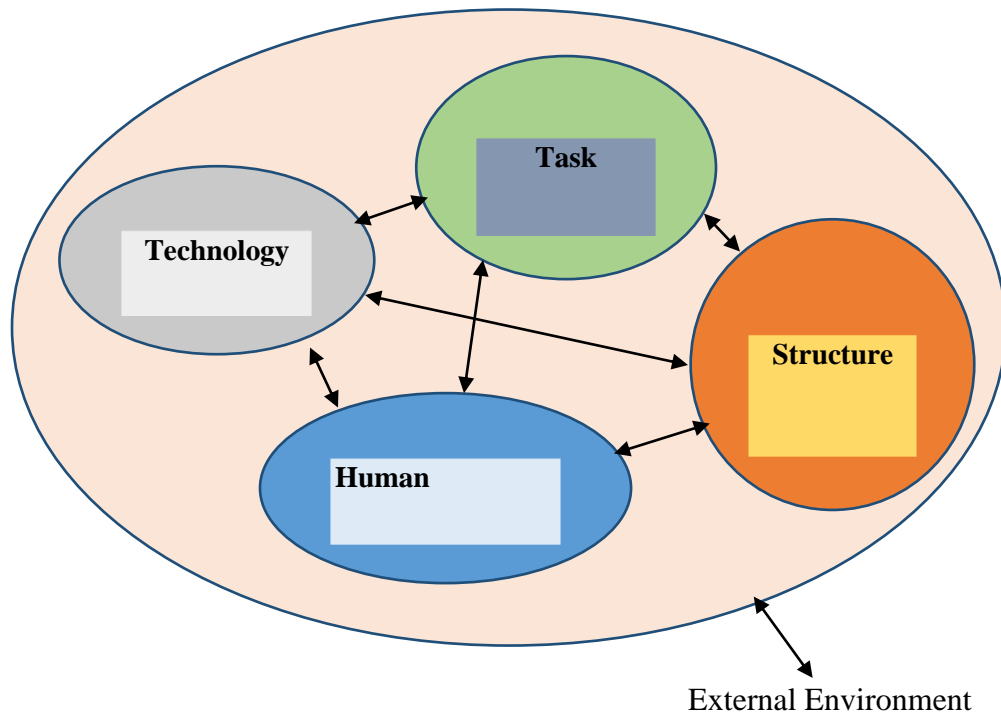
Hanson (2003) contends that contingency theory can be thought of as a subset of open system theory because it is through open system theory that one understands the dynamic flow of events, people, and resources that take place in organizations. James, Stoner, Edward, and Daniel (1995) argue that the contingency or situational approach was developed by managers, consultants, and researchers who apply it in real-life situations. They employed this theory to seek explanation and provide a logical answer to why, for example, did an organizational development program work brilliantly in one situation and fail miserably in another. Advocates of contingency theory

point out that the theory answers such question. Results differ because situations or contexts differ and a technique that works in one case will not necessarily work in all cases. Explanation implies that one size fits all management style cannot be always realistic and work uniformly across all organizations. The contingency approach represents an important turn in modern management theory because it portrays each set of organizational relationships in its unique circumstances.

Studies by Chenhall (2003) and Woods (2009) postulate that the contingency theory focuses on the interface between the organization and its task or technical environment. The task environment is thought of as the internal university environment immediately surrounding the organization. Organizations are composed of a set of positions and subordinated units and can themselves fall under other larger units. Organizational structure means a structure that consists of positions and rules for who can do what and which define how various tasks should be executed. In the internal environment, the organizational structure is contingent on contextual factors such as technology, dimensions of the task environment, and organizational size. Thus, a fundamental idea behind contingency theory is that organizational viability is dependent on a fit between the organization and its environment. In line with this, Mulu (2012) argues that contingency theory analyses interrelationships among three elements: the nature of the task performed by the organization, the environmental context of the organization, and the structural arrangements of an organization. In other words, the contingency theory views organizations as systems of interrelated parts.

The theory emphatically argues that rather than seeking universal principles that apply to all or most organizations, analysts should identify contingency principles that reflect the demands of particular types of task environments organizations work in. In the same vein, Owens (2004) contends that contingency theory represents a middle ground between the view that there are universal principles of organization and management and the view that each organization is unique and that each situation must be analyzed separately. It also explains as organizations adapt to their immediate operating contexts and posit that the best way for an organization to organize depends on the environmental context it operates in.

Contingency theory stresses that variability in environmental needs demands variability in organizational responses (Hanson, 2003). An organization's environment will be important both for how its structure is formed and for how tasks can be accomplished. In line with this, Owens (2004) also argues that the school system or school is in constant dynamic interaction with the larger external environment in which it exists. Environment according to the author refers here as the social, legal, political, and economic system of the culture the school operates in. In view of this, internal arrangements of the organization are also largely contingent upon circumstances in that environment. Those internal arrangements are best understood as containing four dynamically interactive sub-systems: tasks to be performed, the structure of the organization, technology utilized to perform the tasks, and the human social system (Owens, 2004).



Source: Owens, (2004, p.140).

**Figure. 2: Interacting sub-systems within organization and interaction with the external environment**

To sum up, it appears that a research study conducted in the area of quality assurance is suitable to be based on perspectives of contingency and institutional theories. Notwithstanding the apparent discrepancy between the two theories, many researchers acknowledge their interrelations and complementariness in that both theories have commonalities of the idea that organizations carry out their activities within a context that ultimately affects how they are structured and undertake their QA activities. While working to complement each other they influence the methodology of the study and the whole procedure of this study.

### **3.2 Conceptual Framework**

Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) adopt the importance of utilizing a conceptual framework after completion of the initial literature review. A well designed conceptual framework serves as the “scaffolding of the study” consisting of categories and “descriptors” (or dimensions as described below). These initial dimensions serve as the “backbone” of a study and help in developing the research process and methodological design, which in turn facilitates the choice of data collection methods (pp. 58-59).

In this research, the conceptual framework is adapted from the literature, institutional, and contingency theories to be employed as a guideline for developing research instruments, data collection, and data analysis. The framework comprises three dimensions identified as internal university environment (which comprised of organizational structure, organizational capacity, and the student support services); external or institutional environment; and QA and enhancement practices. The diagram depicted in Figure 3 below shows the basic components of this framework and the interaction among the three dimensions of the study. The single arrow in the figure-3 displays the direction of influence and interaction among the three components. In the conceptual framework of this study below, it is depicted that student support service is selected as a task to be performed and again it is the prominent interaction point between the available resources within the institutions such as the students, academic staff, and the management. Students, academic staff, and the management form the second sub-systems (human) in the organizations of this study as part of organizational capacity that plays the role of the human social system. The interaction among members of the organization underway is based

on the organizational structure which is the third sub-system in the organizations. Other resources such as financial and material resources including mainly digitalized technologies are inevitably in use. Ogawa and Bossert (1995) proclaim that how schools are administered directly affects aspects of the work structure, such as school climate and school educational organization, which then influences student learning technically measured as student achievement.

### **3.2.1 Quality Assurance and Enhancement Practices.**

Explicitly, QA is a system organized by a sum total of mutually interdependent factors such as internal university environment (student service, organizational capacity, and structure), institutional environment, and quality assurance and enhancement practice. A quality assurance and enhancement practice is one dimension of the research influenced by both internal and external organizational factors.

As a start-up, the fundamentals of the QA system consist of clear goals and objectives at the organizational level, resources as a means to implement its objectives, the monitoring and evaluation, and the clear procedures to be followed. More elaborately, the practice of QA in universities can be categorized into the following phases: defining the institutional vision, mission and strategic goals, conceptualizing what quality means for the organization in light of its own goals, setting procedures to meet that quality and monitoring its progress and finally being able to respond accordingly, when all is not well or willing to improve continuously, even when things seem to be functioning properly(Loukkola & Zhang, 2010).

Quality assurance practice needs consistent support from organizational structure to make an internal quality process more systematic (Reichert, 2008). Again Matiru (2007) argues that establishing a quality assurance centre in each higher institution will enable it to facilitate staff development training, coordinate implementation of quality recommendation from EQA agency based on accreditation and quality audit reports, and run the operation of quality assurance processes in the institution.

All over the world universities are confronting with some challenges related to QA practices. Some of these challenges are presented as introducing cost-effective IQA, in which facilities

available and processes are well articulated between each other and work together as a system; infuse IQA with planning, management, and resource allocation; creating the proper balance among the interests of management, employers, and academic staff; setting up appropriate methods to employ the best use of evidence to enhance program quality and student employability; searching for the appropriate balance of centralized and decentralized structures; and, last but not least, creatively developing new IQA that supports the development of consistent quality-enhancement processes in a university (Ehlers, 2009). In addition to the above challenges, HEIs in developing countries face supplementary problems in the organization of their IQA in their institutions. This has to do with securing adequate financial and competent human resources for IQA and operating it in an institutional context where information systems are often fragile, data are scarce, and computer-supported solutions are not easily available. QA processes and external QA practices such as accreditation and quality audit work to complement each other (Commonwealth of Learning, 2010).

### **3.2.2 Internal university environment.**

The institutionalization of quality assurance necessitates a structure or other form of organization to which clear roles and responsibilities are bestowed for carrying out quality care programs. In this regard, many organizations set up quality assurance departments or directorates. An effective structure facilitates the management and clarifies relationships, roles and responsibilities, levels of authority, and supervisory or reporting lines. By reviewing an organization's structure, a manager will be able to determine which human, financial, and technical resources are available, how they should be allocated, and which resources are lacking. One of the key influential factors for a well-functioning quality assurance system is the suitable organizational structures for quality assurance, particularly the decentralisation of responsibility and the degree of centralization in the university (EUA, 2006; Sursock, 2011).

According to Sursock (2011), the university structure with clear responsibilities and accountability lines at all levels of the university will warrant the quality assurance process to be simple and easy for closing all the reaction loopholes. However, most private institutions have a centralized, profit-oriented management structure similar to that of a private enterprise.

Structures for IQA refer to leadership positions devoted to quality assurance—collegial bodies (committees) or technical support structures (IQA offices) at both centralized and decentralized levels responsible for supporting IQA and making decisions about the quality of academic activities.

In the conceptual framework (Figure3) below the arrow that is pointing downward to link organizational structure to quality assurance practices such as self-assessment and accreditation process suggests that the type of quality structure, whether it is centralized or decentralized, could determine quality assurance practices. The structure dictates the quality assurance processes and procedures because it has a managerial role to give decisions. For the organizational capacity, the senior leadership is in charge of the strategic direction of the institutions, based on higher education policy in place; firstly, it is responsible for setting guidelines to guide the activities of staff in the institution. After laying the basic strategies, as the next task, the leadership will communicate the strategy, quality goal, and related decisions to staff members, students, and external stakeholders (EUA, 2006). From the top, the senior leadership (the President and his vices) are responsible for initial steer like monitoring, making decisions, or facilitating the process, and the lower-level leadership (deans and department heads) will take the lead in developing the quality system process.

As contended by Sursock (2011), to manage the process of quality assurance in institutions successfully, it is crucial that the management, at all levels of the university, is pulling in the same direction and be able to encourage the staff that they are key players in realizing the strategic orientation of the institution. To communicate easily and achieve common goals all internal stakeholders (Academia, students, and the management) should be on the same page or have a common understanding of quality and QA practices. The arrow in figure 3 that point towards student support service and organizational structure refers to that capacity of the management or academics may influence both of them by either enhancing or hampering them.

Quality assurance services in the university have to undertake all the various students support services. Therefore, learner support includes not only the availability of high-quality academic programs but also ensures that the students receive their study material in time, assignments are

assessed and evaluated within the stipulated timeframe and they shall be provided with academic advising and guidance. Put differently, learner support includes all variables relating to tutorial and learning services to ensure that students' learning processes are facilitated and their needs are met (AAOU, 2010). Lack of support from the organization one way or the other would hamper the implementation of internal quality assurance practice. On the contrary, proper support promotes internal quality assurance practices. The delivery of support services to students done by part-time staff could create the problem of accountability, this, in turn, affects practices in the support services which again have its impact on quality assurance practices (Ghosh & Agrawal, 2014). Therefore, the capacity of an organization that involves academic staff and the management influences the student support service is depicted by the arrow pointing the direction of influence to student support service in the conceptual framework.

Resources are another important and often neglected aspect of quality in higher education, thus the availability of resources, their adequacy, and whether up-to-date to an institution or not needs attention. These resources can be physical, i.e. infrastructure, building, labs, furniture, equipment, books, research journals, etc., human resource, i.e. faculty, administrative and other support staff; financial, i.e. funds available to carry on different projects and managing events or petty cash to run the day to day affairs. Adequate, continuous, and timely availability and utilization of these resources assures the proper implementation of various policies that are essential to achieve quality objectively. Resources within an academic setting combine all other components like policies, curriculum, and faculty input; together to mark the presence of a system. The availability of physical and virtual resources today is a key factor in proper functioning, future growth and development, and quality assurance of an academic unit, and is also catalytic in greater motivation and satisfaction of the key stakeholders: staff, faculty, and students. Comprehensive planning to acquire new resources, a policy to protect and audit existing resources, and the study of cost-benefit analysis of major resource planning, are essentially important for an institution of higher education to strategically utilize their resources for the competitive edge and play a pivot role in bringing quality.

QA costs the money and time of highly-skilled individuals. Though effective, system-wide program accreditation is costly and involves large numbers of people and complex logistics.

Without adequate funding, the quality of QA processes and hence the credibility and integrity of their outcomes are threatened. Countries need to make frank assessments of their financial capacity to undertake the range of possible QA activities and tailor their systems to their unique financial situations, as well as to their human resource constraints. On the diagram of the conceptual framework (figure 3) the arrow that links organizational capacity to quality assurance practices particularly IQA activities depict the direction of influence. Resource adequacy and whether it is up to date to current practice influence quality assurance and enhancement practices success or failure. While the four sub-systems of the case universities are interacting dynamically to provide service to students.

### **3.2.3. Institutional Environment.**

Regarding the institutional environment that influences internal quality assurance and enhancement practice, firstly, policy issues were observed from former studies that higher institutions had their respective staff development policies in place, which to a large extent guides professional advancement of staff. “The concept of institutional environment is used to describe external factors that indirectly affect an organization through societal norms, resources, and constraints”(Carroll & Huo, 1986, p.838). With this regard, the European University Association (2006) has identified staff development as an important building block of internal quality assurance and quality enhancement. Further, Romina (2013) has suggested that staff development programs on a continuous basis will help academics and non-academics to clarify and modify their behaviour, attitude, value, skills, and competencies. In this way, they grow and develop in their knowledge and thus become more effective and efficient in the performance of tasks. Thus, the policy that promotes staff development contributes to the betterment of internal quality practices.

Political-legal environment: the political-legal framework refers to the legislative and regulative aspects through which governments influence the operation of an organization. It includes the government laws, acts, sets of rules and regulations, and reform policies that govern and influence the functioning of an organization: “In the context of higher education, the legal environment may contain proclamations, funding, and quality regulatory frameworks,

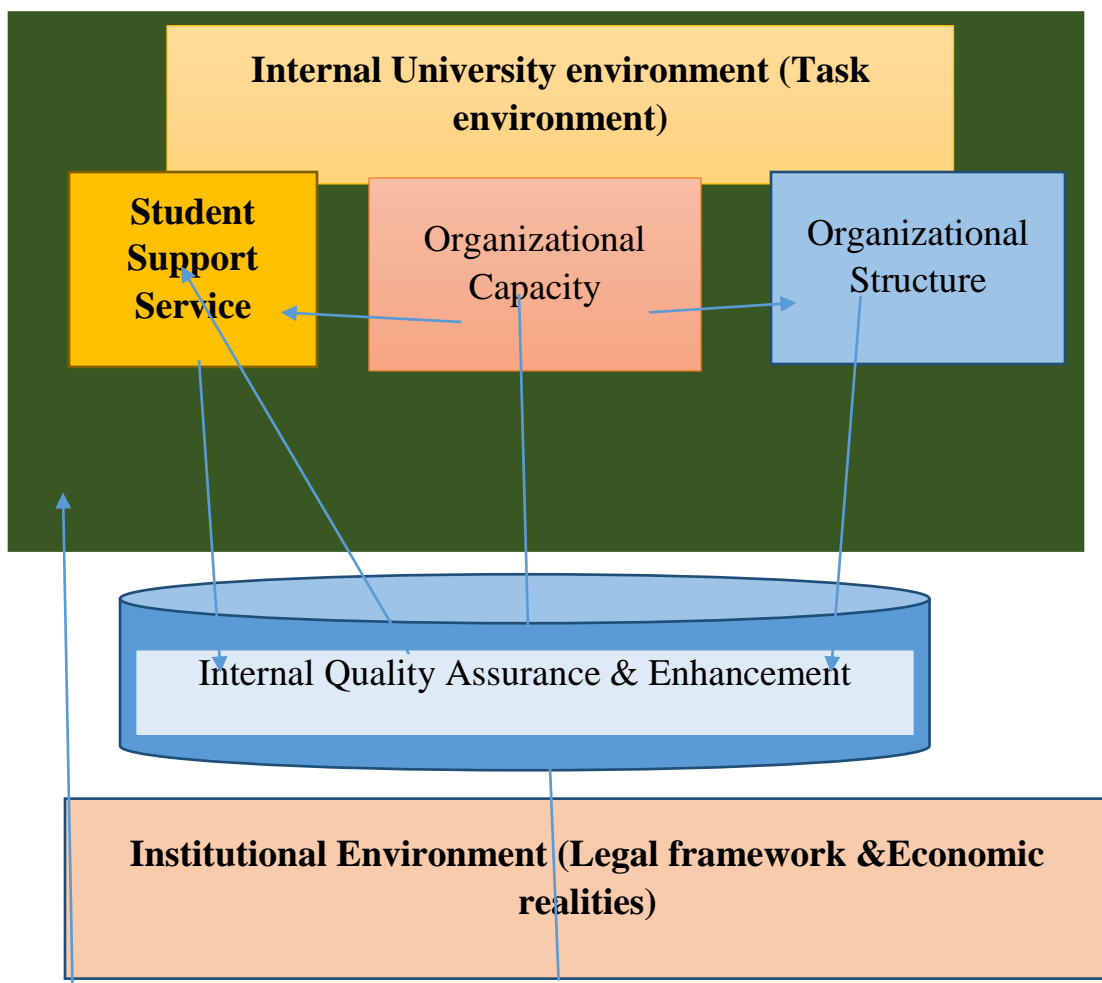
government control over higher education, and policies regarding government's initiatives to widen access" (Mulu, 2012,p.79). HERQA is the regulatory agency that carries out an evaluation or review of the quality of higher education in the Ethiopian context that influences higher education.

### ***3.2.3.1 Accreditation.***

Accreditation is the process by which "a government or private body evaluates the quality of a higher education institution as a whole or a specific educational program in order to formally recognize it as having met certain predetermined minimal criteria or standards" (IIEP, 2006, p. 19; Sanyal& Martin, 2007, p. 6). Accreditation is an important accountability instrument with which quality is verified to the taxpayers so that they are convinced of the service quality of a university.

Accreditation decisions are usually limited to a fixed period, after which the institution or program is required to engage with a more, or less, rigorous re-accreditation process.HERQA's guideline developed to regulate accreditation of CBHE in Ethiopia proposed conditions for quality assurance and accreditation of CBHE: Firstly, the foreign higher education institution (FHEI) should offer either programs/courses that have been properly accredited by an accreditation authority in its country of origin. Secondly, a local partner that seeks to operate in a collaborative arrangement with a Foreign Higher Education Institution (FHEI) shall be required to seek accreditation from HERQA. Thus, the legal framework set by HERQA stated above is one of the institutional environments that influence quality assurance and enhancement practices of both public and private HEIs in general. In (UNESCO, 2017, p.42) the document states that "the national accreditation system was seen as a highly relevant external factor that improving the internal quality assurance system at the university." Thus, the arrow in figure 3 shows the direction of influence between the external environment and the internal environment and depicts that the legal framework for accreditation of CBHE either constrains or promote the quality assurance process of universities working in collaboration with foreign institutions. There is compliance concerning the accreditation requirements of new institutions.

In addition to the legal framework, demographic factors are the socio-economic environment that has its own influence on QA systems for the number of students demanding higher education is continuously on increase at universities in sub-Saharan Africa particularly, Ethiopia needs adjustment in line with the problem. Bashir (2007 cited in Garwe, 2015) reported that most developing countries failed to match the continuous rise in demand for higher education locally and for this reason, they turned to foreign higher education providers to narrow. The conceptual framework below the arrow that originates from the institutional environment pointed to the task environment (internal university environment) depicts the direction of influence, briefly, the arrow shows that the political and legal frameworks of Ethiopia provide directions to all public or private HEIs. Particularly the CBHE guidelines are the legal framework set by HERQA to influence activities of internal quality assurance and enhancement practices of case universities of Ethiopian that work in collaboration with CBHE universities from abroad.



### **Figure. 3: Conceptual Framework of the Study**

## **Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Research studies trustworthiness relies on the appropriateness of the research design and methodology employed. This part highlights methodological details appropriate to the study. In effect, it details the rationale for the selection of study area followed by a discussion of the epistemological position assumed and the research design adopted. A comparative case study, as an appropriate design for this study, is given due emphasis. The section also explains the participants' selection process as well as methods and procedures employed in the data collection and analysis. Finally, an attempt has been made to discuss validity before discussion on ethical considerations.

### **4.2 Research Paradigm and Design of the Study**

This section presents the three forms of research paradigms followed by arguments of rationale to select the design of comparative case study.

#### **4.2.1 The Paradigmatic Perspective.**

All research is based on some underlying philosophical assumptions about what constitutes valid research and which methods are appropriate for the development of knowledge in a given study. The belief system that guides the researcher's actions and influences how knowledge is generated and interpreted is referred to as worldviews (Creswell, 2009). Others called the beliefs epistemologies and ontological orientations (Crotty, 1998 cited in Creswell, 2009), or preferably referred to as paradigms (Lincoln & Guba cited in Creswell, 2009). Epistemology is a study of the nature of knowledge or how one knows what he/she knows (Lichtman, 2006). Paradigm is another term commonly used to explain philosophical assumptions in research activities. A

paradigm influences the general orientation about the world and the methodological choice by the researcher. According to available evidence, there are three paradigms in research undertaking: positivism, constructivism, and pragmatism (Creswell, 2003, 2009).

Positivists believe that knowledge is developed based on careful observation and by developing numeric measures of observation of the objective reality that exists in the world (Creswell, 2009). Traditionally, quantitatively oriented researchers have worked within this paradigm. They analyze their data using statistical techniques and maintain a degree of objectivity in their interpretations.

On the other hand, constructivism is another perspective typically seen as an approach to qualitative research. As Tashakkori and Newman (2010) explain, this position holds that individuals seek understanding of the world and are predominantly interested in collecting narrative data to make subjective inferences based on the findings. This pursuit is predominantly interested in collecting narrative data and makes subjective implications based on the findings. Specifically, a qualitative approach is justified when the nature of research questions requires exploration (Stake, 1995) and this paradigm assumes that there is no objective reality.

The third paradigm, pragmatism, is considered the newest type of research option (Johnson and Christensen, 2004), and as another alternative philosophical foundation to date (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2012). Pragmatists believe in the use of multiple paradigms to gain multiple answers in research. In similar ways, they recognize the value of diverse perspectives, experiences, and meanings in pluralistic ways. Pragmatists, specifically, believe in pluralistic worldviews (Creswell, 2009). Such a philosophical outlook is desirable to different forms of data collection and analysis embedded within mixed-methodologies.

Scholars further explain that the three paradigms have pros and cons by themselves. For instance, there have been over increasing debates over the importance of pragmatism; adoption of the paradigm is more challenging for a single researcher such as this one. Mixing methods takes time and is too costly in many aspects. Following a positivist pursuit, on the other hand, seeks generalization of results obtained from numerical analysis rather than on the deep investigation of the problem. In contrast to this, it is assumed that the interpretive or constructivist paradigm

allows researchers to understand the specific contexts in which the problem happens (Creswell, 2003), and to enable them to develop a theory or pattern of meanings (Creswell, 2008). According to Grbich (2007) cited in Owen (2014, p.6) constructivism assumes that “there is no objective knowledge independent of thinking” and reality is socially embedded and existing entirely in the mind.

This makes reality a moving target, because it is “fluid and changing” and is constructed “jointly in interaction by the researcher and the researched.” As discussed above, it seems that constructivism is a research philosophy more appropriate to use in exploring perspectives on conceptualizations of quality and internal and external challenges influencing internal quality assurance practices.

Therefore, a decision has been made in this work to employ the epistemological position of the constructivism paradigm. The main purpose of this study is to explore conceptualizations of research participants about quality; challenges that the influences of the internal university; and institutional environments on QA and enhancement practices of host institutions of cross-border higher education service of IGNOU and FH-Mainz from participants’ point of view. A qualitative approach embedded within the constructivism paradigm deems appropriate for achieving this purpose because it seeks to understand issues or phenomena such as people, events, institutions, and activities from the participant's point of view in context-specific settings (Patton, 2002). No research perspective is more desirable than constructivism to understand participants’ attitudes, perceptions, and experiences in more depth and to helpfully answer research questions raised regarding activities and events in internal quality assurance and enhancement practices of participants under discussion.

#### **4.2.2 Rationale for Employing Qualitative Method and Comparative Case Study Design.**

Qualitative research is process-oriented in nature. As such, the social world is viewed in terms of processes. Qualitative research attempts to examine events and meanings as they unfold, and help understand the contingencies that influence the manner in which such events evolve. This is because this knowledge claim is predominantly interested in the collection of narrative data in a natural setting. Thus, in this research, the qualitative method is chosen based on the assumption

that studying quality assurance practices of host institutions is an ongoing process involving conceptualizations of the different actors who have deeper knowledge and experience concerning the issue under study.

It is all common to find five traditions in qualitative inquiry. One is grounded theory; this is concerned with the development of theory out of data (Bryman, 2012). Referring to the second qualitative research design, Bryman explains ethnography as “a study in which participant observation is the prevalent research method but that also has a specific focus on the culture of the group in which the ethnographer is immersed” (p. 432). In narrative research designs, researchers describe the lives of individuals, collect and tell stories about people’s lives, and write narratives of individual experiences (Creswell, 2012). Literature also provides phenomenology and case study as the type of qualitative research design. Among the five traditions of qualitative inquiry, a case study is a bounded system with a set of interrelated elements that form an organized whole. Yin (2009) defines a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates contemporary phenomena in depth and within their real-life context. The case study produces the type of context-dependent knowledge in the study of human affairs, there appears to exist only context-dependent knowledge. Bryman (2012) depicts that a case is an object of interest in its own right, and the researcher aims to provide an in-depth clarification of it. Defined this way, case study research provides a rich and thick exploration into a single social phenomenon or situation. It excels at producing an understanding of a complex issue and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2003).

According to Yin (2009) case study helps investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context. It is desirable when the researcher seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the case (Creswell, 2009) and when the research questions require an extensive and in-depth description of the phenomenon (Yin, 2009). A hallmark of case study research is the use of multiple data sources, a strategy that also enhances data credibility (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003). It seems that the design is appropriate to the different aspects of the problem under investigation as an organic, interrelated whole. Within the scope of this study, it is not feasible to study quality assurance practices in all host universities at work with cross-border providers in

Ethiopia. It is thus decided to choose two cases, to explore issues of quality assurance, and enhancement practices. (Johnson and Christenson,2017,p.899) point out that “Case study researchers view each case as having an internal and an external context”.Concomitant to thisresearch, a case study was an appropriate method selected to analyze views of students, academic staff and the management linked to the internal host university context of this study, namely, organizational and capacity structures, student support services and the institutional factors that influence the implementation of QA and enhancement in case universities.

In general, the case study research is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. As a result, a comparative case study design, which focuses on a particular issue, is considered an appropriate design for this particular study. This is because it is unlikely to study the contexts of two cases that are different to some extent (Yin, 2009).

#### **4.2.3 Comparative Case Study.**

According to Bryman (2012), the comparative design embodies the logic of comparison in that it implies that we can understand social phenomena better when they are compared with two meaningfully contrasting cases or situations, that is to say, comparative research in education by definition implies finding the differences among similarities or determining the similarities among different educational systems on a global, national or local level. Research also reveals that comparative studies have undertaken are not only limited to exploring similarities and differences but also to provide opportunities to learn experiences from each other and improving knowledge about one’s practices. What is considered a disadvantage in using this design is that the researcher may sacrifice the depth of analysis for the breadth of analysis. In line with this Johnson and Christensen (2012, pp. 337-338) contend that “this is the classic depth-versus-breadth trade-off in case study research”. In response to the purpose of comparison, Balci (2007) reflects that the aim of comparison to include purposes is to define, convince, inform, and benefit in addition to showing similarities and differences. In particular to this study, a comparative case study is a response to learn from in-depth comparisons of QA experiences of host institutions working with cross border higher education providers instead of offering general explanations.

The two host institutions one public and the other private are selected for comparison based on their functional equivalence in that both of them run MBA programs in collaboration with CBHE. Additionally, both case institutions produce graduates for domestic as well as international markets. Concerning quality assurance regulation, both case-1 case-2 has been audited by HERQA twice. Additionally, both institutions are located in the capital city so that the infrastructure service such as internet access, electric power, and access to the road is similar. Concerning, the difference between the two cases: (1) one is a public higher institution whereas the other one is private; (2) the Public Host University gains its budget from the national treasury while the Private Host University generate its income from student fees.

### **4.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques**

In this section, the total population of research of the two case universities are presented followed by the samples selected purposively from MBA students, academic, management, and support staff from the library and registrar office.

#### **4.3.1 Population of the Research.**

Prior to the sampling of human subjects, it is attempted to identify those institutions subject to the study. This comparative study is intended to explore issues within the international dimension. In terms of higher education service, there are only two cross-border HE providers in Ethiopia (Indira Gandhi National Open University and FH Mainz University), working in partnership with local private higher institutions. The focus of this study is to explore the conceptualization of quality and challenges influencing QA practices of two host institutions working with CBHE providers. The University of South Africa (UNISA), for example, is a cross-border higher education provider, but it is not considered because it has no reasonable partner within a local context. Accordingly, in this comparative study, IGNOU and FH- Mainz are targeted as one category of the population of the study from the perspective of Case-2 and Case-1. These two host universities have a link with CBHE providers and have long experience in relation to other higher institutions. Besides, they have also set their own internal quality assurance units in place and submitted their audit report to HERQA.

This research purposely engaged in diverse participants of the organization with various cultural backgrounds to generate deeper insights into how and what participants of this research conceptualized in light of conception of quality, internal and external host university challenges that determine the implementation process of QA and enhancement practices. On top of that, participants from both sexes and staff hired on a full time and part-time basis were considered. Accordingly, the participants of the study comprised of first and second-year MBA students. The MBA program was selected because it is dominantly offered in CBHE programs in Ethiopian. Participants from the departments were picked out from host institutes operating in collaboration with Indira Gandhi National Open University and FH-Mainz cross-border higher education providers at Addis Ababa campuses. This selection of participants is based on the assumption that they are the major actors in the teaching and learning process that primarily determine the implementation process of QA and enhancement in host institutions. In addition, student representatives of MBA programs was selected based on purposive sampling, for the reason that the participants have better awareness about CBHE providers. The research also involved academic staff, heads of departments, distance course coordinators, vice presidents, and quality management experts in the respective institutions. To gain additional details about the context of the partnership history of the partnership has been presented as follows.

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and FH-Mainz University are the prime providers of higher education intended to expand global cooperation through partnerships with two sister local institutions in Ethiopia: case-1 and case-2. Indira Gandhi National Open University is the partner of case-2, an Ethiopian senior private institution whereas case-1, which also operates in Addis Ababa, is the host institution of FH-Mainz University from Germany. Today, case-2 affiliated cross-border higher education provider, IGNOU, has an impressive profile of great magnitude attributed to its global presence in thirty-six countries and sixty-one partner institutions. This makes it an emerging major distance learning university in the world. As a global leader in distance education, it was conferred the Centre of Excellence Award in Distance Education in 1993 and the Award of Excellence for Distance Education Materials in 1999 by the Commonwealth of Learning, Canada. In July 2010 the Web Metrics Ranking of World Universities, which ranks universities on the basis of their calibre on the Internet, ranked

IGNOU as eleventh in South Asia (CSIC, 2010a) and tenth amongst Indian universities (CSIC, 2010b).IGNOU at present offers 125 programs of study through 1000 courses to a cumulative student strength of about 14, 334, and 90 all over the world. These programs are offered in widely diverse areas and at different levels covering a Doctorate degree, Master's, and Bachelor's degree.

Fachhochschulen (FH Mainz) or the University of Applied Sciences and Arts at Mainz is a type of German institution of higher education that emerged from the traditional Engineering Schools and similar professional schools of other disciplines. It differs from the traditional university mainly through its more practical orientation. Subjects taught at Fachhochschulen include engineering, computer science, business and management, arts and design, communication studies, social service, and other professional fields. In an effort to make educational degrees more compatible within Europe, the German degrees were mostly phased out by 2010 and replaced by the European bachelor's degree. Currently, FH-Mainz is one of the CBHE institutions working with the public and founding institution case-1. FH/Mainz and case-1 have signed a bilateral memorandum of understanding (MoU) that commits the two organizations to work together in line with the design, development, and implementation processes of the bilateral CBHE program.

#### **4.3.2 Sampling Techniques and Procedures.**

In a qualitative study of this type, sample size varies on breadth and complexity of inquiry, but important individuals can be purposefully selected for the essential information they can provide. In line with this, Galvin and Galvin (2017) argue that purposive samples are selected based on the careful judgment of the researcher regarding the type of individuals they consider to be an especially good source of data for a particular research topic. Although there is no clearcut formula that determines sample size, Teddlie and Yu (2007) suggest the use of a sample of 30 in number and less can suffice the need to generate narrative data. Creswell (2012) also reports that the number of study participants may range from one to 30 or 40. According to him in qualitative studies, the larger number of cases can become cumbersome to deal with as the need is to report details about each individual and site. On top of this, it is assumed that the addition of each

individual or site (sight) only lengthens time. It is typical in qualitative research to study a few individuals or a few cases. Generally, sample sizes in qualitative studies are smaller than those used in quantitative studies. As it is all common to find purposive sampling in qualitative studies, it is a useful technique to help select participants in this study. Researchers portray purposive sampling as a deliberate way with some purpose in mind. However, this sampling method has got its own shortcomings in line with this Johnson and Christensen (2017, p.575.) stated:

Purposive sampling has the same limitations as any non-random sampling method. Specifically, the ability to generalize from a sample to a population on the basis of a single research study is severely limited. The optimal situation would be for the researcher to specify the criteria that potential participants must meet to be included in a research study.

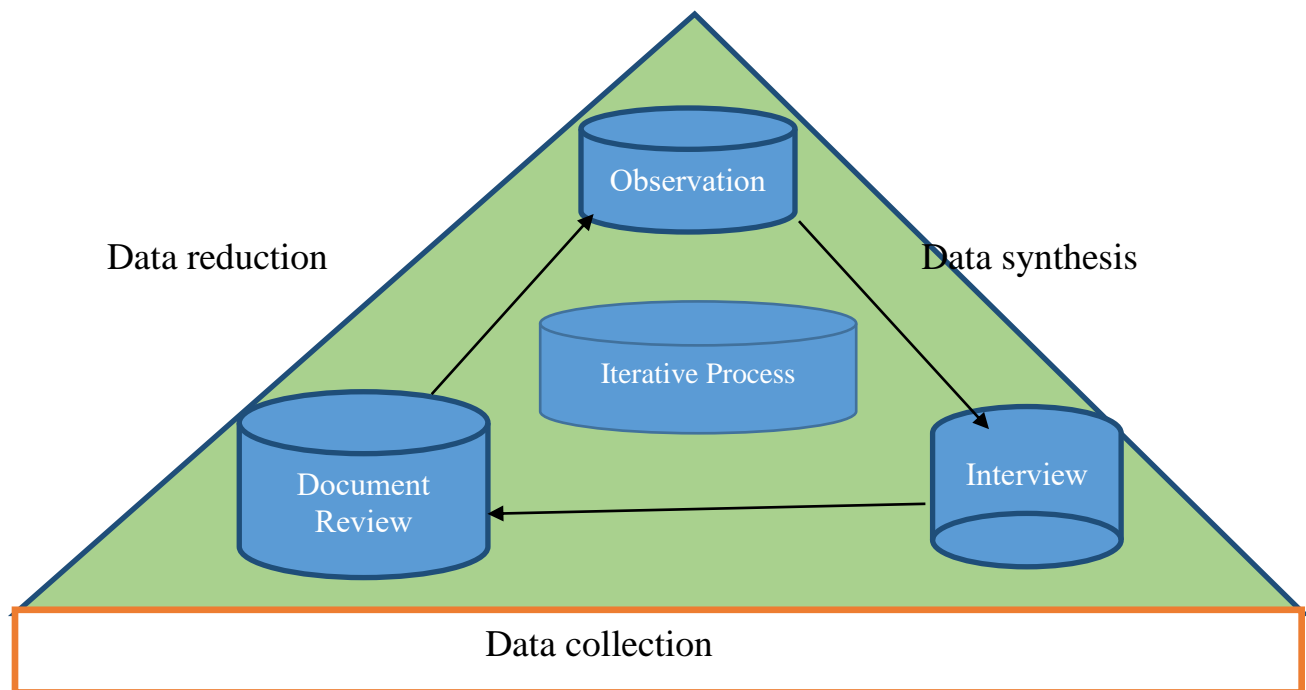
In this study, purposive sampling is selected because it aims to seek rich data through an in-depth study (Johnson and Christensen, 2004, 2012, 2017). Its purpose is to maximize information or digging in-depth rather than facilitating generalization (Teddie&Tashakkori, 2003). Further, this sampling technique seeks to include the full spectrum of cases and reflect the diversity within a given population by including extreme or negative cases (Curry et al., 2009). Therefore, employing purposive sampling techniques helps generate adequate data from participants.

Accordingly, participants of the research are selected based on criteria: (1) their responsibility in management of MBA programs, (2) quality assurance offices, (3) knowledge they have about CBHE providers. The study involved students, academic staff, distance course coordinators, resource centre heads, department heads, and vice presidents of the host universities. The sampling process has proceeded until the data saturation level was reached. As evidence of the sampling process Charmaz (2006 cited in Bryman,2012) puts it, when new data no longer stimulate new theoretical understandings or new dimensions of the principal theoretical categories, the relevant categories are saturated.

#### **4.4 Methods of Data Collection**

The study employed three data collection instruments: semi-structured interviews, document reviews, and observations. Relying on pluralist sources of information, i.e., using a variety of techniques is consistent with the case study approach chosen for this study. This is also

congruent with the researcher's philosophical stance discussed earlier. Regarding this, Patton (1990) argues that the multiple sources of data allow the researcher to validate and crosscheck findings.



**Figure. 4: Methods used in the data collection process of the research**

As it is shown in figure 4 above, documentary evidence, interview and the observation tools were employed to collect data and based on data in an iterative procedure. Here, the researcher has selected possible sources of documents for reviewing the process and exploring pertinent data, and making decisions about what to explore in-depth. The three data collection instruments were revised based on the critical comments forwarded by two PhD candidates and a professor. The comments received also helped the researcher to reduce some data sources and develop new ones for effective data synthesis. The diagram shows that the base of the triangle being wider than the two sides indicates that plentiful data were collected first. Through the process of synthesis and data, reduction appropriate data were collected in an iterative process. Iterative is a process of not a onetime task, but an ongoing process that entails several repetitions. Data

collection and analysis were conducted repeatedly three times to review the interview questions. The repetition was undertaken to refine data collection instruments.

#### 4.4.1 Document Analysis.

The sources that provide highly credible data related to administrative, organizational aspects in relation to the organizational structure of case universities are focused. Documents of all types can help the researcher uncover meaning to develop understanding and discover insights relevant to the research problem. As stated by Yin (1994), nevertheless, documentary information must be relevant to every case topic. For instance, the documents used as a source of data include: memorandum of understanding or partnership-agreement documents between the cross-border universities and the Ethiopian host University, Academic Standards and Quality Assurance document (ASQA and CEIQA), and Strategic plans of case-1 and case-2, including HERQA's document on cross-border higher education accreditation and regulate on the guideline.

**Table 1: Documents reviewed in case-1**

No	Institutions	Type of documents
1	Case-1	-MOU(Memorandum of Understanding)4 page -ASQA document - Strategic plan
2	Case-2	-CEIQA documents(170 pages) -Public relation brochure -Strategic plan
3	HERQA	-CBHE guidelines

#### 4.4.2 Semi-structured Interview with Participants.

Researchers in qualitative studies most often use interviews as an important data collection method to gain deeper data that cannot be directly observed (Patton, 1990). Interviews are important data collection techniques for case studies in particular. Researchers in qualitative research collect data consisting largely of words or text from participants. Therefore, interviews

are used to get a deeper and further understanding of what participants perceive pertaining to quality assurance practices in the context of both host universities of IGNOU and FH-Mainz. These human affairs should be reported and interpreted through the eye of the specific interviewee, and well-informed participants that provide important insight into a situation Yin, (1994). Interviews can be fully structured, semi-structured, or unstructured Robson, (2002). Semi-structured interviews have a standard list of questions that allow the interviewer to follow up and it also allows a set of a relatively flexible type of questions to be asked at the same time. The semi-structured format is chosen to enable a free flow of perceptions and ideas from the interviewee Tibebu, Tridib and Solomon, (2009). It can give the opportunity to probe beyond the protocol (Lodico, Spaulding &Voegtle, 2006). It also encourages rapport with the interviewee so that s/he feels comfortable to discuss and provide the information required. As a result, the interviewees themselves raised additional or complementary issues and these will form an integral part of the study's findings. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted to allow for the emergence of novel information offering new directions. Therefore, the use of semi-structured interview, in this study, allows an important range of questions to be directed to respondents who assume different responsibilities in the universities under study.

In terms of structure, the interview began with background issues consisting of introductory questions about the professional background followed by major issues of concern in the study (Appendix-A). That is to mean interview guides were used to probe respondents' opinion regarding their conceptions of quality and quality assurance practices and internal and external factors that impede quality practices. Additional issues of interview protocol included accreditation and self-assessment issues. Participants were also asked for their views regarding student support service, organizational structure and organizational capacity. The interviewees concluded with questions that invite additional comments and suggestions.

As Bryman (2012) argues interviews will be conducted with appropriate respondents to collect and clear up problems in question formulation and to ensure if the instruments function appropriately. In view of this, interviews were conducted with academics, department heads, some selected representative-students of the two institutions and quality assurance experts. The intention of conducting interviews with these participants was to gain in-depth information in the

area of the study. That is, it was thought that they assume to have better understanding and insight due to their different positions they hold as well as specialist knowledge and experience in CBHE. According to Creswell (2012), an interview involves a series of steps. To that end, in this research, consent to conduct interviews was obtained from responsible organs in the first place. Following acceptance of informed consent, appointments were scheduled for the final interviews through follow up phone calls. I conducted all the interviews alone following schedules. Henceforth questions were posed to all the participants in the arrangement of semi-structured interview questions. All possible ethical concerns are observed before and even during the conduct of the interview. Some participants were tape-recorded for their views, while others refused to be recorded. Concerning those participants who (refused to be recorded) declined during data collection I have used transcriptions of field note to jot down their reflections, just to maintain the continuation of the interview processes.

In general, the semi-structured interview sessions approximately lasted from 45 minutes to an hour. During the interview activities include: (a) when new questions were derived during the interviews or to allow interviewees to elaborate their responses and explore issues that I did not anticipate, participants were asked to elaborate on their opinions, thoughts, and perceptions until the response was well understood (b) all interviews were transcribed verbatim and checked by the participants to ensure correctness. It was found that the contents of the interviews had almost reached saturation. This was revealed in further interviewees conducted that generated redundant information. Similarly, to this effect, all interviewees are made to receive an explanatory letter incorporating ethical issues. In view of this, it explains that all information provided shall be kept confidential and the participation is voluntary. Participants can choose not to participate and depart before the completion of an interview without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way. It was delivered through in person or face-to-face approach with all study participants: students, academic staff, department heads, distance course coordinators, library heads, registrar office heads, deans, quality assurance managers. Undertaking interviews with these respondents are imperative for two reasons: for one thing, they directly or indirectly take a stake regarding quality matters and they can provide deep insight pertinent to the different positions they assume for others.

As Ellis et.al (2007) stated, quality for HE is an elusive term as it may suggest the notion of accountability at the expense of improvements. Yet, quality has to be conceptualized in order to improve it. Data collection and analysis took place between June 2018 and May 2019. Regarding the collection of data, the required ethical clearance was gained from higher officials of the host institutions and informed consent from interview participants. Pseudonyms (1-11) were used to anonymise interview participants. The twenty-two interviewees are labelled in pseudo names for anonymity as displayed on table 2 and table 3 for case-1 and case-2 respectively.

**Table 2: Participants interviewed in case-1**

No	Participants	Organization	Level of Education	pseudo-name
1	Management	Case-1	PhD.	Gashaw
2	Management	Case-1	M.A	Biruk
3	Management	Case-1	M.A	Lelise
4	Academic staff	Case-1	PhD.	Demeke
5	Academic staff	Case-1	PhD.	Soresa
6	Academic staff	Case-1	PhD.	Hailu
7	Student representative	Case-1	B.A	Tibebu
8	Student representative	Case-1	B.A	Almaz
9	Student representative	Case-1	B.A	Boru
10	Library head	Case-1	M.A	Kaleab
11	Registrar office head	Case-1	M.A	Neima

**Table 3: Participants interviewed in Case-2**

No	Participants	Organization	Level of Education	Pseudo name
1	Management	Case-2	PhD.	Asnake
2	Management	Case-2	PhD.	Liben
3	Management	Case-2	PhD.	Zewge
4	Academic staff	Case-2	PhD.	Teferi
5	Academic staff	Case-2	PhD.	Teklay
6	Academic staff	Case-2	PhD.	Marru
7	Student representative	Case-2	B.A	Tirsit
8	Student representative	Case-2	B.A	Zewdu
9	Student representative	Case-2	B.A	Mishamo
10	Library head	Case-2	M.A	Damtew
11	Registrar office head	Case-2	M.A	Tolossa

**4.4.3 Observation.**

Field observation can be a detailed notation of behaviours, events and contexts (Best & Kahn, 2006). Notably, it helps understand the context besides what the respondents have responded during the interview. Observation of learning environments was conducted so as to triangulate information collected through the interview method regarding resources of case institutions. This is because, observation and self-review reports are closely connected, which are widely used to follow-up on the self-review reports. In general, the observation process also helps cross-check the data collected from the three stakeholders of the interview: students, academic staff and higher education managers to complement data collected through other methods and become part

of most schemes of triangulation. In this research, observation is used as an important tool to collect more accurate data on internal quality assurance and enhancement practices.

To collect observational data, host universities of both cross-border institutions, IGNOU and FH-Mainz in Addis Ababa have visited following an appointment made in advance to visiting day. With regards to this study, field notes (not a checklist) were used as a primary observational tool. Then data were collected by writing adequate data instead of checking items in the observation sheet. Hereafter, observational data of the occurrences of events and physical appearances regarding internal quality assurance processes are meticulously detailed to help address research objectives. As also indicated by Best and Kahn (2006), the notes may contain direct quotations whenever possible; the quotes may be paraphrased as required. Some basic information such as the date, the place and time of the observation, the type of activities, and other pertinent information are presented in the field note. In addition to the use of field note, entities to be observed were recorded using mobile smartphones which are currently, appropriate electronic means to capture adequate data. Archives, libraries, ICT rooms, and resource rooms were visited twice to observe documents, students reading in the libraries and resource rooms. While visiting, particularly the contribution of CBHE to host institution to facilitate ICT rooms has been captured with an electronic camera in case-1.

#### **4.5 Method of Data Analysis**

According to Stake (1995, p. 71): “there is no particular moment when data analysis begins. The analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilation.” Case study research requires an extensive and in-depth description of the phenomenon to better understand the case under study. Thus, the data analysis method employed could enable achieving this purpose. Accordingly, this research uses thematic analysis which provides a rich and detailed description of the data set. To manage time and handle data properly, data obtained through interview and document review including observational data was analysed independently and interpreted employing text analysis, description, and narration methods. Tape-recorded responses were transcribed into words and together with notes taken during interview and observation including data obtained via document reviews were summarized ultimately. The

data were also coded. At the end of the coding process, themes recurring now and then were identified for analysis. Henceforth, major themes emerged as the main point, together with the researcher's own explanation of each theme, were written up as the findings.

In presenting interview data, direct quotations were used to transcribe what the interviewees have said word for word. Here transcription is needed for two reasons. The first and important one is to keep the tape-recorded interview data in its written format. Secondly, selective transcription is used to avoid extraneous information which does not contribute to the purpose of the study. There are some conventions to follow when quoting an interview transcript. For instance, it is appropriate to indicate who is speaking in the quotation. In this study, as pointed by Bryman (2012) pseudonyms were introduced before the quotations. The interview sentence in quotation marks has set out from the main body text by indenting it in order to differentiate between the presentation data from the analysis data. Following the in-depth analysis and findings of each case, cross-case analysis has been conducted to identify similarities and differences between the two cases. The cross-case analysis proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Stake (2006), as a central attribute to this research project. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) and Stake (2006), an important reason for doing cross-case analysis in multiple case studies is to deepen understanding and explanation of how the program or phenomenon performs in different environments. If multiple cases are used, then each case is usually first examined as a separate entity called within-case analysis for similarities (patterns that cut across the cases) as well as differences. When people or groups of people are studied, an attempt is usually made to reconstruct the participants' realities and portray the multiple viewpoints existing in the case. To generate codes in thematic analysis for case1 and case2, the transcripts were thoroughly coded to identify, analyze and summarize themes of repeated patterns of meaning across the data set collected using a semi-structured interview, document review and field notes.

Following, the interviews, documents reviews and observations data were analyzed using within-case analysis based on the research questions and the conceptual framework first. Secondly, the in-depth analysis of the findings of each case was conducted through cross-case analysis so as to identify similarities and differences between the two cases. An important reason for doing cross-

case analysis in multiple case studies is to deepen understanding and explanation of how the program or phenomenon performs in different contexts.

## **4.6 Validity (Trustworthiness) and Ethical Concerns**

### **4.6.1 Validity Issues.**

Validity in qualitative inquiry has to do with being credible. It refers to the bridge between a construct and the data. The constructivist approach does not apply the scientific values of validity, objectivity, or generalizability “in the same way (or at all)” as in the traditions of positivistic or logical empiricist approaches. In general, constructivists discard scientific inquiry that adopts lasting totally objective and “hold that knowledge of the world is not a simple reflection of what there is, but a set of social artefacts of what we make is there” (Glesne, 2006, pp. 6-7).

To address credibility, this study employs triangulation of three sources of data and data collection instruments which are the common strategy that is widely used for improving validity in qualitative research. Research has shown that it is a strategy of substantiation, which helps the researcher to be more confident in the study findings and conclusion. Despite this, the issue of validity in qualitative research is more than triangulation. Triangulation is using more than one method to collect data on the same topic. According to Johnson and Christenson (2012; 2017) triangulation is a way of assuring the validity of research through the use of a variety of methods to collect data on the same topic, which involves different types of samples as well as methods of data collection.

In some cases, it may be necessary to collect data in more than one way or from more than one source, so as to gain a greater understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Definitions of researchers on triangulation highlighted that triangulation is used to describe research where two or more methods are used, known as mixed methods the two scholars further pointed out: Triangulation also involves the sources (participants) from which the data was collected. These data sources emphasize the contributions made by the management, practitioners and students via their voices, insights, experiences, view and value of QA from their various spaces in their

setting. The process of triangulation from several facets of this research permits alternative interpretations, labelled by Yin (2009, 2011) as competing explanations that race and cannot co-exist.

Literature also uncovers transferability, dependability and confirmability equally important to ensure creditability findings in qualitative research of this type (Patton, 2002). Numerous outlines have been developed to appraise the rigour of the trustworthiness of qualitative data (e.g., Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and strategies for establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability have been extensively written about across fields (e.g., Krefling, 1991; Sandelowski, 1986, 1993). To this effect, an attempt was made to provide a thick description of the phenomenon under study presented in the next three consecutive chapters. Besides, an effort is exerted to maintain stability or consistency (dependability) of findings over time. Further, the findings of the study shall remain as objective as possible, being freed from the researcher's personal biases at least. In short, other than sole reliance on triangulation, the use of combined strategies such as single case analysis and comparative case analysis treated in the next three chapters expected to promote qualitative research validity. The concern of validity well-thought-out and the strategies employed throughout the qualitative data collection, analysis, and write-up process every time possible.

#### **4.6.2 Ethical Considerations.**

It is anticipated that any ethical issue may arise during the qualitative research process (Creswell, 2009). In research that involves collecting data from people, about people, researchers need to protect their research participants by developing trust with them, promoting the integrity of the research, guarding against misconduct that might reflect on their organizations or institutions, and cope with new challenging problems (Creswell, 2008). Hence, first and foremost the researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values and desires of participants.

The consent of College deans of the respective home institutions was secured first by explaining the objectives of the study by submitting supportive letters from the college of Education and Behavioral Studies. Similarly, the data collection through interviews, observations and document review was carried out with consent from participants of the research. In respect to this, every participant was informed about the topic and the purpose of the research while the interview

session was started. Then, it was sure that the information they provided neither used against them nor revealed their identity in any way. In other words, participants who are willing to participate in the research are assured that he/she would not be identified with any particular viewpoint or opinion in the report. As the research involves human participants, participants privacy, dignity, wellbeing and freedom have to be safeguarded (Bryman, 2012). Thus, the anonymity and confidentiality of participants of the research were considered to be concealed. In addition, they are also guaranteed the right to opt-out of the study at any time.

## **Chapter Five: Analysis and Results of Case-1**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this section, the analyses and findings of the data drawn from interviews with three MBA student representatives, three academic staff, three management staff, two staff from student support service (libraries and registrar offices) data from document review, and field notes are presented. The study focuses on the presentation and analysis of a public university (case-1) that hosts the CBHE FH-Mainz based on the research problem formulated at the beginning of the study. The chapter portrays data collected from purposively selected academic staff, students and the management and identifies perspectives on quality first. In the remaining section, the analysis of the exploration of conceptualization of participants is presented on the internal university environment and institutional challenges that influence quality assurance and enhancement practices proceeds. In the end, the contributions of the CBHE to the hosting institution have been analyzed.

#### **5.1.1 The Institutional Context of Host University and its CBHE partner.**

Recently, the number of public universities climbed and reached 46 while a similar radical increase took place in private HEIs operating in Ethiopia, which is nearly 198 in number. Out of the total private HEIs, 10 % of them were added within three months between April and August 2019 academic year. Following, the mounting number of private HEIs at an alarming rate HERQA conducted a surprise visit as a means of quality assurance to monitor unfair practices and took corrective measures on those institutions operating without being accredited by the agency Reporter-News Letter (2019).

Abebe (2014) points out that Addis Ababa University (AAU) initiated on March 20, 1950, with the establishment of the University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA) where learning started with 70 students and 9 staffs. It was renamed Haile Sellassie I University College (HIUC) in 1962 and then Addis Ababa University in 1975 followed by the revolutionary regime that took place in 1974. Addis Ababa University remained the only higher learning institution in the country for

over half a century despite the challenges and changes in the name that give a clue concerning the political pressure behind the process. However, it is still the oldest and the largest university with over 10 inner cities and outskirts campuses. Comparison of its foundation with current status, according to AAU's annual abstract, in 2018 academic year shows that beginning with an enrolment of 33 students in 1950, in 2018 AAU has a total enrolment of over 52,000 students enrollment is hiking higher by 1575 times and over 8, 000 staff of which about 2,691 academic and about 5,385 support. It runs about 70 undergraduate and 293 graduate programs (72 PhD, 221 Masters) (Addis Ababa University Education Statistics Annual Abstract, 2018, p.1). The university started its first Master's programs in 1978 and its first PhD programs in 1987(see <http://www//aau.edu.et>). Currently, AAU has given priority to postgraduate programs as a policy direction of the country and MA programs were selected for this study based on their largest number compared to UG and PhD programs (Addis Ababa University Strategic plan, 2015). Addis Ababa University was selected in this study because it is a flagship and public host institution operating in collaboration with CBHE based in Germany. Under Economics and Management College (Co.EM) the target of this study, the Management department is the local partners with CBHE FH-Mainz University from Germany.

The former Faculty of Business and Economics has its origin in the creation of the Department of Economics in 1959 under the Faculty of Art of the University College of Addis Ababa. This first move was followed by the establishment of the College of Business Administration in 1963, which consisted of two departments, namely the Department of Management and the Department of Accounting. In 1978 the College of Business Administration, the Faculty of Art and the School of Social Work were merged to form the College of Social Sciences. Twelve years later (in 1990), the University Senate decided to reorganize the College of Social Sciences, which resulted in the formation of the Faculty of Business and Economics (FBE). Following the formation of FBE, the faculty office moved from the main campus to the former place of the Crown Prince in 1992. Then in 2010, the School of Commerce, the School of Information Sciences and the Faculty of Business and Economics were merged and named "The College of Management, Information, and Economic Sciences". In April 2012, because of the revised governance system of the university, the college restructured and was named the College of

Business and Economics, consisting of four departments and one school (College of Business and Economics, 2019).

German universities maintain more than 20,000 international partnerships with approximately 4,100 universities in over 140 countries worldwide. The German university systems are extremely diverse with almost 2.5 million students enrolled at about 440 universities in 180 cities in Germany. There are three types' universities such as Universities for scientifically oriented study, universities of applied sciences for practically oriented study and College of art, film, and music for artistic study (DAAD, 2014). University (Universität) including Technical Universities (TU) and Universities of Applied sciences (Fachhochschule/ FH) have a lot in common: both have bachelor's and master's programs. At both students sit in lectures and seminars, write exams and chores, get credit points and grades. At both, you do an academic degree. Universities as well as FHs are supposed to teach their students scientific thinking and are obliged to train them with an "employment-qualifying" degree. Almost all universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschule- FH) have a compulsory practical semester to study, which is completed in one company. Graduation from a Fachhochschule can be achieved in about 4 years, whereas at universities more than 5 years have to be spent on average before a degree can be obtained. Until recently, there were no tuition fees at public institutions of higher education, but due to the different lengths of study courses, the opportunity costs of university attendance are higher. As the Fachhochschulen are more wide-spread across the country than universities, living costs may also be lower. Fachhochschulen is located in smaller cities, and students may not even have to leave the parental home in order to study. This has changed recently in the course of the Bologna Process with the introduction of the Bachelor/ Master system, which has led to a convergence of the two tiers of higher education in terms of course length. Besides, the Fachhochschulen are also trying to gain equal footing with universities in other respects, e.g. by naming themselves "university of applied sciences" or by demanding the right to confer PhD degrees, which had formerly been the exclusive privilege of universities.

The following table describes the academic and supporting staff profile of the department of management case-1. The academic staff of the department is dominantly (77%) MA holders and

the remaining seven academic staff (23%) are with higher academic rank out of which five of them are assistant professors, a professor and an associate professor.

**Table 4: Academic and supporting staff of the Management department**

College	Department	Academic staff				Rank	Supporting staff			Status
		Sex	M	F	T		M	F	T	
College of Economics and Management	Management department		28	2	30	Lecturer	1		1	Library head
			5	0	5	Assis. Professor		1	1	Secretary
			1	0	1	Asso. Professor	1		1	Registrar's head
			1	0	1	Professor				
			Total-35				Total- 3			

The following table comprised a total of 430 MBA students attending three different modalities such as regular, extension, and distance education. Regular students attend a two-year program whereas extension and distance MBA students stay for three years to complete their program.

**Table 5: Statistics of MBA students in case-1**

Postgraduate Program			Regular students			Extension students			Distance students		
College	Department	Sex	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
College of Management and Economics	MBA	Year-I	28	26	54	61	35	96	--	--	--
		Year-II	33	12	45	47	24	71	--	--	--
		Year-III	-	-	-	64	17	81	68	15	83
		Total MBA									

## 5.2. Perspectives of Quality

Based on the conceptual framework this research focuses on the internal university environments of case-1 that comprise the organizational structure, the student support service, and organizational capacity whereas the institutional environment refers to the CBHE legal frameworks of HERQA. The quality conception of samples of academic staff, representatives of MBA students, head of the management department, and quality-unit management experts were analyzed. The analysis was grounded on the reason that exploring participants' conceptualizations of quality, the internal, and external challenges influencing quality assurance practices should come first to assure or improve quality. Confirming the former argument Ellis et al. (2007) stated that quality has to be conceptualized first to improve it and awareness of quality in the organization is an important starting point for the enhancement of educational quality and a well-functioning quality assurance system.

To research question 1 that stated: how do you conceptualize quality? For instance, an academic participant (Demeke) from the management department reflected his conception of quality:

Quality in the context of higher education in Ethiopia can be viewed from the policy perspective that emphasizes the country's human resource development. The existing, HEI policy of Ethiopia focuses on human capital formation. In the process of human resources development, HEIs help students develop their knowledge, skill, and attitude. Thus, quality is all about producing competent graduates, based on the underlying philosophy of the country which is human capital formation. However, in the process of human development in Ethiopian HEIs, priority was given to citizens to access higher education in general than a quality education.

Quality for Demeke is about producing competent graduates but at the same time, he stresses the fact that quality factor may have been disregarded since priority has been given to citizens to get access to higher education in general. In view of a veteran academic participant's conceptualization of quality that the national vision of the country was prioritised by concentrating on the human capital formation that meets national standards. To meet the urgent need for human capital the country focused on the expansion of HEIs to accommodate more students. However, meeting the national standard is challenged by increasing the enrollment of students from year to year. Reply of the veteran academic participant signifies quality conception

from a broader perspective in this research. For (Demeke) quality means to meet the national standard. In the Ethiopian HEIs context the national vision cascaded into university vision first and then further tailored into the curriculum of different programs to be translated into action in the process of producing capable graduates that contribute towards the social, economic and political developments of the country. Alike to Demeke's broader definition of quality, HERQA's document defines quality as fitness for purpose and all HEIs in Ethiopia adopted this definition and commonly employ it (Teshome & Kassahun, 2008; HERQA, 2011). Thus, fitness for a purpose is a quality definition shared among all private and public HEIs in Ethiopia aimed to achieve the national vision (human capital formation). Overall, the reply of the academic participant and HERQA's document signifies quality conception from a broader perspective.

In a narrow perspective, the AAU Education Statistics Annual Abstract document define quality institution-wide. The document states that quality is to meet the graduates' profile set by each program delivered at the university. According to this document, the graduate profiles are explanations of attributes, the list of abilities, and competencies that a university aims its graduates will develop from a certain program through their study to prepare them for their future education or employment (AAU Education Statistics Annual Abstract, 2017). Furthermore, the above document elucidates that the graduate profile includes:

- (a) Lists of all competencies, abilities, and virtues expected to be developed by graduates of the program
- (b) These abilities, competencies must be amenable to observability, assessment, and measurability
- (c) There should be coherence between the goals of the department /program unit and all profiles (AAU Education Statistics Annual Abstract, 2017, p.40).

Unlike quality definitions of HERQA stated as fitness for purpose and (Demeke's) conception of quality as meeting the national vision which is broader in scope. AAU's document noted above define quality as meeting standards of graduate profile set by each program within the institution. The role of the QA system is to monitor the provision of the student learning process to meet the standards required for their higher education award. Thus, each department is functioning towards helping students achieve the graduates profile set and assure the quality of its provision.

Based on its graduate profile each postgraduate program works to meet the national vision which is human capital formation. A participant with a managerial role expressed his understanding of

quality as “performance of duties to maintain the standard of curriculum, which is the core of teaching and learning process. Based on standardized curriculum academics be able to produce quality graduates” (Soresa).

According to the above participant’s perspective quality seems to relate to a classroom activity to be conducted as a daily routine based on the requirements of the curriculum developed for the level. Ethiopia’s Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MoSHE) have set in FDRE/HEP, 2009, (Article 22.1, p.4989) document review of the proclamation put that institutions shall develop that “quality standards, undertake an academic audit periodically, follow-up and rectify the deficiencies revealed by the audit and maintain appropriate documentation of the audit.” Based on the proclamation each HEI needs to adapt its quality standard documents at the institution level first and these quality standards reflected in each graduate profile. The graduate profile further is broken down as contents in the curriculum development process to be implemented at the classroom level. Generally, document review and conceptualization of participants of the study reveals that quality is a multilevel conception inculcated in documents set at national, institutional, and the classroom level.

Process quality was another perspective of participants’ conceptions of quality identified at the classroom level. In line with the process aspect of quality one of the academic staff, Soresa explains that more attention has been paid to this aspect of quality in the educational processes. With this regard Soresa explains this aspect of quality as “...the process quality links to how teachers and administrators use inputs to frame meaningful learning experiences for students. Their work represents a key factor in ensuring quality school processes.”

On the other hand, the output aspect of quality observed in graduates was another viewpoint of quality identified as conceptions of some participants in this study. For instance, the Quality Management Unit’s (QMU’s) expert, Lelise, defines quality based on tangible products or services. Graduates could contribute to the world of work after graduation. With this regard, Lelise elaborates as follows and says:

In the future Quality Management Unit (QMU) is planning to conduct tracer studies on student output of the university through data that will be collected using mobile phone

communication. To make contact with graduate-students later lists of graduates and their cell-phone numbers will be kept recorded ahead of time before they leave the campus upon graduation. As a follow-up program, ASQAO intends to contact the current addresses of graduates through cell-phone contacts and ask about their destinations. Based on up-to-date information obtained from graduates our office will collect information on success or failure stories from eyewitness account co-workers or supervisors who are willing to inform ASQAO regarding contributions of our graduates that hired in their firms. Based on the data collected on the status of our graduates from employers through tracer studies and communication with alumni students it is possible to understand the output aspect of quality and its impact on students' future fate.

According to the participant's comment documenting attrition rate based on student statistics of admission rate contrasted with the number of graduates alone is not enough, rather, "how many of these graduates were successful to join the world of work to contribute to the society is what matters"(Lelisa). Another management participant (Kaleb) pointed out that in the future ASQAO intends to ... "randomly collect feedback from graduates because the focus now is about the impact universities have outside the campus walls."

Output perspectives of quality shade light as there is a difference in the conceptualization of quality between those who reflect quality as a short-term activity to be fulfilled at the department or university-wide and those who view quality as a long-term process extending beyond experiences at the campuses of universities. To decide the level of quality whether it is high or low based on tracer studies on the future fate of students after graduation takes time. Thus, the quality judgement will depend on evidence emerging from tracer studies that focus on the immediate impact university graduates have on the world of work and the society at large. Contact with employers and alumni students was suggested to provide information about graduates. This view that relates the impact of university education on society highlights the output aspect of quality. According to the evidence from the case study cited above, alumni students and employers may directly supply inputs to be incorporated as IQA instruments so that study programs could be updated with traditional skills.

Another Perspective of quality identified in this research falls into the category of the input aspect. Conceptualizing quality differently, a participant (Soresa) among the sampled academic interviewees expressed to conceive quality as inputs mobilized during the admission period. In line with the input aspect of quality, Soresa defines quality as stated below:

As to me, quality is the function of three major components these are: (a) Appropriate and relevant curriculum should be planned first. (b) Following curriculum planning a staff member who meets at least the minimum requirements should be recruited and (c) Infrastructure and resources with a manager who efficiently and effectively manages resources should be in place. It is only then when all these three components mentioned above are well-organized and work together that we will achieve the quality of higher education.

In his view of quality, the above participant focused on the input aspect of quality and three forms of quality inputs pointed out as the curriculum to be delivered, the academic staff with the required calibre, and managerial capacity that should be devoted to managing these three inputs should be aligned to ensure the quality of higher education. Another participant (Gashaw) also pinpointed that quality is an achievement of work based on the curriculum developed. With regard to this issue, Mulu (2012) argued that educational inputs such as human, financial and physical resources either directly or indirectly influence the quality of teaching and student learning. Out of the three resources mentioned above, particularly one of the inputs that put intolerable pressure on HEIs is the number and preparedness of received students. Thus, the quality of input needs to be monitored and evaluated at the institution level through the involvement of the top-level management, the registrar office and academic staff as well.

Inputs of quality include financial, physical, and human resource measures associated with the resources that are provided for students at each educational level. Financial measures are generally summarized by educational expenditures per student. On the other hand, educational outputs refer to the consequences of the educational process as reflected in measures such as the levels of knowledge, skills and values acquired by students while educational processes refer to all processes from curriculum development to final assessment including admission, teaching and learning. With regard to the Ethiopian context, the quality model HERQA employs now has three elements; input, process and output (HERQA, 2005). Linked to the quality definition in host institutions of CBHE programs of this study, among the input, process and output aspects of

quality due emphasis was given to the curriculum which determines the input aspect of quality. However, ignoring the quality and relevance of curricula could end up producing graduates who lack the skills and capacity required by the world of work. Consequently, the process aggravates the unemployment rate affecting learners, their family, and society in general. Therefore, the input aspect of quality directly or indirectly determines the output aspect of quality. In the Ethiopian context, the UNESCO document reflects that little attention was given to cross-border higher institutions regarding follow up and assessment of cross border programs, whether their course materials and student support services that fit input aspect are aligned with Ethiopian social milieu and economic needs (IIEP/ UNESCO, 2006).

Different from the above perspectives, Boru, a student participant in the extension program at the management department defines quality based on teachers' commitment as follows:

Quality for me includes teachers' qualifications, delivery, the teaching materials or content, universities' communication channel and relation to students. However, unless the teacher is committed the other quality components I revealed are useless. Quality is not measured by having a PhD alone, the commitment of the instructor matters. It is not only money invested and infrastructure of the university that produces quality rather the work discipline and commitment of the teacher that determines the quality.

According to this student participant financial and material resources including technology facilities as input do not guarantee quality service. Working to meet the standard and being qualified need to be accompanied by a commitment of the academic staff. This is because academic potential should be visibly translated into practice and delivered to students during teaching-learning processes. Moreover, the success of delivery needs to be preceded by proper planning and timely implementation. Another student participant (Boru) views quality not only as input related to human and material resources alone but also as a task that needs a personal decision of being dedicated to student//s' learning unceasingly. Moreover, this student participant pointed out that: "I know a knowledgeable instructor with high academic capability, however, he is not punctual at classroom sessions and consultation hours as posted on his office door, the reason for this is a problem of commitment to his profession". Commitment needs individual decisions waged beyond calculating gains and dedicating to working hours. Supporting this argument, a participant of this study argues: "Quality has an implicit aspect which is internal and difficult to measure" (Almaz).). Thus, inputs alone do not warrant quality

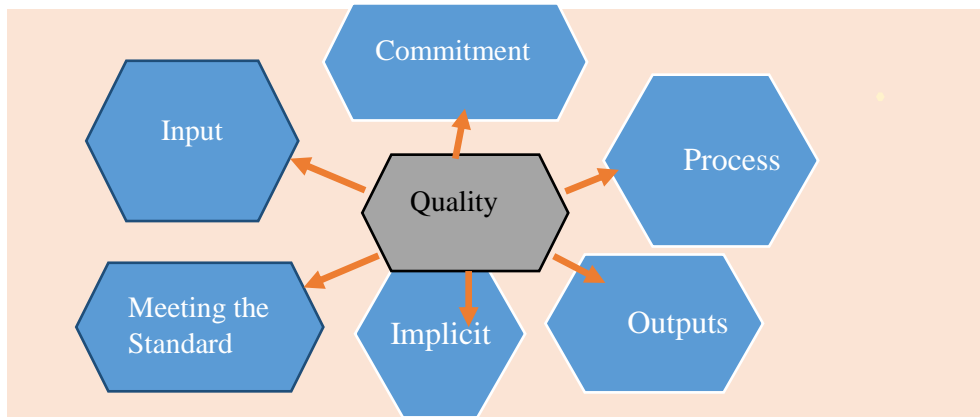
education, the commitment of instructors, which is linked, to process aspects of quality can affect the delivery of courses, advising of students, and assessment. Almaz further argued that “posting consultation hours on doorposts alone is not enough”. According to the above participants, quality needs the commitment of advisors to respect the schedules and delivering the task timely. In addition to the qualification of instructors, outcomes or output favoured by employers’ quality is a personal issue that is invisible and difficult to measure.

Along with quality conceptions mentioned above as input, process, output, and teacher’s commitment quality as implicit is another perspective of quality identified, associated with the individual level conception of quality. In this view quality is a matter of the instructor’s private affair with implicit nature rather than being imposed on him from the organization as a set of standards. In this vein academic participant Demeke reflects his conception differently, for instance, he argues that “... quality is implicit which come about by individual teachers rather than by management imposition and producing guidelines one after the other and enforcing the academic staff”. Moreover, emphasizing the commitment of teachers that varies with individuals, because commitment to work for quality is inside driven, the management should not assume achieving quality through the imposition of quality standards from the outside environment as the only option.

Standards, fundamentally, performance standards are cutting scores defined on a specific output, outcome or impact indicator. For El-khawas standards are usually “quantitative and generally based on the perspectives that higher education institutions have specific objectives... there are golden standards to be maintained” (El-khawas, 2001, p.61). Similarly, in the words of Stella and Martin (2007), meeting quality standards establishes that it is possible to detect and quantify certain features of higher education. According to these scholars, the same standards can be applied to all courses or institutions regardless of their context and the nature of the program. In views of David (2017, p.2) the input and output quality aspects were traditional and “quality control was about inputs and outputs. The rather important middle piece, the actual education that took place, was very much unsupervised”. In this study, participants identified the process aspect of quality along with input and output. On the other hand, the implicit and academic

commitments are aspects of quality difficult to be quantified and they relate more to the personal characters of individuals.

To sum up, the analysis on perspectives of quality conceptions of participants in case-1 conceptions can be categorized as the quality of input, quality process, quality of output, meeting the quality standards, implicit and academic's commitment. Furthermore, According to participants' conception of quality the six quality conceptions of students, academics and the management can be grouped into four levels: quality at national level; institution level; classroom level; and individual level. Meeting the standard is the quality conception that belongs at the national level because common standards are set by HERQA to regulate both the public and private HEIs. In fig.5 below the arrow shows those quality conceptions of academics, the management, and students overlap and perspectives of quality conceptions of these participants have been analyzed and categorized into six categories. The figure shows the findings of the analysis. input and output quality aspects are monitored at the institution level whereas the process aspect is the quality aspect carried out at the classroom level by academics and students. Finally, the implicit and academic commitments are quality levels reflected by individual academic staffs.



**Figure.5: Conceptualization of quality in case-1**

### **5.3 The Challenges of the internal university environment.**

Based on the research question Q.2 that intends to explore internal challenges influencing QA practices data generated from management, academic staff and students was analyzed intertwined with document review and field notes. Subsequently, how internal challenges related

to internal university task components such as quality assurance structure, organizational capacity, and student support services, influence QA and enhancement practices were analyzed and presented.

### **5.3.1 Challenges related to Student Support Service.**

Student support service is one of the internal environments to be focused on while exploring challenges of the internal university environment that influence QA and enhancement practices in host institutions. Based on views of academic, student, and management participants supported by document review analysis was carried out. Analysis of challenges influencing support service was delimited to academic advising, plagiarism, language skills, registration, and library services.

#### ***5.3.1.1 Academic Advising.***

While reacting to research question 2 that probes challenges encountered while supporting MBA-students. Responses of academic participant analyzed from interview data pinpointed academic advising was a key challenge encountered in the process of supporting. The participant Demeke pointed out the cause for the challenge and noted that “Academic staff at the university level devotes most of their hours in seeking part-time works for the sake of economic survival. Therefore, advising students could be challenged”. Similarly, a student participant interviewed on student support service in line with students’ thesis advising service revealed that:

Lecturers are not available at their office according to the schedule for consultation hours posted at the entrance of offices. I visited the offices of my advisor based on schedules posted; however, the office remains closed for weeks. On the other hand, e-mail communication is not functional as an alternative means of communication, thus an exchange of information between students and teachers was challenging. (Tibebu).

According to Tibebu, posting consultation hours at the doorposts alone is not enough, acting in agreement to the time table is a key. Inline with this, Demeke, an academic participant, identified that some academic staffs were too busy because they engage in part-time jobs that hamper them to be available at their office in the allotted time. Thus, there could be a communication breakdown between advisors and their advisee. During discussions with academic staff and

students, it was learnt that there is no monitoring system to check whether or not the academic advisory services are provided to students properly. Concerning this issue, a student participant, Almaz, complains “instructors provide academic guidance and advising services based on their time schedules and willingness.” Thus, arranging convenient consultation hour for both advisors and advisees enhances communication. Regarding their intellectual capacity a student participant from the MBA extension division commented:

I know one instructor that has high intellectual capacity there is no question about his capacity. The problems lie in his commitment, this instructor was not working to his full potential. Sometimes complain about income appear as a discussion point between lectures in the classrooms and I am not happy with this issue, after all, we are there to attend courses. (Tibebu)

In the same vein to participants’ view, Arega’s(2016) findings summarize the issues raised above and he states that “serious challenge was associated with negative behaviour and attributes of instructors, such as low level of academic qualification, lack of dedication, excessive moonlighting, and lack of pedagogical skills (Arega, 2016, p.10)”. Arega emphasized low-level qualification and lack of commitment raised by study participants noted so far. Moreover, moonlighting of teachers also raised as a challenge, Webster dictionary defines the term moonlighting as: “having a second job, secretly and typically at night in addition to one's regular employment” (Webster dictionary, 2019). As root cause to the challenge faced in advising students a manager participant referred back to the history of academics and students accepted as inputs in the department and pointed out his view as “the criteria employed to recruit teachers and the policy of student placement is critical in determining the quality of student advising”(Gashaw). Contrarily member of management participants described a lack of interest on the part of students and teachers’ negligence to oversee student advisee's paper works has amplified plagiarism.

Concerning lack of commitment on the management side academic participant, Demeke moved further and complained about:

To receive more than one certificate or degree from various institutions, there are some students who attend their education in two different institutions in the same study periods. When it comes to teachers, some of them focus on their economic subsistence only. Thus, the lack of responsibility of teachers which is declining on the part of teachers has made

these students out of control. Overall, the management should be accountable to select these untrustworthy students and teachers to join the university. (Demeke)

Concerning relations between students and the management, a student participant commented:

Most management decisions made without referring to university legislations and some managers use legislation as a tool to negate our applications and deny service to students. As a student when we ask our right based on the legislation, the management does not respond on time. For instance, I appealed to the department first but there was no solution, next I appealed to the college management but there was no solution, lastly, I was forced to appeal up to the president office and I got an appropriate response successfully. (Boru)

Gashaw, a participant from academics, expressed his criticisms in line with communication to the management:

I know some of my students who graduated with better performance were not interested to join this department as a staff. I witness that they were smart graduates who could join us, however; they were looking for jobs for several months while our department has vacancies that invite their qualification. They told me the working environment is not inviting me to apply for the vacancy announcement. Thus, the new staff hired in our department were graduates from other institutions. Overall, the leadership decisions affected the relationship between students and academics and created an unpleasant working environment.

To a follow-up research question, how do the challenges of advising processes affect quality assurance and enhancement practice? , Soresa, who is from academic participants, concentrated on how the challenge of student advising relates to the qualification of teachers influences quality assurance and enhancement practice. A bit smiling during the interview session he expounded it this way:

Accommodations of a large number of undergraduate (UG) students followed by postgraduate students have caused a challenge on the quality of education. On top of that qualifications of the academic staff assigned to advise MBA students are not up to the prescribed legislation of the university. During recess time I and my colleagues use the term mocked by 'cloning' to label those university staff who offer courses or advising students equal to their qualification level. (Soresa)

This participant reflects that assigning advisors against the university legislation sooner or later affect quality assurance and enhancement practices. As evidence of this, the background information (see table 5, page 94) shows that there are only seven professors advising students registered for PhD and MBA programs in the management department. Supervising or advising support provided by seven professors alone (one professor, another Associate and five assistant

professors) to 430 MBA students attending regular, extension and weekend programs seems impossible. Thus; the large majority of students are advised by teaching staff holding M.A. degrees against the level prescribed in university legislation. According to Addis Ababa University Senate legislation (AAU, 2007), academic staff should hold an academic qualification of at least one level above what he/she is supposed to advise. This has been implemented at Moi University, whereby diploma programs are taught by bachelor's degree graduates, undergraduate programs are taught by master's degree holders and doctorate programs are taught by senior lecturers and PhD or its equivalent. However, academic staff should not be blamed for advising students because the mismatch between the numbers of students admitted and qualified staff available at the department enforced the management to do so. These academic staff were assigned deliberately by the management to employ as a strategy to solve the high rate of enrolment, for instance, case-1 accepted 52,000 students in the 2018 academic year (AAU Education Statistics Annual Abstract, 2018).

Overall, advising of students was challenged by less commitment of academics to work according to consultation hours, mismatch of students-advisors ratio, and low level of academic staff qualification. Regarding challenges related to the management, a student participant elucidated that follow up from the management side was poor; thus, the outcome of this failure could lead to poor quality of advising support given to students in their thesis work. The communication channel between the students, academic staff and the management have been deteriorating, and consequently, quality assurance practices could be affected due to miscommunication among these internal stakeholders. Generally, lack of the commitment of managers and academic challenge advising of students which in turn hampers quality assurance and enhancement practices.

### ***5.3.1.2 Plagiarism.***

Plagiarism is another challenge identified in the process of advising students' while providing academic support to MBA students). Academic participant Demeke expressed that "Plagiarism runs rampant among higher education students unless some corrective measures are taken it will become out of control" in support to the former interviewee another participant, Soresa, from the same department voiced out his experience during the thesis evaluation session as follows:

In the 2012 academic year, while I evaluate the thesis work of one MBA student. I was puzzled by a topic for it was familiar to me earlier. After the exam session was over, I went to my office and checked my former files of evaluated thesis works and came to know that similar thesis work evaluated in 2010 with the same topic and plagiarized contents, only some biographic data were changed.

The participant exposed that he evaluated one MBA thesis submitted twice in 2010 and 2012 as a partial fulfilment project. Soresa reflected that the second submission in 2012 was identified as copied work of another student in 2010. Currently, ICT infrastructures including online communication have been misused for plagiarism purposes. Managing plagiarism is a difficult task in case-1, maybe because of escalation in university students from year to year. Moreover, easy access to ICT facilities and communication among students made an exchange of information simple. Using these facilities and opportunities students could submit the thesis paper presented in one university as if it was their work. Extending his discussion on plagiarism Soresa also reflected his view as “the root cause to all these ill practices emerged from the recruitment policy of Ethiopian universities in undergraduate programs.” The students allowed to join humanities and social science departments were recruited based on the 70:30 policy, which states that 70% of the cohort that joins HEIs will go to science and technology and the remaining proportion joins social science fields. In his discussion Soresa strengthens his arguments:

The Government has announced a policy of 70:30 per cent professional mixture in annual enrolment, with 70% of the cohort allocated into the Science and Technology and 30% into Social Sciences and Humanities streams. Relatively, those who join social science streams were students who scored lower grades as compared to Science and Technology streams. Being part of the Social and Humanities students that scored higher grades rarely join the management department. Unfortunately, these graduate students with poor academic background comeback to join MBA programs. Consequently, having received low achievers or poor inputs into the system of higher education expecting high-quality graduates would be a scarcer opportunity to be practical. The number of high profile graduates is too few maybe because the output depends on the quality of the inputs and those who endorsed the policy of allocation should take the responsibility for the poor quality of graduate students.

According to the arguments noted above the input aspect of quality has its origin in policy formulation and practice of HEIs governing bodies. Thus, the blame goes to the Ethiopian policymakers that favoured science and technology students that comprise 70% of the cohort group. Plagiarism revealed in the process of writing thesis work that challenges the student

support services, particularly student advising, have their origins in student placement policies. Thus, quality in the MBA program is a product of the long education process and some multi-stakeholders contributed towards its enhancement or hampering. In HEP, 2009(Article 41.9) it was set that “Plagiarism and cheating in the exam are breaks of discipline that warrants severe penalties”. Based on this proclamation at the institution level diagnosing this problem, AAU’s ASQE office included in its short-term action plan (2017-2022) to alleviate the problem of plagiarism through the action plan proposed:

All colleges are required to develop their procedures and ways of mitigating the problems of academic plagiarism in a manner that does not violate the University’s rules and regulations for the same. The AVP office should finalize the process started in this regard or look for other options for the procurement of the software for controlling plagiarism or academic offence (AAU Strategic Plan, 2017-2022, p.7).

Plagiarism is not unique to MBA students of case-1 alone it was also revealed at the institution level. As evidenced by the ASQE office that suggested a software application (a plagiarism checker) to address this challenge. Furthermore, Plagiarism has become a challenge in HEIs in a broader context. Particularly, plagiarism was identified as one of the challenges encountered in the process of supporting, advising, and evaluating students. To control the challenge of plagiarism ASQE office proposed a joint venture among individual instructors at the department, college and institution level as well. Unless prompt actions are taken, Plagiarism that started small now at the university level among students slowly could grow to national-level crises such as grand corruption.

### **5.3.1.3 Language.**

Language is another challenge identified with student support services while advising MBA-students. English language constraints of students in expressing their ideas orally during presentations sessions and also while writing their project paper works. In line with this challenge, a participant in the academic staff of the MBA program, Demeke, pinpointed the source of the problem when saying: “this limitation could be due to students’ background in the previous grades”. Additionally, his reflection on the issue confirmed that a limitation in language skills was a prominent barrier in classroom teaching and advising students in their thesis work. Moreover, he extended his opinion and pointed out that “because we use the

English language as ‘lingua Franca in higher education, students are suffering a lot in writing their thesis work and presenting it orally’ (Demeke). In supporting the former participant’s argument, studies also proved that “poor English language proficiency among students and teachers affected the quality of teaching and learning in secondary schools and HEIs” (Ayalew et al., 2009, p.253).

Gashaw, a management participant, also raised the challenge about language to be critical in the success or failure of students to join the CBHE program offered in collaboration with case-1. All first-year MBA students from both regular and extension programs should compete to join the CBHE program and the CBHE program offers scholarship based on the requirement of a pass mark in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Gashaw further explains that “although, both regular and extension MBA students compete for the opportunity provided by FH-Mainz a CBHE university those who were successful in IELTS exam mostly belonged to extension students”. Regular students miss this opportunity because they were not successful in the IELTS language tests. Concerning the same issue, a student participant, Tibebu, also pointed out that prominently writing in the English language has been a challenge for his thesis work. Taking into consideration communication skill, Arega (2016, p.10) argues that “students’ behaviours and attributes, such as poor communication skills, resistance to active learning, and absenteeism, were seen as major challenges to internal leadership.” According to Arega (2016), poor communication and teachers’ attributes, noted above as challenges in teaching-learning processes and leadership in higher education. Regarding the language aspect, though students have plenty of ideas to express, their ideas remain bottled up in their minds due to limitations of language skills. One of the academic participants commented on his experience as follows:

Even though some MBA students could be well versed in the subject matter they have problems demonstrating their potential during an oral or written presentation. This failure may happen due to a lack of speaking or writing skill. Thus, I found the English language to be a critical challenge for students while writing their exams and thesis works. (Soresa)

Overall, lack of writing skills in English, on the part of students seems one of the factors that push students to exercise plagiarism, which is one part of academic dishonesty. Besides, missing classes due to power interruption and plagiarism are the challenges identified that need an

immediate response to the management. These challenges could be a hindrance to provide academic support services that influence the quality assurance and enhancement practices.

#### ***5.3.1.4 College of Economics and Management Registrar office.***

Registration is the second student support service selected to be explored regarding challenges encountered. Thus, the head of the registrar office has been interviewed on the challenges faced in providing support service to MBA-students followed by a tracer research question: how the challenge affects quality enhancement practice. Regarding the first question the head of the registrar office reflected her comments as stated below:

Currently, case-1 established a portal service in collaboration with Ethiopian Tele Communication (ETC). The Portal service of the university enabled us to report student grades online. This is a success story in our college because students can access their grade reports wherever they exist in at any time. However, the challenge in these services has to do with the delay of some academic staff to submit grades based on the deadline. Even worse, some academic staff submits grades to our office after being addressed through calls from my office. (Neima)

Neima from the registrar office further argued on how quality enhancement could be challenged throughout the delivery of support service. She said that “occasionally there could also be a delay in portal service due to technical problems at the Ethiopian Telecommunication Corporation networks that affect schedules of grade submission”. Delay in reporting grades for any reason harms our annual plans. Neima continued: “any delay will distort our annual plans and we are enforced to revise our plans”. It was obvious that revising annual plans one way or the other hampers quality assurance practice.

Material resources such as the digitalization of the registrar office to provide portal service in case-1 are a great opportunity to facilitate student support services. In case-1 portal service a web application for the institution to post-university profiles, registration forms, slips, student grade reports and other pertaining documents from applicants. It is also a platform that let users register, view get notified of new vacancy posts. Students’ registration and accessing grade reports could be facilitated through the portal service of the university and economically it is

beneficial to students. Despite of the opportunity in technology, lack of commitment to employ the opportunity on the part of some academic staff and the management who failed to manage the issue of grade submission in due days to the challenge of student support service provided.

### ***5.3.1.5 Library Service.***

Registration and library services were selected to explore challenges that exist while providing services to students because they complement student support services. Kaleb, the Head of the library was a participant selected purposely to provide information with regard to library support service to MBA students. While responding to question about challenges faced in support service, he briefly reflected that: “support service provided to undergraduate, MA, and PhD and other researchers is decisive”. The library service provision includes electronic and soft copies, well-facilitated and spacious rooms to use computers and reading. Additionally, in a different room, there are reference section and reading rooms reserved for MA and PhD students. At the beginning of the new academic year, the library provides an orientation to new entrants to be aware of how to access electronic resources and other hard copy resources. After providing a brief introduction about the support services the library head addressed about challenges encountered as follows:

Challenges experienced while providing support service to our students with some of our staff of the library who were denied upgrading themselves. These staff have no access to build their capacity nor incentivized while working in 24/7 schedules. Recruitment of new staff is also difficult from the market because the college was already closed a long time ago. While the librarian disregarded, the emphasis was given to facilities and building giant libraries. (Kaleb)

The library head testifies that capacity building in mobilizing resources was highly emphasized and there were “adequate and up to date facilities in the host institution. However, there is a problem regarding the human resources that were neglected” (Kaleb). Furthermore, Kaleb, a participant from the library support service forwarded his worries: “Some of our staff does not qualify to give orientation to MA and PhD students at the entry, but they provide this service which is beyond their mandate. Thus, they need to upgrade themselves for their duty has a direct

impact on the quality of support service.’’ On the other hand, provision of support service to students should not be done at the expense of our library staff; this is because mutual understanding among the university community and participatory development guarantee quality service provisions.

According to the participant’s concern, the challenge of quality of support service could arise due to demotivated library staff. The innovation of library science to information science left behind the former trainees of library science with their old skills. Though the program was innovated the library staffs were not trained to fit the program. To keep pace with current innovations in the field, the library staffs also need to update their knowledge and skills. However, the library head complained that ‘‘Institution-wide except for the library heads who qualified in MA degrees for they had been members of academic staff previously, other library staff do not have the opportunity of upgrading themselves’’ (Kaleb).

Nevertheless, the case university was resourceful and was considered to have adequate infrastructure. Yet, the problem relates to the demotivated library staff that lacks the motivation to provide support service to MBA students. The fact that this library staff who denied the right to upgrade themselves have complaints on their career and capacity development, one way or the other this situation could challenge the quality of student support service provided to students in case-1. Generally, student advising, library, and registrar office services are in a good stand to provide up to date services. However, the human resource particularly the academic and the library staff could not cope up with the innovations introduced such as portal-service for grade report and soft skills in the library respectively. The library staff who denied upgrading are consequently, demotivated and lack capacity to service provision and this situation, in the long run, could have its impact on student support service that affects quality assurance and enhancement practices.

To sum up, analysis of challenges linked to internal university environment identified reveals that advising students as a part of student support service has been challenged by; lack of commitment in both academic staff and the management, plagiarism, lack of skills in writing a thesis, negative views of academics, and disappointed library staff. On the other hand, the

registrar office and the College of Economics and Management library provide adequate and up to date material supports and the digital facilities are a good opportunity for MBA students. Finally, weakness in support service provision, in turn, affects quality assurance and enhancement process in general including programs of CBHE.

### **5.3.2 Quality Assurance Structure.**

An organizational structure is a system that outlines how QA activities directed to realize the goals of an institute. These activities include clarifying rules, roles, and responsibilities. The organizational structure also delineates how information flows from level to level within the institute. Thus, an organization structure defines how activities such as task allocation, coordination, and supervision are directed (EUA, 2006; Sursock, 2011).

In order to explore the challenges related to organizational structure and how it influences quality assurance practice, a review of the Higher education Proclamation number 650/2009 and AAU's document is conducted, followed by an interview of research participants. The document HEP No. 650/2019 sub-article 21.1 p .4988) reads: “every institution shall have a reliable internal system for quality enhancement that shall be continuously improved”. Based on the HEP proclamation case-1 instituted ASQEO staffed with 6 experts in educational management, information system, and quality management in 2012. Within case-1, the primary responsibility for QA and quality promotion rests with the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Office (ASQEO) set as directorate office.

Moreover, the strategy document also elaborates that the university senate mandates the office to be responsible for QA because it is the highest university ruling body that translates the quality enhancement policy into action. Document review of ASQEO also describes as the document has a wide menu of strategies and instruments to execute the functions spelt out in its documents. These instruments include curriculum evaluation documents, staff recruitment criteria, assessment administration guidelines, modules writing guides, self-evaluation guidelines for undergraduate and postgraduate programs (ASQEO, 2018).

Besides its coordinating role in line with quality enhancement activities across the institution, the document review discloses: ASQEO spearheads the IQA system and works closely with all faculties, colleges, and schools that have a relation with quality improvement and quality issues. On top of that, it updates all of them through electronic information on QA and supplies evaluation materials, provides refreshment training and serves as a liaison office for EQA regulatory activities by HERQA (AAU Education Statistics Annual Abstract, 2017).

Overall document review revealed that Case-1 have an IQA structure in place, developed policy guides, and disseminated the documents online to be accessed at ease. The policy document that guides program review also suggests that a cyclic review of programs needs to be done every four or five years (The AAU Education and Statistics Annual Abstract, 2017). The suggestion of cyclic review of every four/five years may impact the mind-set of the department head to give less attention to day-to-day activities. The trend reveals that there is little attention given to the process aspect of quality because it is hardly practised at the program level: “conducting self-study is the primary responsibility of departments and it must be carried out before the external review. Selected staff members within the program may conduct the self-study” (The AAU Education and Statistics Annual Abstract, 2017, p.83).

In the guideline, the number of staff members selected for self-study at the department level clearly stated to comprise 2-3 professionally conspicuous member staff. At the college level, the ASQEO document also suggests that another review team comprising of 6-8 team of professionals who are responsible to conduct peer review or external review need to be assigned following the self-study. The rationale behind this peer review stated in the same document as: “The review process provides an objective outsider’s perspective about the quality and effectiveness of an academic program based on the self-study report” (AAU Education Statistics Annual Abstract, 2018, p.84). At the institution level, 12-15 members proposed to assess peer review reports collected from all colleges, faculties or schools. The self-study/assessment followed by the review process conducted in the cyclic process every 4 to 5 years. The flow of information is stressed from top to bottom, the number of participants at the institution level, peer reviewers and department level already assigned leaves no room to the lower structure to decide where subordinates were not listened to. In the quality assurance structure of case-1, the

channels of communication make a new idea difficult to travel. The organizational structure seems to have in/built mechanism. Additionally, only six senior-level experts or staff work in the context of the huge number of students and academic staff in case-1, this mismatch could hamper the likelihood of addressing the quality of MBA programs offered by CBHE providers. Though the policy guide put roles and responsibilities of quality assurance partners at various structures IQA and enhancement activities were conducted rarely instead of being a day to day practice. Supporting this issue, Biruk, a participant from management member, reflected over one event as stated below:

In the 2015/16 academic year, the president office obliged ASQEO to coordinate a random institution-wide self-assessment of some selected programs undertaken. In response to the urgency of the assignment a quality audit carried out at the college level, five departments have been selected out from each college/faculty, and some academic staff and students picked randomly. Using these randomly selected five departments information collected and reported to the president office. The president office employed the information to address the meeting of teachers, students and administration office workers. (Biruk)

The participant from ASQEO pointed out two years back quality assurance activity undertaken to address the political agenda of the government which was a one-time event rather than the regular quality assurance practice in case-1. The self-assessment was conducted to gather information following the then unrest faced nationally at the university campuses all over the country. During that period the university officials were busy calming down student uprisings. An urgent quality assessment carried out institution-wide could only solve a one-time event. Concerning the level of organizational structure at which quality assurance practised and its purpose (CHEA, 2016, p.10) suggests that “implementation of the backbone of IQA should be at both institutional and college levels in order to foster continuous improvement of quality. Self-study of programs and departments examines whether the objectives are achieved or not whereas peer review brings independent and objective perspectives into being.”

In case-1, “even though quality assurance (QA) at the university was, initially, externally driven, the university has, over many years, developed its internal quality assurance system, which is now supported by well-documented quality policies, procedures, and instruments.” (Biruk)

The enrollment rate of students that increases from year to year, budget decline, and a few numbers of ASQEO staff that are six in number are the internal context that entangled quality assurance and enhancement process.

To a follow-up research question posed to participants on challenges related to QA structure, one of the academic staff, Gashaw, reflected his idea as follows:

During an interview session at the department office, Gashaw revealed that the department does not have IQA tools of its own. However, the department of management employs centrally developed guidelines for self-study or program audit. There is no focal person or committee to collect routine practices of quality except the department head doing everything alone. Thus, IQA practices are not focused on the department. The department head agreed with that view saying: “the curriculum review carried out every four/five years to assess its relevance and quality using the guidelines available on the AAU’s website” (Gashaw). Updating the curriculum alone conducted periodically every four/five years, however, other teaching-learning processes such as the delivery method and instruments of assessment were not given attention as stated in the proclamation.

With regard to the research question that probes internal challenges of QA and enhancement practices, a follow-up interview question linked to how the organizational structure influenced quality assurance and enhancement practices was asked. Demeke reflected his view of academic participant Demeke explained: “there is no such thing as a day-to-day follow up of quality at our program. No one is there to control who does what, everybody is free to do what he thinks proper.” Demeke went on and further explained his view on current practices regarding quality:

I am not comfortable with the intentions of the external structures imposing their redundant policy on us one after the other. This is not a proper way to assure quality, because quality relates to students' and teachers' academic freedom. Taking the role of governing by an external body to assure the quality of our work aggravates the problem rather than lessening it.

The participant voiced out, his concern regarding the negligence of the management to involve professional teachers in the quality assurance practice. Being professional academic staff are

responsible for the day to day core duties and, outsiders should not enforce them through policies and guidelines.

Field notes data collected from the billboard and the management department office at Eshetu chole building reveals that the management department runs three levels of programs such as PhD, M.A., and B.A. programs provided to regular, extension, and weekend students including CBHE and a distance education program. The management department devolved responsibility to three coordinators assigned to coordinate the PhD, MBA, and B.A. programs, respectively. However, the weekend, extension and distance programs further created compromise of quality because each program needs its level of resources, quality assurance structure and follow-up. Among these diverse programs, concentrating on the quality assurance of MBA programs delivered in partnership with the CBHE institution seems impractical in the context of case-1(Field notes, 24/5/2018).

As a researcher, I captured a picture of a billboard as a visible cue in a large context of the College of Management and Economics to explore the information carefully, and not ignore it or take it for granted. The billboard is available in front of Eshetu Chole building that provides a prompt guide concerning the lower and middle managerial structure at the college and department level (See appendix.4). There are 35 offices, and classroom posts listed to inform the internal and external stakeholders and locate offices and classrooms at seven stores of the Eshetu Chole building. However, the quality assurance office is missing in the lists of the billboard of the college, which implies that there is no institutionalized IQA office to coordinate quality activities as a middle or lower structure at the college and department level. Document review of IQA office document reveals that “the review teams or committee members comprising 2-3 and 6-8 at department and college level respectively should be formed during program review to run self-study and assess the relevance and quality of programs” (ASQE, 2018, P.94).

Information drawn from the billboard, confirms that there is no office allocated to the internal quality assurance and enhancement unit at least at the college level to run the internal quality process at the college or department level. However, host university managements need to empower middle and lower-level managers at the grass-root level and create environments where academics staffs and students can debate quality matters without feeling intimidated.

Practically IQA units are missing at department and program levels and a focal person or a coordinator or responsible committee as well. It seems there is a lack of a responsible body to employ IQA tools as a means of monitoring these quality assurance activities at the college or department level. Thus, the head of the management department and the three program coordinators of the Ph.D., MBA and undergraduate program forced to be responsible for shouldering IQA activities as an additional task.

At the institution level, the document review of IQA staff profile reflects the following structure:

Current staff profile of the office for Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement, AAU is headed by a director, and its entire professional services are rendered by six senior-level experts divided into two broad program units, namely: Educational Information System, and Quality Management and Enhancement Unit (ASQEO, 2018, P.116).

Office of the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement (ASQEO) is supposed to be run by a director (PhD) that coordinates quality assurance and enhancement activities by six experts (M.A). One of the biggest challenges to effective quality enhancement concerns large number of students to the number of staff. As a result, many students and academic staff cannot receive adequate monitoring of quality assurance and enhancement activities. For instance, in the 2018 academic year the annual abstract report presented the detail: “AAU has now a total enrolment of over 52,000 students and over 8000 staff (about 2,691 of them are academic and 5,385 are support staff). It runs about 70 undergraduate and 293 graduate programs of which 72 PhD and 221 of them Masters Education” (Statistics Annual Abstract, Addis Ababa University, 2018, P.1). ASQEO that undertakes the key and urgent activities of quality assurance and enhancement with six staff only give clues that less attention was given to the internal quality assurance and enhancement. Thus, developing and extending branches of IQA units at the college or department level are needed in order to monitor quality activities properly.

Generally, analysis of the organizational structure of case-1 revealed that the quality structure exists only at the institution level and yet, not extended to the middle and lower structures such as the college of Economics and Management and the Department of Management respectively. Thus, missing the structure at the college and department level implies that there is a centralized quality assurance structure. The centralized structure, in turn, has little room for the participation

of academic staff and the middle and lower management, which hampers quality assurance and enhancement practice at the department level. Regarding this issues, Rock (2011) argues that institutional quality has to do with meanings of democracy and affects the way the quality process introduced into the institution. This situation leads to the notion that the university structure with clear responsibilities and accountability lines at all levels of the university will ensure the quality assurance process to be simple and easy for dismissing all the feedback loops.

### **5.3.3 Organizational Capacity.**

The major resource input to facilitate students' learning in Ethiopian higher education including CBHE can be categorized into two: human and material resources. Specifically, human resource has two aspects: intellectual and attitudinal aspects. The existence of qualified administrative staff, supporting staff and academics are examples of the intellectual aspect where the attitudinal aspect was neglected. The neglected aspect has to do with the motivation and commitment of academics, the management body and other supporting staff towards their work. This has a detrimental impact on the quality of education in general. The second, which is considered by all HE members as a decisive factor, is infrastructure and facilities in the institution. These resources include finance, classroom facilities, library, internet-connected ICT lab, reading rooms and so on.

The interview question concerning the adequacy of resources and whether they are current to this time a participant of academic staff, Hailu, disclosed his conception as:

In our department, adequate learning resources are available. In our department, nevertheless, the problem arises with miss-management and wrong allocation of resources. First, available resources were not efficiently used because of wrongly allocated resources i.e. the right resources should be allocated to the right places to meet the genuine needs of departments. Second, students are not using available resources properly, for instance, students' reading habits are deteriorating from time to time as a result, and there is rather a wastage of resources. (Hailu)

Though the resource available was adequate another academic participant complained about power cut intermittently affecting classroom delivery through PowerPoint presentations.

Students also use electric power interruption as an excuse for the delay of assignment or project work submissions. Demeke, an academic participant interviewed about organizational capacity and challenges encountered in the department, reflected his views as follows:

Regarding material resources, there is no scarcity of resources, the problem lies with the management of these resources. Compared to earlier experiences I observed there are ample resources and digitalized resources. In my view, the problem has to do with the willingness of students to learn and make use of these facilities. (Demeke)

Secondly, Hailu continued his argument about the lack of staff-support, and pointed out that the role of the management particularly “non-existence of willingness of the leadership to support the staff or motivate the staff through incentives and capacity building was another challenge I recognize to exist.”

Thus, the main challenge of the learning process probably can be ascribed to the above two challenges. The first challenge has to do with managerial inefficiency such as allocating resources to the wrong places. Consequently, misusing materials and wastage occur. Secondly, the disappointment of other stakeholders about the management creates a communication breakdown. Thus, the gap between the academic staff and the management could be a big challenge to run QA and enhancement practices. Demeke pointed out that the problem focuses on quantity rather than quality, he says: “the education policy focused on ongoing capacity development in terms of quantity while what we are lacking is capacity development in terms of capability.”

Analysis of the organizational capacity in case-1 distinguishes that the problem lies in improper utilization and underutilization of resources, inefficient management, and communication break down between the staff and the management reported mainly because of less motivated students to read. Capacity building in terms of capability is missing giving way to capacity development to the quantity of the workforce. The cumulative effect of the Power cut could affect overall activities in the institution and contributes to other challenges of quality. In the situation commitment of managers and teachers exists, supplying an ample amount of material resources may not change the efficiency of the organization. This, in turn, shows the number of increases of public universities from two to 49 and the private universities from none to 198 (Annual

Abstract of Standards and Quality Enhancement of AAU, 2018). However, complaints about low-quality provisions of both public and private universities have become an ongoing agenda.

Regarding a follow-up interview question how the challenges of organizational capacity influence quality assurance and enhancement practice? Data from the institutional context of case-1 on the table.4 shows that the academic staff-student ratio of the management department is 12 to 1, and 77% of the staff in case-1 is MA holders who engaged in advising students of MBA programs. This indicates that the qualification of staff teaching in case-1, by comparison, is below the standards set by the Ministry of Education, which demands a staff qualification mix comprising 30% PhDs, 50% MA and 20% BA holders. Besides, the programs run by the department are differentiated as PhD, MBA, BA; programs coordinated by three coordinators independently. Besides, 430 MBA students are attending their education in regular, extension and distance mode. Despite enrolment growth, the same number of staff is responsible to provide advising and supervision service to diverse levels of programs and to a large number of students that require supervision of advisors with different capacity. Due to the mismatch between advisors and student ratios, students are being advised by novice researchers against the standard of legislation. In the words of Soresa's expression above this condition could be termed as 'cloning', a term that suggests a self-reproduction process hampering quality assurance and enhancement process.

Generally, the findings of the analysis show that material resources are adequate and up to date. However, the challenge occurs due to lack of commitment and poor management of resources, the mismatch between the number of students and advisors, and assigning of novices as research advisors against the requirements of university legislation. These challenges mentioned above could influence the organizational capacity of academic staff and students which results in an undesirable impact on quality assurance and enhancement practices.

#### **5.4 Institutional Environment**

Selection of students and the recruitment of academic staff is/are decided by external forces. Universities cannot be independent of influences coming from the external environment; however, the influence should not be one direction from the external side only. The political

unrest undermined the education process as a whole. Education has been neglected instead issues of short-range and daily agendas have been prioritized. Our national vision come true not on emphasizing ethnicity, but through HE with far-sighted intellectuals not on the effort of politicians.

#### **5.4.1 Institutional Challenges influencing Quality Enhancement Practices.**

In this section analysis of the legal framework, particularly HERQA's CBHE guideline and economic realities of case-1 are focused.

##### ***5.4.1.1 Legal Framework.***

In a guideline by HERQA developed to regulate both incoming CBHE operating in Ethiopia and the outgoing CBHE such as Admas and Zemen, private Universities engaged in Cross-border programs at Somaliland, Hargeisa (Guidelines for the Accreditation of CBHE in Ethiopia, 2011) highlights that the CBHE guideline will aim to:

1. Provide a framework for quality provision in cross-border higher education,
2. Protect students and other stakeholders from the low-quality provision and disreputable providers,
3. Enhance the development of quality cross-border higher education that meets the nation's human, social, economic and cultural needs,
4. Support and encourage international cooperation and enhance the understanding of the importance of quality provision in cross-border higher education (outreach),
5. Provide a scheme of application, accreditation, monitoring, and evaluation of programs delivered by Foreign Higher Education Institutions (FHEI) overseas through CBHE.

During the interview session at their office, I showed the CBHE guideline to each participant individually first and asked whether or not they were familiar with the guideline. To an interview question that probes awareness of participants about CBHE guideline, except the two participants of ASQAO, other participants interviewed individually at different schedules unanimously responded that they were not familiar with the CBHE guideline at all. HERQA has set CBHE guideline with a purpose to protect students and stakeholders by using as a frame of reference to monitor, evaluate, and accredit quality of programs or CBHE, relevance to national

needs. The CBHE guideline intended to equip partners working in collaboration with CBHE to be accountable to students and other stakeholders to protect them from disreputable CBHE providers. However, at the lower structure (MBA program), academic participants let alone transfer information to students to help them make informed decision linked to the quality of CBHE. The interviews show that all participants of case-1 expressed a lack of awareness of the CBHE guidelines existence. Thus, due to the lack of awareness, none of the objectives listed in the guideline could be implemented at the host institution working in collaboration with FH-Mainz University.

Document review of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU, signed as of 14/3/2012) between case-1 and its CBHE partner reveals that case-1 operates based on MOU in addition to the CBHE guideline provision of HERQA. With regard to the signatories between the two partners the MOU states:

The two parties agree that each activity undertaken according to this MOU shall be dependent on the availability of funds, and financial arrangements for each activity shall be negotiated before entering into a program-specific agreement related thereto. The parties agree that they shall use reasonable efforts to find adequate financial resources for the activities and exchange programs undertaken under this MOU (Memorandum of Understanding, 2012, p.2).

MOU was another provision signed between presidents of hosting and CBHE institution that informs the details regarding financial issues and specific activities carried out at the MBA program level. Regarding the MOU one of the interviewed academic participants reflected that:

CBHE is assisting to draw a lesson from the experiences of institutions abroad, but the partnership needs proper management so that it is not abused. Working in partnership is an opportunity to secure the quality of the MBA program, however, institutions must work as per MOU, otherwise, the other way round it could become a means of corruption, and some individuals in the institutions may abuse the partnership and build their capacity. (Hailu)

To an interview question about how CBHE guideline (institutional environment) influences quality assurance practices, Soresa, an academic participant answered:

HERQA's regulation discriminates between private and public universities. As a shared evidence to this view here is my personal experience. A few years ago I applied for a part-time job in one of the private universities attaching my credentials and academic profile including my prolonged work experience in the flagship university (AAU). The private HEI human resource head was reluctant to receive my application for the vacancy unless I have authenticated document of my PhD degree from HERQA. Hiring staff without authentication or recognition from HERQA would mean violating the regulation. On the other hand, this regulation is not common in public universities. Mind you I am a veteran academic staff at the first-born university and yet the same qualification viewed and treated differently between the public and private HEIs, to me this is not fair.

Concerning HERQA's regulation another academic participant, Hailu, broadly viewed and extended his broader comment linked to institutional freedom of HERQA and said: "first of all HERQA is not an 'independent agency' because its policies were designed in favour of the government side. Besides, financially it is dependent on the government's finance and operates with few qualified staff". According to Hailu, independence was strongly circumvented by questions as finance and policy.

#### ***5.4.1.3. Challenges related to Economic Conditions.***

Economic realities currently observed such as inflation of birr, high cost of living that are generally influential at the national level on daily lives of the society, in general, have also its impact on university students as well. Lelise, a participant working as quality assurance manager disclosed that "Students of public universities face financial problems mainly due to inadequate research budget allocated for their research." Soresa, another participant particularly focused on other student services as important to help students reduce their overheads and suggested that: "Student cafe services are essential needs to MA students for they suffer in looking for cheaper houses and this kills their study time. Besides, many MA students live in the outskirts of the city because of the high rent of houses in the capital city. Thus, they have to travel long hours to and from college for many hours". Soressa, a participant from the academic staff, elucidate life

outside the campus. He pointed out that it also had its input to hamper students learning quality because it consumes their time being forced to trace cheap food etc. Boru, a student participant's response also shows the same problems which have been forwarded:

Since I registered for the MBA program at case-1, I have to travel to and from home 25kilo meter away by city bus number 26 because I cannot afford the payment to take a taxi. Travelling in a bus have its hardship such as waiting at the station for a prolonged time, travelling long distance standing still in an uncomfortable situation within suffocated and crowded bus. (Boru)

Living expenses like house rent, power cut, travelling long distances for more than two hours on average because of traffic jams and scarce transportation access, have a cumulative impact on the time management of students. Students lose their precious time on travel and these problems caused by the external environment are influencing factors indirectly hampering the quality of education. This happens concerning the economic reality that affected the majority of society. Thus, budget allocation for research is the major influencing factor of education quality.

### **5.5 Contribution of CBHE to Host Institutions**

Concerning research question four, formulated to explore the contribution of CBHE to hosting institutions the participants' response unanimously summarized in statements of the management participant. Gashaw disclosed that the collaboration with CBHE contributed to three tangible results as follows:

(1) To image- the building of our department, College of Economics and Management, and AAU as well. (2) The financial assistance allocated enabled students and academic exchange with FH-Mainz University that complements our effort to enhance the quality of our MBA program. (3) The funding obtained from the collaboration concretely employed to facilitate two smart rooms actively on use. In addition, Gashaw pointed out that the CBHE institution (FH-Mainz University) sourced funding to these facilities of case-1. Following the interview session; I scheduled and visited the ICT rooms. Field notes collected while visiting MBA program smart rooms at case-1. According to the schedule, I found the smart rooms being attractive and well facilitated with computers and internet connections (Fieldnotes, 1/5/2018).

In summary Conceptualizations of quality among participants of case-1 can be categorized into six quality perspectives: (i) quality as input, (ii) process, (iii) as output, (iv) meeting standards, (v) quality as implicit, and (vi) commitment of academics. Regarding internal host, university challenges that influence quality assurance and enhancement practices (i) lack of writing skills, (ii) plagiarism, (iii) lack of commitment in academics and Management affects the quality of advising process which is part of a student support service. In line with the student support service linked to the library and registrar, office there are up-to-date and adequate facilities. However, lack of upgrading skills of library staff and lack of commitments of academics to use the portal-service, hampered student support service. Collectively, these forth mentioned challenges hinder student support service provided to MBA students. The organizational structure of case-1 found to be centralized at the institution level thus, less participatory about coordinating quality assurance activities at middle and lower level management structures.

As to organizational capacity, even though, resources are adequate and up to date, the challenge arises from mismanagement of resources. In the teaching and learning processes, resources such as computers, printers, and stationeries are abundantly owned by administrative staff than available at the hands of academics who are closer to students.

Lastly, in connection with the influence of the external environment on quality assurance and enhancement practice, except for managements from ASQEO, all the rest lack awareness about the CBHE guideline; institutions working with case-1 without being accredited and operate with MOU only. Economic realities are a challenge to MBA students. Lastly, CBHE in the case of case-1 was found to be an opportunity in image building and funding to facilitate ICT rooms.

**Table 6: Summary of Findings in case-1**

Research question	Findings
Q1. How participants do conceptualize quality?	Six perspectives of quality are conceptualized; these are Quality of input, Process quality, Quality of output, Meeting the standard, Academic commitment, and Implicit quality.
<p>Q2. 2. What are the challenges of the internal university environments that affect QA and enhancement according to the different participants?</p> <p>- How do these challenges of host institutions influence quality enhancement practices according to the different participants?</p>	<p>Lack of writing skill, plagiarism, cloning, centralized quality structure and lack of commitment to academic and management are challenges of an internal university environment.</p> <p>The absence of quality structure at the lower management level hampers the participation of the academic staff, students, and the management; lack of commitment of the management followed by academic negligence; mismatch of advisors–student ratio; and disappointed library staff negatively, influence QA and enhancement practices.</p>
Q3. How does the institutional environment influence QA and enhancement practice?	Except for the management participants, all the participants of case-1 lack awareness, about the CBHE-guideline, unanimously.Lack of awareness influence QA and enhancement practices. As well, economically, the daily lives of MBA students are affected. This, in turn, has a negative impact on process quality as they do their thesis. The host institution (case-1) was not accredited by HERQA. Participants consider the quality of CBHE programs are the responsibilities and concerns of the management.
Q4. How do CBHE contribute to hosting institutions?	CBHE working, as a partner with case-1 was reported to generate an opportunity in image building of case-1. It also serves as a source of fund to facilitate ICT rooms for undergraduate students including MBA and PhD programs.

## **Chapter Six: Analysis and Results of Case-2**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter of the study focuses on the presentation and analysis of quality assurance of a private university, case-2, based on the research criteria (formulated at the beginning of the study). The chapter portrays data collected from different participants and identifies perspectives on quality first; secondly analysis of (challenges) of internal and external environment on the quality assurance practices of the host university working in collaboration with CBHE through the analysis of their conceptualization of quality. Following exploring conceptualization of stakeholders listed above analysis of the influence of internal and external environments have on quality assurance practices proceeds. In the end, the contributions of CBHE to the hosting institution (case-2) have been analyzed.

#### **6.1.1 The Institutional Context of case-2 and the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU).**

IGNOU since its establishment in 1985 has contributed significantly to the development of higher education in the country through the distance mode. With in-built quality assurance mechanisms, IGNOU is not only a nationally accredited institution in India but also an internationally recognized centre of excellence in distance education (IICBA, 2003).

Regarding IGNOU's future contribution to CBHE, OECD's account pointed out:

With sensible capacity development strategies aimed at developing their human resources and competences, including in cross-border higher education, the former emerging economies ...English-speaking India would probably become the world's number one higher education exporting country, with a strong capacity to attract foreign students to its institutions, both in its territory and in the countries where they have progressively provided their services (OECD, 2009, p.86).

In the case of Ethiopia, the program organized through IGNOU's headquarter in Delhi is offered in partnership with a local private university, SMU which is based in Addis Ababa. The

programs offered by IGNOU are based on the principles of providing post-graduate studies employing a cross-border distance educational modality. Saint Marry University (SMU) established in 1998, is a prominent Ethiopian institution of higher learning located in the capital of the country, Addis Ababa. The University is private, young, and dynamic after fifteen years of dedicated services first as a college and then as a University college since 2008. SMU earned a University status from the Ministry of Education in September 2013. St. Marry University has four main campuses in Addis Ababa, thirteen major distance education regional centres, and 160 coordination offices spreading all over the country. Currently, eight graduate programs are run in partnership with Indri Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). These programs include Business administration, Public Administration, Library and Information science, Sociology, Economics, Rural Development, and Political Science in the distance mode of learning (see [www.smuc.edu.et](http://www.smuc.edu.et), 2013). The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), since its establishment in 1985, has contributed significantly to the development of higher education in the country through the distance mode. With in-built quality assurance mechanisms, IGNOU is not only a nationally accredited institution in India but also an internationally recognized centre of excellence in distance education (IICBA, 2003).

According to OECD's (2009, p. 86) account, IGNOU's forthcoming was proposed:

With sensible capacity development strategies aimed at developing their human resources and competences, including in cross-border higher education, the former emerging economies ... English-speaking India would probably become the world's number one higher education exporting country, with a strong capacity to attract foreign students to its institutions, both in its territory and in the countries where they have progressively provided their services.

At present, IGNOU offers 125 programs of study through 1000 courses to a cumulative student strength of about 14, 33,490. These programs are offered in widely diverse areas and at different levels covering a Doctorate degree, Master's and Bachelor's degree, Postgraduate and Undergraduate diplomas and certificates. The University has established a network of 58 Regional Centers (RCs), 6 Sub-Regional Centers, and 1400 Study Centers (SCs) all over the country to provide easy access and effective support services to the learners. These include Program Study Centers (PSCs) as well as Special Study Centers for, minorities, like jail inmates,

personnel of different wings of defence. The University entered into bilateral and multilateral cooperation and alliances with several countries, especially in Asia and Africa: United Arab Emirates (Dubai, Al Ain, Sharjah, and Fujairah), Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Abu Dhabi, Seychelles, Mauritius, Maldives, Ethiopia, Madagascar and Liberia (CSIC, 2010a).

The programs organized through IGNOU's headquarter in Delhi, India is offered in partnership with a local private university, SMU which is based in Addis Ababa. The programs offered by IGNOU are based on the principles of providing post-graduate studies by means of a cross-border distance educational modality in Ethiopia.

### **6.1.2. The Institutional Context.**

Case-2 established in 1998, is a prominent private University among Ethiopian institutions of higher learning located in the capital of the country, Addis Ababa. After fifteen years of services as a college first and a University college since 2008 promoted to university status by the Ministry of Education in September 2013. At the present, this University has four main campuses in Addis Ababa, thirteen major distance education regional centres and 160 coordination offices spreading all over Ethiopia.

Currently, eight graduate programs run in partnership with Indri Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). These programs include Business administration, Public Administration, Library and Information science, Sociology, Economics, Rural Development, and Political Science in the distance mode of learning (see [www.smuc.edu.et](http://www.smuc.edu.et), 2013). The preferences of the private HE sector will be to launch programs that reduce costs and maximize profits. As a result, it is not surprising that there is a considerable provision in the various areas of business studies (HERQA, 2016, p.8). The MBA program of IGNOU was a case selected in this study. To assure the quality of MA programs including the CBHE provisions, SMU has an established internal quality assessment system, which follows up improvements and informs the pertinent academic and administrative units of the gaps that need to be narrowed and the practices to be enhanced. To date, twice the Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency (HERQA) has audited the

institution. The first was in 2004 and the second in 2008 and for the third time audit invited HERQA in 2019.

The total number of students that were enrolled in all IGNOU programs comprises 4929 students of which MBA students, who are the focus of this study in the enrolment statistics, revealed that within ten years gap the total number of students to be 546 out of which 452 males and 94 females. In this research, IGNOU a CBHE was selected among many private HEIs in Ethiopia because it is a pioneer CBHE provider to deliver post-graduate programs to regional centres deprived the opportunity in the sector.

**Table 7: Academic, Student, and Support staff profile of case-2.**

No	Academic staff		Students			Supporting staff
	Full time	Part-timers	Undergraduate	Masters	Distance Education	
1	200	-----	6000	2000	23,000	1000
2		-----	Total31000			

Source: SMU statistics 2019.

**Table 8: Enrolment of IGNOU students by entry & program MBA (Masters of Business Administration) at case-2**

Year of Admission	Sex	Programs of IGNOU									
		MBA	MPS	MSO	MPA	MEC	MCOM	MARD	MLIS	MSW	
2006	M	36	7	38	40	54	20	36			
	F	2	7	5	0	4	4	7			
	T	38		43	40	58	24	43			
2007	M	43		149	73	96	49	131	7		
	F	4		27	10	13	10	14	1		
	T	47		176	83	109	53	145	8		
2008	M	79		121	57	102	45	112			
	F	10		21	10	10	4	7			
	T	89		142	67	112	49	119			
2009	M	107		173	113	168	90	123		84	
	F	23		52	19	32	33	14	9	53	
	T	130		225	132	200	123	137	2	137	
2010	M	85		155	94	172	114	83	11	105	
	F	24		51	16	38	34	14		58	
	T	109		206	110	210	148	97		163	
2011	M	25		48	18	35	36	16		21	
	F	8		18	6	8	21	1		18	
	T	33		66	24	43	57	17		39	
2012	M	39		48	29	69	31	42		50	
	F	7		39	12	11	21	4		33	
	T	46		87	41	80	52	46		83	
2013	M	27		63	26	101	42	29		37	
	F	10		26	10	15	25	6		29	
	T	37		89	36	116	67	35		66	
2014	M	11	14	20	12	35	21	11		13	
	F	6	0	3	2	3	1	1		7	
	T	17	14	23	14	38	22	12		20	
Grand Total	M	452	21	815	462	832	448	583		310	5
	F	94	0	242	85	134	153	68		198	0
	T	546	21	1057	574	966	601	651		508	5

Source: registrar office of IGNOU program at SMU.

The total number of students that were enrolled in all IGNOU programs comprises 4929 students of which MBA students, who are the focus of this study in the enrolment statistics, revealed that

within ten years gap the total number of students to be 546 out of which 452 males and 94 females. IGNOU as CBHE was selected among private HEIs because it is a pioneer to deliver post-graduate programs to regional centres deprived the opportunity as a spearhead in the sector.

## **6.2 Perspectives of Conceptions of quality**

Conceptualizations of the study participants of case-2 have one way or the other, influenced quality assurance and enhancement practices to make the quality of higher education better or worse. This is because the intentions of participants or how they define quality influence their actions. In this section samples of participants purposely selected from the academics, students, and managers, were interviewed regarding their conceptualizations of quality. Hereunder some of their prominent perspectives on their understanding about quality have been analyzed, and results are presented as follows; quality understood as (i) fitness for purpose, (ii) performance of academic staff.... For instance, one academic participant, Teferi, defines quality as stated below:

I do not have my definition of quality however, I agree with case-2 (host institution's) definition of quality which is adopted from HERQA stated as 'fitness for purpose'. There are vision, mission, and educational objectives in place in our institution. Quality refers to those practices that fit in realizing the vision, mission, and educational goals of the organization.

According to an academic participant's conception quality is not a private issue. Each member of the institution should not define quality on an individual basis; rather a quality conception should focus on unitary concept shared among the community of the institution based on HERQA's document. Thus, fitness for a purpose is a concessional definition of quality commonly employed within the institution. Stella and Martin (2007) also argue that "fitness for purpose" is based on the assumption that institutions of higher learning have different missions and objectives. Tirsit, a student participant, narrowly defines quality in simple terms about the performance of academic staff:

Quality is decided by comparing the performance of one academic staff against other colleagues' performance provided that all of them engaged in similar activity. The one who performed quality work will be decided based on personal judgement and some members of the staff could be labelled of good quality.

According to Tirsit, quality seems an unmanageable concept that relies on comparison among academics engaged in similar business without a common standard. Identifying quality service based on personal judgments and labelling its quality to be poor or good seems debatable. As opposed to the previous perspective of quality conception in which all members of the institution agreed upon, one common definition a student participant conceptualized quality to be flexible. For this participant there could not be agreement among individuals, this happens because a decision on quality determined by comparing individual practices with each other, thus, his/her definition relatively relies on subjective judgment.

As to the management participant Asnake, a conception of quality falls into two categories:

One category of definition of quality has to do with the module or distance education material, simplicity of the language, whether the information of modules was written clearly and self-explanatory, to be understood by independent learners and the second category that differs from the former one is quality of student support services such as counselling and tutorial services, delivered as per the schedule of the tutorial session. Curriculum material and support services targeted here to qualify quality service.

According to Asnake, quality is conceptualized in terms of the input aspect of quality that refers to the content of modules and the simplicity of its written language while being prepared by the IGNOU centre in India. The second quality aspects mentioned above by the same participant were counselling and tutorial services (the process aspect of quality) which are the responsibilities of the Ethiopian teachers. In this collaboration program between the CBHE and hosting institution, IGNOU professionals should take responsibility for the quality of the material while the Ethiopian instructors who provide the tutorial service are responsible for the process aspect of quality. Thus, if there is any quality problem created with regard to the delivery process the blame goes to Ethiopian instructors. Additionally, well-prepared learning material alone does not guarantee quality learning. This is because quality material needs dedicated and critical readers who take time to read. If the reading effort of students supported by academic staff, who give tutorial service through deep reading to update their knowledge, the output will be promising. In the end, students will meet or exceed the standard set first and achieve the objectives of the CBHE program. Therefore, quality is achieved by the joint effort of three actors: IGNOU's curriculum designers, Ethiopian tutors and IGNOU students in Ethiopia.

As the participant categorized quality into two might help to know the one accountable for the blame or the blessing in line with lack of quality. Based on participants' reflection, I can comment that IGNOU centre is accountable for the good quality of the material or its defect and regarding the quality of support service that includes the delivery process the responsibility goes to the Ethiopian teachers. Students as end-user are also responsible for reading the material and attending tutorial sessions. On the other hand, the academic participant Marru pointed out: "In the collaboration between the host (case-2) and CBHE institutions, case-2 has a facilitator role, because modules, tests, project works and lastly the degree awarded to graduates commenced by IGNOU center. In here case-2 plays the role of facilitation in tutorial programs."

Unlike the former participants that link quality to the vision of the institution, Marru relates quality to teaching- and learning processes. Comparatively, meeting the vision suggested above takes a longer time and requires the collection of the effort of all the employees. However, instructors and the management of case-2 may contribute to the process-aspect of quality, by providing quality modules to students and supporting them at the right time during the course delivery. This seems to have an immediate impact on quality. Liben, another management participant of case-2 showed to have a different perspective when defining quality:

Because the quality of higher education involves input, throughputs, and output dimensions, it is difficult to define it in one sentence. The input aspect of quality such as students registered for MBA program depends on the long process linked to the prior experiences of students such as primary, secondary and undergraduate programs. Similarly, recognizing the output aspect of quality goes beyond events of graduation of students with MBA degrees.

Additionally, the above management participant of case-2 explained quality in more elaborated statements as follows:

Inputs such as, qualification of instructors, time teachers take for preparation before delivering the course, the way the lesson is delivered and tests are administered, quality of students registered for the program, time students spend in the library for a study run through a very long process that includes lots of activities, and involvement of all the operational units of the institution. (Liben)

According to the above participant, quality entails the participation of many stakeholders who have a stake and contribute to its improvement. These stakeholders should work together in the long process to achieve quality. Before running the process, there need to be appropriate inputs

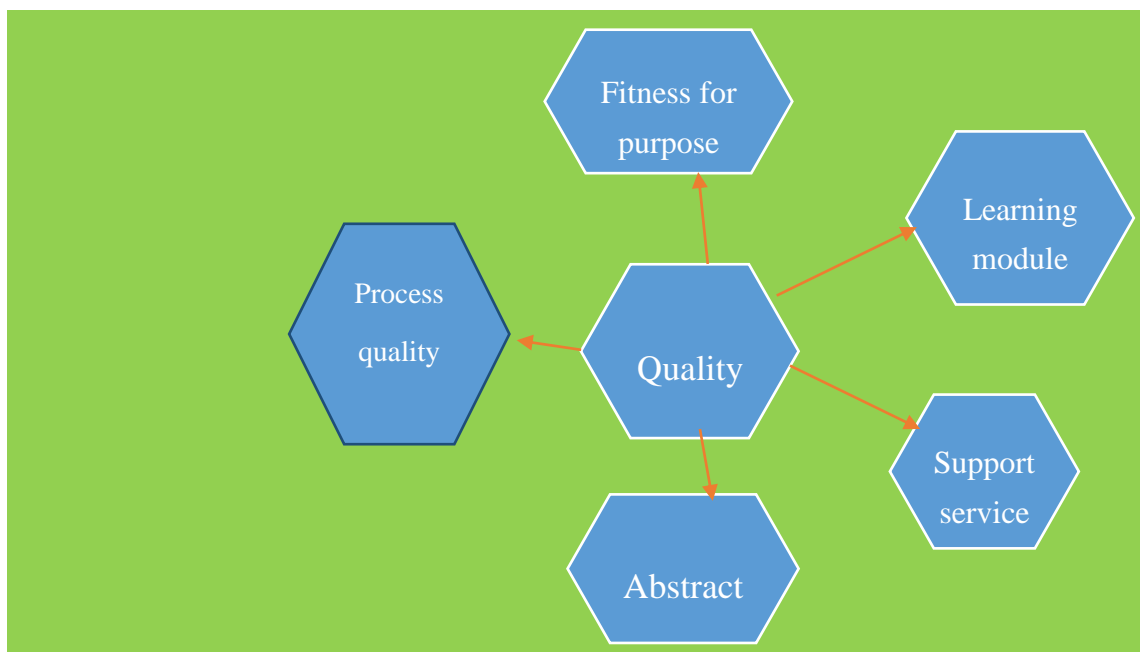
that qualify for the level of higher education. These inputs refer to qualified teachers, students who have the readiness to learn and the net effect of these interactions could end up with the quality output. Inputs include curricular content, student-staff ratio, contact hours, various material resources related to the field of the study. Properly integrated inputs work together in the process part towards better output. Furthermore, to illuminate the root cause for poor quality in higher education, Liben attributed the existing values of reading teachers and students have in the teaching and learning process. Liben argued that students' culture of reading has been on a decline from time to time. The cause of decline could be connected to students' home values, school values or societal values that students were brought up with. Furthermore, the participant pointed out his account regarding teachers reading experience as follows:

Though it is not generalizable to all teachers, teachers' reading culture has been on a decline too. Some teachers value reading in our institution. However, they read limited to their disciplines. As to me, I believe that teachers need to read across disciplines and developing this reading culture could have a remarkable impact on the quality of education of students. (Liben)

The participant's discussion covers the input, process and output aspects of quality in general, unlike the former participants that conceptualized quality in its broader perspective encompassing the former background of students, current practices of academia and students and future productivity of students in the society. His/Her conception of quality goes beyond the institutional level to cover experiences of students from their earlier school life and the world of work after graduation. On the other hand, Teklay, another academic participant has another perspective regarding quality conceptions. He remarks that defining quality is only possible by indirectly inferring the changes observed or measured on outputs. Otherwise, the quality of higher education is an abstract concept invisible in the inputs or process aspects. Teklay defined quality as follows:

Quality in the higher education context is very difficult to define because it is very abstract. One cannot measure quality in the context of higher education but he/she can understand the existence of quality based on the attributes revealed as outputs. The quality outputs perceived in graduate students' character could be directly or indirectly point to the status of quality of the training students undertaken. Thus, one can judge higher education quality to be good or bad based on the impact of the learning process. (Teklay)

The conception of quality among participants of case-2 comprised diverse concepts that range from quantifiable belongings such as learning modules to abstract conception. Therefore views of participants of case-2 can be outlined into five categories of quality conceptions such as (a) quality as a long process, (b) fitness for purpose, where quality is judged in terms of the extent to which a product or service meets its stated purpose, (c) quality of the learning material, (d) quality of student support service, and (e) quality as an abstract concept. Moreover, the five quality conceptions congregated into different levels as fitness for the purpose at the national level, process quality at institution level, support service and learning module at classroom level, and abstract quality at individual level.



**Figure.6: Conceptualization of quality in case-2**

### **6.3. Challenges of Internal University Environment**

The conceptual framework in chapter three offered a foundation for informing various iterations of my coding arrangement used as a “working tool in connection with the research questions, the framework provided an organizing structure” (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008, p. 61) for reporting findings of this research. In this research, internal university factors in focus are the internal arrangements such as organizational structure, organizational capacity, and the student support service. Pertinent data were generated based on research question 2 that aimed at exploring

challenges of the internal university environment. Successively, a follow-up interview question employed to learn how the challenges influence QA and enhancement practices. Data generated from the management, academic staff and students representatives' interview have been analyzed supported by document review and field notes. Therefore, components of the conceptual framework such as quality assurance structure, organizational capacity, and student support services were analyzed and the findings are presented below.

### **6.3.1 Student Support Services.**

Academic and administrative supports are the two dimensions of student support services recognized in the literature: “Academic support, sometimes known as tutorial support, is provided to students in the cognitive intelligence and knowledge issues specific to certain courses, while non-academic support (administrative) support deals with helping students in the affective or organizational aspects of their studies” (Thompson, 2002 cited in Melese, 2015, p.42). Student support provided to students at higher education instructions fall into two major categories; academic support to students to help them conceptualize ideas while the administrative dimension of support paves way for learning. The analysis of challenges influencing quality assurance and enhancement practices of case-2 that focused on student support services identified services of a tutorial, library, and registrar office and are presented as follows.

#### **6.3.1.1 Tutorial.**

Tutorial is one of the academic support services offered to MBA students based on the schedules set by IGNOU requirements. The coordinator of international programs facilitates the timetables for tutorials and the learning materials distributed every time MBA students register for their distance courses. Regarding the challenges faced in tutorial service provision, the management participant Asnake, elucidated his experience as follows:

Many students are not available during tutorial services, especially if the nature of the course devoid of mathematical skills. Concerning non-mathematical courses, students assume that they manage it through independent reading on their own. For instance, out of 100 students registered for the course, nearly 10 to 20 per cent could be available for

tutorial services. Currently, tutorial service is no more practical because the number of students available for tutorial service from time to time is on the decline.

According to Asnake, students attend tutorial services in courses that demand computational skills selectively and the number of students who attend tutorial service has decreased progressively. In addition to absence in tutorial services deterioration of reading culture was another challenge raised in relation to MBA students. In line with academic staff, the management participant, Zewge, reflects a challenge he experienced regarding the reading culture of academic staffs and pointed out that: “even though, it is not generalizable to all because there are some diligent academic staff responsible for their duty some academic staff conduct tutorial sessions without preparation ahead for their tutorial courses.”

Based on a follow-up question for elaboration and how the challenge affect quality processes Zewge went on and expressed his grievance regarding current trends of academic staff and suggested further on the issue:

Generally, teachers' reading culture has deteriorated. If it exists it is limited to his/her disciplines, in my view, teachers need to read across disciplines because this practice has an impact on the quality of education. Particularly, many part-time teachers rather than focusing on reading they spend time running from one campus to the other for part-time works like bees flying from one flower to the other. Zewge continued his remark on how this challenge influenced the process phase of quality and said:

What teachers deliver, time students spend in the library to study their courses influences the quality of learning. Whether part-time teachers manage tutorial classes without preparatory reading or take time to read and prepare for the next lecture before delivery is decisive to affect the process aspect of quality.

Another senior manager, Liben, emphasized the issue of reading and pointed out that “as to my observation since the establishment of this institution for a prolonged time, linked to academic capacity some academic members are not up to my expectations. However, I have observed also diligent and committed teachers who never compromise their profession.” Reflecting on the root cause for poor quality education. Liben went on and raised current values of students that “reading culture is deteriorating from time to time this could be related to students’ home

values, school values or societal values in which they were brought up, generally, students' culture of reading is on a decline from time to time.”

In addition, Mishamo reflected that foreign language ability and lacking the skill of writing and poor culture of reading led some students to plagiarise their paperwork from former students that graduated before them. This activity, unless it is checked on time could become one of the challenges in quality of higher education. As opposed to the above participant Asnake point out that “some IGNOU students are from various embassies residing in Ethiopia. Thus, they are good at the English language than their Ethiopian students.”

On the same issue Zewdu, a student participant revealed that the institution supported them as students by providing materials and arranging tutorial programs and giving immediate feedback to project works. Regarding the challenges encountered linked to the support services from the center Zewdu stressed that: “I personally did not face any problem with the centre but there are inefficient internet services and power interruption in my residential area for I am living far away from the centre. Unfortunately, I hardly, read the modules deeply because I am too busy in office duties.”Zewdu expressed his grievances about the time shortage encountered, because of additional responsibilities related to job, family and social affairs. Thus, to mitigate this critical problem and encourage efforts in reading their courses reconsidering tutorial support is key.

Overall responses of research participants show that the interruption of the tutorial program and a progressive decline in tutorial service; a decline in reading culture of academic staff and students were challenges have the potential to influence the student support efforts of the host institution and the quality of the CBHE courses negatively. In general, a decline of the reading culture of academics and students was a challenge affecting the quality assurance process.

#### ***6.3.3.2 Registrar office.***

Registrar office is another support service provider that facilitates students, attending learning in distance modality, linked to this support the registrar officer, Tolosa, briefly explained services provided at their office as follows:

Registrar office provides an orientation to IGNOU students when they first register to create awareness. The provision aims at helping them decide on their future academic life. Students receive the counselling service individually first and orientation session in

groups follows. Afterwards, the centre uses home telephones, cell-phones, and e-mails to communicate with students regarding information exchange to access their modules, grade reports, and feedback on their assignment and schedules of tutorial services. For communication to be feasible each student has to give his/her personal account and password received during registration.

Tolosa continued elaboration on challenges encountered and pointed out: “Challenges associated with providing support to the students relate to the weakness of some students in writing their thesis work and submitting on time. Some students fail to meet the deadlines, in turn, this limitation delays their time of graduation.” Considering this problem IGNOU amended the former study period, the program coordinator further explained IGNOU’s amendment linked to admission:

According to the former IGNOU’s requirements students were required to graduate within five years and students are aware of the requirements during entry. However, the latest IGNOU’S admission criteria updated the time framework and by adding three more grace periods extended the study periods to eight years. However, those students admitted before the amendments need to finish within five years because the program terminates its services and require a student to register again. (Tolosa)

On the same issue, the senior manager Liben pointed out some challenges that could be faced due to the delay of graduation. He said that the delay has so many consequences on students and the centre as well. For instance, there is a challenge of obtaining foreign currency to run the program because a student’s fee is paid to the IGNOU centre in USD. Thus, obtaining foreign exchange is a challenge to the host institution (case-2). On top of this, delay in graduation costs students a lot, because course fees are paid in foreign currency which fluctuates from year to year.

To sum up, tutorial service is a weaker support service provided to students than the support provided by registrar and advising services. High drop-out rates and long study durations are interpreted as signs of ineffectiveness and inefficiency.

#### **6.3.3.3. *Library service.***

Document review of SMU(case-2) annual plan reveals that “the Digital library services provide support to new and existing library systems which are including the KOHA libraries integrated system, the institutional repository of the university, Jstor, Springer, and other systems which were enhanced library services.” St. Mary’s University, (2017, p.24)

Library facilities are the third support service that complements advising thesis and tutorial service. In line with this issue a student participant, Mishamo shares his account on learning materials: “IGNOU provides us with both hard and soft copies of modules at an appropriate time and the modules are written in detail and are well organized”. Because of this he and his friends rarely go to the libraries for further reading. The head of the library, Damtew, reflected that students do not use their time properly: “according to my experience students are crowded in the library at peak times while the exam weeks are approaching or when deadlines of submission for assignments and projects are closer.”

During my observations I interviewed the library head and observed case-2 library and noted my observation in field notes as follows:

Field notes on library service reveal that the library has enough collections of journals relevant to the MBA program, subscriptions. However, those IGNOU students borrowing reading materials were few in number. The library head interviewed on the issue responded to provide reference books and journals based on the feedback from staff. Though the library is spacious enough relatively few students engaged in reading during a time of observation. On the other hand, even though adequate materials available in the library for borrowing no names of MBA students in IGNOU programs available in the lists for borrowing. (Field notes, 24/4/2018)

In summary, founded on data obtained from document review, field notes and interviews of participants, though there are adequate collections of material provisions, persons supporting students to accesses resources at the library, MBA students of IGNOU programs were reluctant in employing library provisions.

### **6.3.2 Quality Assurance Structure.**

No matter the high effort exerted by the external environment of the HEIs side, quality enhancement is promising through an internal QA system developed by the institutions themselves. Guided by the research question 2 that was formulated for this research, analysis has been conducted regarding quality assurance structure with the document reviews of HPE (Higher Education Proclamation, 2009) first. In this official document, it was legislated that “every institution shall have a reliable internal system for quality enhancement that shall be continuously improved” (HEP650/2009 article 21.1, p.4988).

Following this decree, case-2 developed a working document and the document states that “...case-2 identified strategic directions to guide institutional planning and operation for the year 2013/14--2017/18, quality assurance and best practices are priority areas in the document” (CEIQA, 2017, p.1). According to this document, the primary responsibility for IQA and quality promotion rests with the Centre for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA). Case-2 has put in place CEIQA in 2004, as a centre with a role of coordination and overseeing the implementation of institution-wide quality enhancement activities, based on policies and guidelines developed at the university level (CEIQA, 2017). Furthermore, the document reviewed elucidates that a director who is accountable to the president of case-2 chaired the centre and executes its duties through two units: Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) and Academic Development Resource Unit (ADRU). CEIQA delivers, activities related to quality issues such as: Conducting quarterly monitoring and evaluation on the implementation of planned activities of SMU’s operational units; producing evaluation reports based on monitoring; providing training on quality assurance and enhancement practices to the university staff and other similar institutions; coordinating institutional and program self-assessment, and publishing a quarterly newsletter that focuses on educational quality. Besides, the document review of CEIQA (2017) discloses that case-2 has developed policies and put in place a centre (CEIQA) responsible for self-assessment. CEIQA devolved responsibilities to the quality assurance unit (QAU) to play the role of monitoring and evaluation. According to field notes taken at CEIQA after the interview session, regarding reports collected from QAUs at the archives. The field notes revealed that QAU’s monthly, quarterly and yearly reports of all QAUs including the international Program office in which IGNOU was a part were well documented and submitted to the archives of CEIQA (see appendix E). IQA is a systematic way of assuring the quality of inputs that include students and staff, teaching-learning process and outputs (graduates). CERQA focus on the ten guidelines of HERQA to run an internal quality audit and each quality assurance unit (QAUs) employ the same criteria and submit their monthly, quarterly and annual reports based on their regular practices of monitoring and evaluation to provide up-to-date data to CEIQA.

Teklay, one of the academic staff participants, was interviewed with regard to the organizational structure of IQA and pointed out:

Every academic department has set its own QA units and they are accountable to report monthly to CEIQA. Quarterly there is a meeting organized by the centre to discuss the reports and provide timely feedback to quality assurance units so that QAUs use these feedbacks as inputs to strengthen their work further.

The forum held quarterly at CEIQA allows each head of the quality assurance unit (QAU) to exchange ideas and identify the strengths and weaknesses of practices to improve quality. Unlike monitoring and follow up activities, evaluations conducted at the end of the academic year have little contribution to quality enhancement. Thus, CEIQA is a centre that plays the role of coordination at the institution level whereas QAUs are sub QA offices at the department level that is accountable to the centre of the QA office (CERQA).

Even though, Asnake, one of the management participant, commented: “IGNOU has its strategic plan set for five years and its program is assessed quarterly based on monthly performance report to CEIQA”, data collected through field notes recorded from the archives during the study visit do not support this comment. Additionally, there is a quarterly published bulletin by the centre entitled ‘quality matters’, which invites academic staff and other outside scholars to contribute to the newsletter (CEIQA, 2017). According to my observations, this newsletter provides a forum for those who need to contribute to the issue of quality to the institution and beyond. Somehow, it communicates a sound message, as quality is the main concern in the institution. In this regard one of the participants among the management, Zewge, reflected:

CEIQA is a centre at case-2 that coordinates the issue of quality at the institution level and there are IQA operational units at each program and supporting staff level that plays the role of monitoring quality and reports to the CEIQA monthly, quarterly, and annually. Feedbacks provided, during quarterly meetings were minuted and each QAU collects feedback forwarded by CEIQA to amend their next plans accordingly.

Document review of the annual plan of case-2 reveals that the quality enhancement committee (QEC) of each department or unit are involved in planning, monitoring and report its progress every six months and at the end of the year to CEIQA. Data from participants and document review all together display that case-2’s quality assurance structure was organized in a decentralized manner. However, one participant, Marru, was of the view that “CEIQA is a

centralized office, which plays a coordinating role of all offices including the lower structures regarding quality activities.”

To a follow-up question, how the quality assurance structure influences the quality assurance and enhancement processes, Zewge explained that: “the quality issue is shared responsibility of both quality assurance units and CEIQA. Following monthly, quarterly, and semester reports’ feedback given by CEIQA are reconsidered by the committee of QAUs for further improvement”. Progress report followed by feedback from CEIQA seems a good opportunity to take timely measures on quality problems of each unit. Thus, the quality structure of case-2 which is decentralized facilitates the quality assurance and enhancement process. In addition, the decentralised quality assurance structure creates a two-way communication between the top management and other staff working at the lower level quality assurance structures.

To sum up, CEIQA was established in the host institution and devolved its structure to the lower level of the institution. Devolving the structure created a dual communication channel between the lower-level management such as departments and quality assurance units (QAUs) and CEIQA. Thus, there is a free flow of information in both directions. Evidence from data of the field notes regarding monthly and quarterly reports of QAUs (see appendix G) and the interview responses of CEIQA’s coordinator disclose that case-2 has a decentralized quality structure. Consequently, decentralized organization of quality structure brings about power devolvement by sharing burdens to lower-level staff. Moreover, a sense of ownership and dual communication between CEIQA and quality assurance units create fertile ground for every member of the institution to contribute to quality enhancement activities (see Appendix-G)

### **6.3.3 Organizational Capacity.**

In this section, research question 3 designed to explore the adequacy of resources and whether resources are current to this time guides conceptions of participants in case-2.IGNOU modules are resources in focus in the next section.

### **6.3.3.1 Modules.**

Liben, a participant from the management forwarded his account pointing out: “in my view, IGNOU’s modules are adequate and up to the standard.” The participant raised some evidence to support his account and commented that firstly, IGNOU’s post-graduate program employed IGNOU’s modules “as a benchmark whenever our indigenous postgraduate programs were launched” Secondly, some public university staff working as part-timers at case-2 testified that they use IGNOU’s modules as resource material for their work as they offer courses at their MBA classes in public universities. According to Liben, the weak side of these modules is the lack of cultural relevance; this lack can be attributed to their design and development by Indian experts and not yet tailored to the Ethiopian context. To fill this gap students are required to do assignments, projects and research work centred on their domestic cases in which they are accustomed on top of that tutorial support services are provided to students by the Ethiopian instructors. Adding to the former participants, Tirsit, a female student participant, also commented regarding the contents of the modules as follows:

A concisely prepared and non-redundant module needs to be provided for adult learners because they attend courses with additional responsibilities on the job. The MBA modules prepared well and they are so helpful to grasp managerial concepts for they are rich enough and well-written addressing varied ability groups. However, I could not cover all the chapters through reading because they are too vast to manage them within the allotted time. Thus, MBA-courses being bulky and redundant made me face difficulties in covering portions as per the time table.

Moreover, she also commented on future considerations as the modules provided to adult learners need to be concise and non-redundant so that learners who attend distance courses manage to study along with other responsibilities on the job. Tirsit continued: “IGNOU’s modules are helpful to grasp concepts because they are rich enough and well-written addressing varied ability groups. I faced difficulties in covering portions because they are bulky and redundant.” Alike to the above participant a male student participant of the IGNOU program, Mishano, commented on modules: “in my opinion, the IGNOUcenter tried to prepare high-quality materials and made available both hard and soft copies to students on time...”

Cultural relevance of curriculum was another issue raised as a challenge which has to do with the question of quality and relevance. Teferi, pointed out two mechanisms by which lack of cultural

relevance is undertaken: (a) relating students' activities such as projects and assignments with their home experiences and work realities, and (b) employing Ethiopian instructors as a tutor. The academic participant, Teferi also remarked that the only gap he found with these modules was linked to a lack of relevance to the Ethiopian cultural context. To fill the gap of cultural relevance students were required to do assignments, projects and research work in relation to their domestic cases for which they were familiar. On top of that tutorial support services provided to students by the Ethiopian instructors was also helpful to lessen problems of cultural distances. Furthermore, regarding the impact of cultural differences reflected during correcting tests a female student, Tirsit, attending the IGNOU program in the interview session revealed that: "Indian supervisors at the centre of IGNOU are responsible for correcting tests". These Indian instructors who lack contextual knowledge of Ethiopian students correct the final exam that accounts for 70%. She went on: "Had the Ethiopian instructors manage our tests on behalf of the Indian staff they would have taken our English language background into consideration so that test results would be fair to us while correcting our essay tests".

Backing this student participant, the guideline, of UNESCO/OECD Quality Provision in Cross-border higher education, stated that CBHE providers expected to take into account students' cultural and linguistic sensitivities of the receiving country (OECD/UNESCO, 2005). Zewdu, a student of an IGNOU program, remarked that IGNOUcenter tried to prepare quality materials and made available both hard and soft copies to students. To a follow-up, research question how internal university challenges influenced quality assurance and enhancement practice. Maru's reflection reveals that financial scarcity was a critical factor that hindered quality assurance activities at the host institution. Due to scarce resources, CEIQA was not able to give ongoing capacity building training to its academic and other supporting staff. Regarding recurrent challenges related to internal university challenges, the institution faced, Liben pointed out that staff turnover has been a serious challenge to deliver tutorial service. This, in turn, affects the organizational capacity of academic staff. Additionally, the document review of the annual plan identified resource challenges states: "the ever skyrocketing prices of stationery items and instructional-technology linked commodities have made our work daunting.....even more

challenging is the building rent hike, which goes up unabated from year to year'' (SMU annual plan St. Mary's University, 2017, p.vi).

The management participant, Asnake, raised the lack of commitment of some academic staff as follows:

Academic staff turnover and request of some teachers for incentives regarding extra commitments done in addition to their teaching and advising duties. Because of our current financial status, our institution could not afford to pay an additional payment for co-curricular tasks and action research, thus, these academic staffs move to other institutions to work as part-timers. Moreover, instructors hired as part-timers come up with their culture; if it is poor it affects our quality for instance. They ask for additional payments for conducting action research which is part of their duty. Doing action research help teachers to assess students' need and collect feedback that informs their decisions.

A participant with managerial responsibility a challenge to practice activities contributing to quality education in his institution because some part-timers among the academic staff bring the culture of their institution and ask additional payments for instance, for doing action research, which is one of the strategies to improve quality of the educational process. The part-time teachers who are not willing to serve for free provoke those staff hired permanently to follow their examples. However, the institution cannot afford to arrange additional payments other than allotted in the contractual agreements.

To sum up, modules of IGNOU are adequate and up-to-date to MBA students, however, redundancy of contents and lack of cultural relevance were the challenges identified. To mitigate the lack of cultural relevance of modules to the Ethiopian context the tutoring service to IGNOU students was provided by Ethiopian instructors. The capacity of case-2 is weak financially to retain academic staff for a prolonged time, thus, staff turnover is high. The price of teaching and learning material and building rent is rising from time to time hampering the quality of education.

#### **6.4 Institutional environment**

The next section presents the legal framework which is one part of the institutional environment that influence QA and enhancement practice in this research. The CBHE guideline is the legal

framework regulating foreign institutions operating with host institutions. Particularly challenges in relation to the guideline were attempted to be covered hereunder.

#### **6.4.1 The legal framework (CBHE guideline and Accreditation).**

HERQA has developed CBHE guidelines to regulate cross-border HE operating in Ethiopia and the Ethiopian private Universities engaged in Cross-border programs at Somaliland, Hargeisa. (See, Guidelines for the Accreditation of CBHE in Ethiopia, 2011). The guideline will aim to:

1. Provide a framework for quality provision in cross-border higher education,
2. Protect students and other stakeholders from the low- quality provision and disreputable providers,
3. Enhance the development of quality cross-border higher education that meets the nation's human, social, economic and cultural needs
4. Support and encourage international cooperation and enhance the understanding of the importance of quality provision in cross-border higher education,
5. Provide a scheme of application, accreditation, monitoring, and evaluation of programs delivered by Foreign Higher Education Institutions (FHEI) overseas through CBHE. (See appendix G).

Case-2 is working with IGNOU based on the CBHE guideline provided by HERQA. According to an official document issued in 2011 as a framework for quality provision, the document aims to (i) provide schemes of accreditation, monitoring and evaluation of CBHE programs; (ii) protect students and other stakeholders from low-quality provisions; (iii) enhance the quality of CBHE that meets national social and economic demands (HERQA, 2011).

Before an interview question that probes awareness of participants of case-2, I offered the CBHE guideline to all participants followed by the research question stated as: Are you familiar with this CBHE guideline at hand?

Though the participants were interviewed individually at different schedules, their responses to the aforementioned research question confirm that almost all participants unanimously responded that they are familiar with the CBHE guideline at hand. A study participant of the current International program coordinator, Asnake, commented on CBHE guideline for instance

witnessed: “I know this guideline very well it is our ‘bible’ that guides our activity, we do our activities accordingly and whenever there is a dialogue between our institute and HERQA this guideline will be on use to defend the institution.”

Document reviews of the accreditation letter provided to case-2 prove that IGNOU accredited in 2006 for the first time and re-accredited again in 2019. Conversely, public universities that run a huge amount of budget and train the large majority of graduates in Ethiopia are not accredited like private institutions. The management participant, Zewge complained, that HERQA “does not award those higher institutions performed well based on its cyclic audit report”. The absence of reward or punishment based on the audit report, in turn, affects quality in HEIs in general.

Another complaint on the institutional environment reported by a participant of case-2, Marru pointed out that: “HERQA’s staff were not professionals in quality assurance of MBA programs” and went on “for instance, an expert whose background was in language areas evaluates programs like management and accounting, this is not fair, on the top of that they are not open-minded for communication -they just want to impose on us and they do not consider the other perspective.” On the same issue, CEIQA’s director Zewge, pointed out: “HERQA started its pilot audit with case-2 because the management was a volunteer for the pilot study. Following the pilot audit, HERQA audited our institution for the second round, thus case-2 was audited twice based on the self-assessment report”. Both Marru and Zewge concluded their complaint by pointing out HERQA’s negligence for efforts made at the institution level. They argue that the agency does not award those who performed well based on its audit report, which contributes to those institutions working diligently.

Overall, IGNOU was subject to accreditation by HERQA and accredited twice in 2006 and 2019. Letter of accreditation from IGNOU center and a voucher of payment for accreditation reviewed from HERQA’s archives show that accreditation is one of the requirements to be fulfilled for CBHE to work in Ethiopia. Thus, IGNOU works as a CBHE in collaboration with the host institution (case-2) as per the legal requirement of HERQA. Concerning the awareness level of the research participants of case-2 all the participants unanimously are aware of the existence of the CBHE guideline.

#### **6.4.2 Economic realities.**

This aspect of the paper considers ‘Conditions for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of CBHE Subsection 1.5‘financial arrangements’ stated in the CBHE guidelines. A foreign Higher Education Institution(FHEI) opening its branch campus entering into the franchised agreement in the form of working capital, performance guarantee, and tangible assets as required by the relevant regulation for foreign investment in higher education. Foreign exchange is another institutional environment influencing the activities of IGNOU. According to the response of a coordinator of IGNOU, Zewge, “the lack of foreign currency delayed their activities”, this, in turn, affected the quality of education, for the reason that assessment and research proposals failed to be sent timely to the centre of IGNOU in India. Secondly, IGNOU’s program coordinator, Asnake, commented that “fluctuation of the exchange rate of the hard currency was another challenge” linked to case-2 students because “they were forced to pay additional money to cope up with the current rate in foreign currency (USD).” Regarding communication between the headquarters and host university, Asnake went on and stressed that:

IGNOU is down on the list of the National Bank of Ethiopia to get foreign exchange urgently. Therefore, there is a delay in submitting assignments, research proposals, and student’s fee to the main centre in India. On the other hand, the IGNOU centre does not give special consideration to Ethiopian students; it prepares common schedules and treat all students on the same standards as other centres all over the world. Consequently, the IGNOU centre sends exams to our centres, after ensuring students’ fees were completely paid. Sometimes the exam session could be pushed by 3to 4 months from the scheduled time because of delayed payments of students fees.

According to Bunoti (2011) quality in higher education are influenced by several factors including, economic factors, political factors, quality of students and faculty, administrative factors, and academic factors. Though economic factors focused on case-2 there are diverse factors influencing the quality of higher institutions. Regarding life expenses, all IGNOU students are attending their education privately on distance modality staying at home. Thus, economic tensions due to displacement have little impact on them.

#### **6.5 Contribution of CBHE to Hosting Institutions**

Regarding research question 4 linked to the contribution of CBHE to host institution one of the academic participants, Teferi, suggested his view as recited below:

The demand for CBHE is very high for people of our citizens who are doing their job in the countryside, those who do not have access to postgraduate programs in domestic HEIs use IGNOU as a means of upgrading their status. Though the material for distance learning is not culturally relevant to our context it is of good quality. Learning by the IGNOU program which is internationally recognized is a good chance for students from remote areas of the country.

The participant has given his/her account concerning contribution CBHE make in addressing learners need difficult to be addressed by the formal higher education system. Addressing this sect of society is essential because workforces are living far from the capital and regional towns that need upgrading their status for the dynamic world of work. In addition to complementing the unreached needs of distance learners, the CBHE partner also provides its programs for those learners that live in the capital and various cities. Asnake pointed out that: “Some of our students come from various embassies located in the capital and governmental and non-governmental organizations. Thus, IGNOU is playing a wide role in capacity building of many other nations including Ethiopia”. Linked to its contribution to host institution Asnake, the management participant, revealed that “case-2 used IGNOU’s post-graduate program as a benchmark whenever the indigenous postgraduate programs were launched for the first time at Addis Ababa Mexico campus”. Another contribution of CBHE in the views of management participant has to do with the contribution of CBHE (IGNOU) to image building, experience sharing, exposure to specializing new fields, and provision of multidisciplinary options. For Zewege: “IGNOU has motivated some students to learn further, on the assumption that foreign-based HEIs are more reputable than domestic HEIs”. Zewdu, an IGNOU student reacted to the interview questions above regarding the contribution of IGNOU to students. He said:

One of the most important contributions of IGNOU is that it has created a good opportunity for a student like me living far from the central cities to learn without leaving our place of work and family thus, its continuation in the future will help to address those workers in the remote area denied access to post-graduate education.

**Table 9: Summary of findings in Case-2**

<b>Research question</b>	<b>Findings</b>
<p>Q1.How do participants conceptualize quality?</p>	<p>Five perspectives of quality are identified : Quality of curriculum, Quality of student support service, process quality, Fit for purpose, and Abstract.</p>
<p>2. What are the challenges of the internal university environments that affect QA and enhancement according to the different participants?</p> <p>- How do these challenges of host institutions influence quality enhancement practices according to the different participants?</p>	<p>Lack of writing and reading skills in English, plagiarism, absenteeism in tutorial sessions, lack of resources, academic staff turnover, lack of foreign exchange to pay student fee to CBHE programs.</p> <p>The decentralized quality assurance structure encourages participation of the academic staff and students, thus, these participants could be motivated in the participation of improving the quality assurance and enhancement activities. Plagiarism and delay in graduation increase the number of dropouts.</p>

<p>Q3. How does the Institutional environment influence QA and enhancement practice?</p> <p>Q4. How do CBHE contribute to hosting institutions?</p>	<p>Unanimously, all academic and management participants of the research reveal that they do have awareness about the CBHE-guideline.</p> <p>Economic realities have less impact on the daily lives of MBA students.</p> <p>The CBHE program is accredited two times and work according to the accreditation requirements of HERQA. Economic issues, regarding life expenses, have less impact on the teaching-learning process. Fluctuation arises from the exchange rate in the market. The capacity of the staff is complained and disregarded and their effort is disregarded to contribute to quality assurance practices.</p> <p>--CBHE contributes to the host institution as a benchmark for the domestic post-graduate programs, quality of education and image building.</p>
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## **Chapter Seven: Cross-case Comparison of Case-1 and Case-2**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter is organized to respond to the comparative case studies' research design used in this research. It is argued that the improvement of theory construction by comparing two or more cases provide the researcher with a position to create the conditions in which theory will or will not hold and the comparison may itself put forward concepts that are relevant to an emerging theory (Bryman, 2012). Thus, the chapter comprises analysis of cross-comparison of case-1 and case-2 to identify the similarities and differences between them and reveal commonalities and differences of conceptualization of quality, challenges of the internal university that influence quality assurance and enhancement practices followed by the external influences. The cross-case comparison considers internal university environments subdivided into (i) student support service, (ii) organizational capacity and (iii) organizational structure, and external university environment particularly CBHE guidelines and economic realities are the focus areas.

#### **7.1.1 Comparison of Conceptualizations on Quality.**

The word quality has been difficult to define because of the elusive, relative, multi-dimensional, and multi-level of its nature. In day to day communication currently, according to Webster dictionary (2019) definitions of quality include calibre, first-class, awesome, banner, classic, five-star, keen, noble, and top-on the shelf as some synonyms for quality. On the contrary, antonyms like: awful, lousy, pitiable, poor, rotten, vile and wretched describe low-quality (Webster dictionary, 2019). There is a wide variety of understandings of quality depending upon the views of different stakeholders (Bobby, 2014; Campbell & Rozsnyai, 2002; Cullen, Joyce, Hassall, & Broadbent, 2003; Harvey & Green, 1993; Kemenade, Pupius & Hardjono, 2008; Martin & Stella, 2007; Newton, 2010; Vlăsceanu, Grünberg & Pârlea, 2007).

Moreover, the complex context of higher education intensified further the problem of obtaining the specific meaning of quality. Based on the case analysis conducted independently in chapter five and six consecutively cross-case comparisons were undertaken to deepen understanding of

similarities and differences regarding conceptions of quality of stakeholders in case-1 and case-2 reported as follows.

### **7.1.2 The Similarities and the Differences in Terms of the Conceptualizations of Quality.**

In this research, the first research question focuses on exploring definitions of quality among the sample participants purposively selected from academics, students and the management in the context of both host institutions of the CBHE program.

Alike to Harvey and Green (1993) quality dimensions, based on the stakeholders' views of quality and review of various attempts at defining quality who identified five distinct but interrelated conceptions, which are linked to excellence, fitness for purpose, distinctive, value for money, and passing a minimum standard. Meeting the standard and fitness for purpose are quality aspects identified by participants of both cases traditionally common quality conceptions among stakeholders of the previous research by Harvey and Green (1993)

Following the analysis of case-1 that dedicated to quality in the public higher institution context, findings of the analysis of the students, academic staff and the management explored six perspectives of quality conceptions have been explored and analyzed. Thus, the findings of the analysis of case-1 categorized quality conceptions into six aspects: (i) Quality of input; (ii) Process quality; (iii) Quality of output; (iv) Implicit quality; (v) Academic commitment and (vi) Meeting the quality standard. The analyses of conceptions of the three different participants comprising academics, management and students have identified six perspectives of quality in case-1.

On the other hand, following the same procedure similar to a case-1 analysis of conceptions of quality in case-2, have highlighted five perspectives of quality conceptions, these are: (i) Fitness for the purpose; (ii) Process quality; (iii) Support service (iv) Learning modules; and (v) Abstract.

Concerning similarities, conceptualizations of quality vis a vis research participants in both cases, share common quality conceptions in quality aspects such as quality of input, process quality, and intangible aspects of quality. In case-1 some participants' conceptualized quality to be implicit, alike case-1 another synonym "abstract" for 'implicit' 'in case-2 holds a similar

meaning of the quality conception of case-1. Despite using two different terms as ‘abstract’ and ‘implicit’ both terms imply the same thing. In both cases, participants similarly revealed that quality has an intangible aspect difficult to be measured or observed. Both terms: ‘abstract’ and ‘implicit’ qualities imply that quality is invisible in nature and difficult to be measured or observed. In the same vein as both cases, Alzafari (2017) describes quality as one of the most intangible key concepts in higher education discourse.

Furthermore, participants of case-1 use the general term ‘input quality’ whereas participants of case-2 define quality as ‘quality of learning materials. In both cases, the two terms refer to similar aspects. Thus, participants in both cases reflect the same perspective of quality in different terms. In case-1 participants categorized quality provision into three phases: quality as input, process quality, and output quality whereas in case-2 only the two phases of the provision (input and process aspects) were included. Thus, in both cases, participants commonly share categories of input and process aspects of quality.

Because of Santos, Zavale and Dias (2017) inputs refer to resources allocated to HE (students, teachers, infrastructure, funding, curriculum, academic staff, and facilities, etc.) whereas processes are different ways of managing resources (teaching-learning, administration, etc.) to get the desired outputs; lastly, outputs have to do with the final product of the HE activity (graduates, socio-economic development and research outputs).

Regarding differences between the two cases, participants of case-1 conceptualized quality as the provision embracing three aspects; input, process, and output, whereas in case-2 the study participants conceptualized the two aspects of quality provisions; quality of the learning materials and student support services provided during course delivery, only. Relatively participants in case-1 define quality in a broader perspective that covers three categories. The difference between the two cases can be attributed to the definition of input-quality which, in case-2, limited to the course and student support provided to students classroom level that seems to be a more narrow perspective of quality than their correspondent host university(case-1) who conceptualized quality input holistically as an institutional provision.

Overall quality assurance is a process of establishing stakeholders' confidence through monitoring provisions (quality of input, process, and outputs) to fulfil expectations or measures up to minimum requirements. The provision should fulfil the minimum requirements set as standards. It was supposed to meet or fulfil standards, set by the institution. For instance, input such as a fixed number of students per classroom could be one of the standards to be met in higher institutions.

The second point of difference regarding quality aspects between the two cases has to do with meeting the standard in case-1 and fitness for a purpose in case-2. Quality as fitness for purposes is subjective in nature while meeting the standard is objective. According to El-Khawas (2001), the standard-based approach may imply two objectives; (a) minimum quality standards are met in all institutions irrespective of their differences; and (b) programs or HEIs performing below predefined standards are closed down. Generally, the same standards or criteria can be applied to all programs, courses or all institutions. In case-2 that promotes the fitness for purpose approach, quality is based on the assumption that HEIs have different missions and objectives specific to contextual analysis. Thus, quality does not allow for common quantifiable or objective criteria, but in any case, varies among individuals for purpose promotes diversity among the missions of higher education institutions and underlines that quality can be achieved as long as the intended mission is fulfilled. This allows different types of higher education institutions to achieve quality within their categories (CEU, 2016). Fitness for purpose is generally the quality conception of stakeholders external to the university community (Kebede, 2014, p.31).

Conversely, in case-1 participants defined quality as meeting the standards which are an "objective" measure of quality and different higher education institutions are expected to meet common standards set by national institutions. The same standards or criteria can be applied to all courses or all institutions irrespective of differences that existed among them (El-Khawas, 2001). However, both meeting the standard and fitness for purpose are quality aspects set by national organizations.

Thirdly, the quality conception of participants in case-1 has understood academic commitment as a different perspective of quality compared to case-2. Participants of case-1 identified academic commitment as one of the perspectives of quality conceptions.

Defining quality in different contexts is difficult because its meaning varies along with the context. Meeting the quality of standards set by different organizations such as hospitals, factories and universities differ from context to context (Elassy, 2013). Elassy (2015) concluded that the concept of quality and QA is not easy to define because there are as many other concepts in social sciences, which lies in the perception of the beholder and has different meanings in various contexts. Despite these difficulties, it is important to have an understanding of what quality is because the way of improving will be determined by the definition. Similarly, Van Damme (2002, p. 11) indicates that in the era of globalization the definition of quality has become more complex. With regard to this issue he concluded:

The study concluded that defining the concept of quality and QA is challenging because it depends on the perception of the beholder and holds different meanings in various contexts. Despite these challenges, it is essential to have an understanding of quality in advance to determine the way of improvement.

Quality assurance is also an attitude or belief which impacts every aspect of an organization's activity. Thus, commitment to quality ought to be a part of an organization's culture Raj (2014). Defining quality and doing an attempt to establish a culture of quality in higher education, needs the involvement of all stakeholders in the discussion to ensure that different perspectives and needs are incorporated (Bobby, 2014; Cullen et al., 2003). Based on the cross-case analysis the two cases similarities and differences have been summarized in table 10 below.

**Table 10: Similarities and Differences in Quality Perspectives**

Similarities of quality Perspectives						
Case	Institutional level		Classroom/p rogram level	Individual-level		External to Institution (National level)
<b>1</b>	Input quality	Output quality	Process Quality	Implicit quality	Academic's Commitment	Meeting the quality Standards
<b>2</b>	Quality of Learning Modules		Process quality	Abstract Quality	Support Service	Fitness for purpose
Case	Differences of quality perspectives					
<b>1</b>	Provision include (Input, process, output)		Meeting the standard is objective& common to all HEIs		Commitment of academics is another perspective.	
<b>2</b>	Provision include(input and process)		Fitness for purpose is subjective& varies among HEIs			

## **7.2 The Similarities and Differences in challenges of the Internal University Environment**

In the following part, a cross-case analysis of the two cases was commenced based on the conceptual framework of the internal university environment that focuses on student support service, organizational and structural capacities. The cross-case analysis further highlights research question 2 that probe the challenges influencing the internal university environment and how these challenges influence quality assurance and enhancement practices.

### **7.2.1 Student Support Service.**

Student support service is one of the internal university contexts that influence quality assurance and enhancement practice. IUCEA-DAAD (2010) also suggests that in establishing a learning environment to support the achievement of quality of student learning, physical and materials, as well as the psychological environment that is supportive of learning, are crucial.

Vis-à-vis resemblances, the advising service which is a part of student support service has been challenged by (i) lack of commitment in both academic staff and the management, (ii) plagiarism, (iii) students lack of skills in writing a thesis, (iv) negative views of academics towards management and (v) disappointed library staff were challenges identified in case-1. Whereas (i) lack of writing skills in English, (ii) deteriorations of the culture of reading, (iii) student absenteeism in tutorial sessions, (iv) lack of resources, (v) academic staff turnover, (vi) vast and culturally irrelevant modules were challenges identified in case-2. Thus, findings show that lack of writing skills in thesis work and plagiarism were the common challenges hampering students in writing a thesis in both cases.

In both host institutions, participants of research reflected that MBA students were challenged to write their thesis due to lack of writing skills in English. The two case institutions shared this challenge may be, because both of them receive students of common academic background with regard to learning English as a foreign language during their stay at secondary and preparatory schools from the same sources. Inline with this deficiency, Ayalew, Dawit, Tesfaye, and Yalew (2009, p.180) stated that “if students were ill-prepared during their pre-university education for whatever reasons, it would be difficult to cope up with the demands of tertiary education”.

Teaching English language at pre-university levels in Ethiopia could be one of the determining factors in further education, this is because prior exposure influences the future engagements of learners. In fact, quite recently Harris (2015, p.194) in his study on “The Status, Roles and Challenges of Teaching the English Language in Ethiopia Context” concluded:

The results of the study have boldly revealed that the status of the English language is very poor in primary and secondary schools. Furthermore, this was common for English teachers, students and teachers of other subjects. The problem seems deep-rooted due to various contributing factors such as poor capacity building activities, unavailability of opportunities to use the language except for the English class.

Challenges linked to writing skills could be one of the causes for plagiarism, to be rampant as revealed in the interview with an academic participant in case-1(Soresa). The participants also pointed out that some students might exercise plagiarism while doing their thesis work because they were challenged to write in their own capacity, due to poor background in English. On top of that negligence of academic staff has aggravated the condition further.

Inline with differences between the two cases, the cultural relevance of modules was an issue in case-2 while participants of case-1 were silent about this issue. On the other hand, the budget allocation by the government made physical facilities of registrar and library services to be good condition so as to contribute for quality of learning in case-1 while the human resource aspects lack capacity and commitment. In case-2 resources are scarce and hiking in renting costs brought the differences in resources. Thus, the support service of case-2 seems weaker as compared to case-1, this is because the weakness of student support service directly or indirectly suppresses quality assurance and enhancement practice.

### **7.2.2 Quality Assurance Structure.**

As HERQA is a national quality assurance structure for the higher education system, Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement (ASQEO) is a centre for case-1 and similarly, the Centre for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA) is a centre for case-2. Both cases 1 and 2 have their own QA mechanisms, and the IQA systems work based on HERQA’s ten quality standards in order to fulfil the statutory requirements of their institutions. They even disclose the details of their QA mechanisms in accordance with HERQA’s quality code.

Similarly, both hosting institutions established a quality assurance structure which is a priority to assure quality.

On the other hand, the two centres of quality differ in IQA practices. For instance, CEIQA monitor and evaluate quality assurance practices through monthly, quarterly and annual reports of quality assurance units (QUA). Whereas monitoring and quality assessment practices of lower management structures in case-1 are on the development process.

As a point of departure analysis of the organizational structure of case-1 show that the quality structure exists only at the institutional level and not yet extended to the middle and lower organizational structures such as the college of Economics and Management and the Department of Management. Moreover, the three existing divisions (PhD, MBA and BA programs) of the lower organizational structure of the Management department were not part of the quality structure. Thus, missing the quality structure at the college and department level implies that there is a centralized quality assurance structure. The centralized structure, in turn, has little room for the participation of academic staff and the middle and lower management body that contribute to improve or hamper quality assurance practices at the grass-root level. After all, the daily routines of teachers, student support services are conducted at these lower levels of the management. Therefore, research finding reveals that quality structure unit exists at the institution level in case-1 and yet not branched further to lower structure at college and department levels implying that quality assurance structure was centralized. Comparatively, in case-2 the quality assurance structure exists centrally at the institution level and also at lower level management structures. Thus, responsibilities in quality assurance practices are devolved to lower level quality assurance units as well. Consultation and communication between institutional leaders and staff are necessary to socialize and internalize these ideas, making them part of the organizational culture based on QA principles. Implementation of the institutional mission policies and strategies require constant follow-up and guidance from the top-level.

The nature of quality assurance structure, whether centralized or devolved in return, promotes or hampers the participation of teachers and students in quality assurance practices. Academic staff and students take part in the process of assuring quality provided that the quality assurance

structure is devolved to the lower levels of the institution. Differently, in case-2 the quality assurance structure was devolved to lower organizational structures. Thus, they are participatory because the lower level management structures shared the responsibility of the central quality assurance in case-2 (CEIQA). Internal quality assurance processes of case-1 are managed by a university-wide structure; however, in case-2 quality assurance units are involved to support the IQA process. It seems that case-2 is engaged in critical self-evaluation compared to case-1 which lacks this process.

Dzvimbo (2006) argues that the main responsibility of the college quality assurance offices is to implement quality assurance at the college level. The reason for implementation is that the college administrative centre needs to discuss routine issues that arise from the operation of programs within the college.

If institution-level quality assurance structure lack linkage with programs and departments for being centralized in its organization, then the purpose of quality assurance could incline to accountability and the second purpose of quality assurance that is quality enhancement deemphasized. With this regard, Wilger (1999) pointed out that the argument for the improvement led quality assurance is embedded in the assumption that the quality of students learning depends largely on the quality of the internal processes of the institution; it is best guaranteed when the responsibility for quality assurance is located as closely as possible to the processes of teaching and learning.

To a follow-up research question probing their participation in CBHE programs, an academic participant from case-1 (Hailu) reflected his response as “.....Both public and private institutions research participants similarly considered the quality of CBHE to be the responsibilities of ‘others’ who have participated in CBHE programs, as evidence to this, for instance, one academic staff in the MBA program reflected his view as: “We do not have a part in this issue, it is up to the coordinator or the department to run this business”. At the same time, Demeke, another participant also commented in words that seem to have a negative connotation: “CBHE program and practices lack transparency and those who coordinate the program used to drive CBHE program in muddy and gravel roads to build their own economic capacity earlier but currently, I have no idea about this program.”

### **7.2.3 Organizational Capacity.**

Adequate mentoring and supervision systems are required at masters and doctoral levels to improve the quality of research (Moses & Eva, 2015). These systems are developed through mentoring and coaching of the junior faculty by the experienced senior staff. In the case-1 analysis of research participants, the findings show that the advising support given to students was insufficient because the staff-student ratio was high and qualification requirements of academic staff were also not up to the university legislation and the set standard to supervise MBA students.

One of the participants among the samples of an academic staff expressed that the mismatch between research advisors and students enforced case-1 to assign novices with qualification below the requirements of university legislation and HEIs proclamation 650. This condition affects academic capacity and lowers the quality of student support service. Regarding the adequacy of resources, in relative terms, case-1 was well facilitated. In addition, the collaboration with CBHE has contributed to facilitating the host university. For instance, ICT facilities, smart rooms were facilitated by provisions from CBHE working with case-1. This provision is a good opportunity for case-1 to improve a capacity-building that enhances quality assurance and enhancement processes.

In case-1 Gashaw argued that challenges of organizational capacity were linked to mismanagement of resources and allocation of resources to those individuals and offices irrelevant to teaching and research activities rather than the adequacy of resources. Whereas in case-2 Tolosa in the management position complained about the impact of scarcity of resources as follows:

Resource scarcity was one of the challenges to provide quality student support service to students because case-2 runs its undergraduate programs in rented buildings. The rent is escalating from year to year, for example, in this academic year, the rent paid to classroom accommodation amounts to nearly 19,000 birr per month. Had the government supported us to secure our own site for building classrooms things could be reversed. Securing our own site could make us economically capable so as to invest for classroom facilities, consequently, an improvement in the quality of services will follow.

The participant above argues that resource constraints could have an impact on quality and quality assurance rigours as well as scale. Quality improvement strategies failed in relation to economic improvement based on government provision of building site for free. Linking quality to infrastructure alone seems impractical because in higher education academics who play a significant role in influencing the quality of education and other organizational capacities related to human resource, were undermined. However, academics that have a significant influence on the quality of HEIs need priority over other facilities. After all, academia disposes of instructional plans through using facilities.

Secondly, staff turnover is another challenge to the capacity building process of the academic staff. With this regard, Zewge expressed this issue as: “Staff turnover was a critical problem to deliver quality tutorial service. This, in turn, affects the organizational capacity of academic staffs”. Reisberg and Rumbley (2010, p.2) pointed out the crucial of the challenge of staff turnover in HEIs and noted that “the constant staff turnover results in disorder in terms of the institutions’ capacity to operate efficiently and to manage long-term planning and development.”

Analysis so far made in case-1 and case-2 indicates that case-1 is relatively well facilitated and employ updated equipment to serve MBA students. In relative terms resources are not adequate and up to date in case-2, in turn, this inadequacy could have a negative impact on quality assurance and enhancement practices. Renting costs invested for classrooms in case-2 brought the difference in resource allocation between case-1 and case-2. The public money allotted in public institutions comparatively a huge amount of budget is good opportunity case-1 has over case-2 that brought the difference. In addition, resource facilities provided by CBHE partners were another opportunity case-1 has over case-2 to enhance quality assurance practices of the MBA program. Many private institutions have attempted to increase profitability by concentrating on offering lower-cost programs such as business administration, accounting, finance, and computing, rather than offering higher-cost academic programs that require expensive laboratories and equipment, such as medical sciences and engineering.

### **7.3 The Similarities and Differences in Terms of Institutional Environment**

CBHE guideline of HERQA and economic realities are the institutional influences focused on this research. Both cases analyzed in terms of these two institutional factors and a result of cross-comparison revealed was stated presented below.

#### **7.3.1. Legal Framework.**

In the new higher education proclamation (HEP, 2009,article21.4) HERQA was given the mandate to “Ensure that foreign institutions or their branches operating in Ethiopia are accredited in their country of origin and comply with the relevance and quality standards set by the Proclamation”(Article 89.12). Additionally, the proclamation states that “disseminating information about the status, standards, and programs of study offered by foreign institutions (Article 89.13).

In both cases, CBHE guideline provision has been intended to be used as a framework for the quality of CBHE programs. Regarding the awareness of participants in both cases participants of case-2 were aware of the guidelines while participants in case-1 lack awareness about the CBHE guidelines. Over the last 20 years, many countries have created quality assurance (QA) bodies to assist, check, or regulate their higher education institutions (HEIs). These bodies exercise their QA responsibility through various modes and methods that essentially fall under one of the three basic approaches: accreditation, assessment, and quality audit. Of these modes and their combinations, accreditation is the most widely used tool in many countries around the world and many QA bodies have some form of accreditation practices (Stella & woodhouse, 2010).

Findings of the ASQE document reviewing case-1 revealed that the ASQE office expects departments and programs should review their curriculum every 4 or 5 years. According to the document reviewed the curriculum review is cyclic in nature and it focuses on domestic programs. Thus, the CBHE partner of case-1 works based on MOU and never been accredited so far. On the other hand, the strategic plan of case-2 reveals that both accreditation and self-study were approaches employed in quality assurance practices. HERQA’s document shows that the CBHE at work with case-2 was accredited twice.

For instance, in case-2 a CBHE (IGNOU) has been accredited by HERQA twice in 2013/14 and in 2019 academic years. While a CBHE partner of case-1 has never been accredited, nonetheless both CBHE programs were similar for working with a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with their hosting institutions in Ethiopia. Therefore, in case-1 CBHE works without being accredited as compared to case-2 that have certified for the MBA course delivered by IGNOU programs. The accreditation letter at HERQA confirms the end of this argument. Parallel to this case-2 established the collaboration based on the CBHE guidelines. The quality assurance practice in the collaboration between CBHE of case-1 lacks transparency.

In case-2 HERQA accredited the CBHE working in collaboration with case-2 and MOU agreement has been signed between the CBHE and the hosting institution. Whereas, the CBHE of case-1 works only on the MOU agreement. This implies that the collaboration between Case-2 and the CBHE provider IGNOU is responsive to the legal requirements of HERQA and MBA students are protected from low-quality provisions. In case-1 the analysis revealed that students and academic staff lack transparency about the collaboration between the host University and the CBHE provide.

Even though HERQA was established to oversee the quality of both the public and private institutions indiscriminately, practices on the ground appear differently. In this regard, Soresa, an academic participant raised this issue: While I teach at a public university for the last 25 years no one was concerned about the authentication of my degree. Whenever I applied for vacancies as a part-timer at private universities the organization requires authentication of my credential, this condition is not fair. This participant voicing out his intention both the public and the private HEIs should be treated equally as far as the quality of education is concerned. Favouring the public institution and belittling efforts of the private ones should be discouraged. After all, both institutions train citizens to compete for the same job opportunities.

In line with this Ogachi (2009) argues that QA agencies oversee private HEIs, whereas public HEIs may be exempted from control. In the same vein, the CBHE working with case-2 (the private HEI) accredited according to CBHE policy guideline stated whereas CBHE collaboration with the case-1 works only on MOU. At the same time the management and academic staff of case-1 lack awareness about the CBHE guideline. The discrimination noted above was also

clearly visible in practice. For instance, in case-2 document review reveals that IGNOU the CBHE partner of case-2 was accredited twice in 2013/14 and 2019/21 academic years, whereas, the CBHE partner of case-1 was never been accredited so far (see appendix F,p.220). In several countries, the term accreditation is used to refer to public universities that were established by acts of Parliament, by statute, or by decree. They are “accredited” de jure (by law) but not as the result of peer review, a site visit, and a report assessing the institution. Ethiopia, Cameroon and Kenya are examples of such de jure accreditation (Hayward, 2006).

Accreditation processes focus more on the private sector while the public universities that use public money were not accredited. Inline with this issue, HERQA’s reviewer team in 2016 reported:

When one considers the significant imbalance between the number of students in the public HEIs and those in the private sector, the reviewers’ team formed the opinion that the resource investment in accreditation and re-accreditation is out of balance with other activities – existing and possible. (HERQA, 2016, p.13).

### **7.3.2. Economic realities environment.**

Current economic pressure in Ethiopia has a visible impact on the whole society. Therefore, MBA students were not exempted from the economic impact because they are part and parcel of the society that shares the economic blessings or curses. Displacement from home to attend their MBA program in a face to face modality exposed students of case-1 to rising house rent, the transportation cost, and living expenses at the capital. Regarding the pocket money allocated by the government to be given to students of case-1 during the study period, student participants such as Tibebe, Almaz, and Boru unanimously explained that it is insufficient to cover living expenses.

Additionally, in case-1 the research fund allotted to MBA students to run their research project was not adequate consequently, students of MBA participating in the collaboration programs proposed to be five but practically three students succeeded to obtain economic support from CBHE partner. Thus, the rest of the students forced to share economic burdens seems to influence academic quality. On the other hand, in case-2, MBA students were attending their education in distance modality, thus, they are at home and free of charges linked to displacement

expenses. The quality of HEIs has suffered in many countries due to economic constraints, commercialization, human population growth and a shift in priorities from advanced levels to basic education (Bunoti, 2012).

Currently, the economic pressure influenced more residential MBA students of case-1 compared to case-2 students, thus students' academic work quality could be influenced by lack of time management during transportation to and from their residence.

#### **7.4 Cross-Case Analysis of Contributions of CBHE to Host institutions**

Stella (2006, p.268) contends that from a recipient's perspective demand for CBHE was based on:

The education deficit including the need for capacity building, skill development, expectations for better quality and diversity, and the need for life-long learning, have contributed to the increasing CBHE operations. Tradability, as assisted by technology and economy of scale and the breaking down of language barriers has also promoted CBHE.

In the China context, hosting institutions benefited from the contributions of CBHE at the national level. The benefit may promote the importing countries to discontinue the brain drain and leakage of financial exchange, develop human capital, generate income, promote the reputation of local institutions, and form strategic coalitions with the countries providing CBHE (Garrett &Verbik, 2003; Gu, 2007; Huang, 2003, 2007; Knight, 2003, 2006; Marginson&McBurnie, 2004; R. Yang, 2008; Zhang, 2003).In the same way, analysis of participants of private and public hosting institutions in Ethiopia (case-1 and case-2) have uncovered image building and economic gains as the major benefits they obtained from the partnership of the CBHE working in collaboration with them. Differently, case-2 benefited from its partner IGNOU as a benchmark to launch their domestic MBA program and other postgraduate programs as well.

In the Self-evaluation process, only a little attention is paid to the way HERQA handles institutions and programs from abroad that are offered in Ethiopia. The current practice of HERQA has been to evaluate foreign programs for recognition in Ethiopia through the section Equivalency of HERQA. Reportedly, at this moment a document is under discussion in which a

description is given of the way in which the quality of such foreign programs will be assessed (HERQA, 2010). IQA is established within the HEIs, while EQA is established above/between HEIs. As highlighted by Dill (2007) quoted in Mulu (2012, p.39), “IQA refers to practices used by HEIs themselves to monitor the quality of their education, whereas EQA refers to supra-national or national practices used by external bodies to assure the quality of HEIs and programs.”

Quality attracts multiplicity in meaning and interpretations. One of the most common mentioned risks in the literature is brain drain. The possibility that the students will gain foreign degrees and will then prefer to stay or go abroad to work is very possible. Currently, Raj, K. (2014, p.254) findings glimpse that “in many countries, stakeholders have been placing high expectations on their educational systems, compelling institutions to produce higher quality products, services, processes, and by extension, students and graduates.” Perspectives on education quality can be clarified on the basis of a conceptual framework that describes education.

IQA, in general, can be defined as the overall management system which is implemented in the university to carry out the quality policy for ensuring that the university fulfils its purpose and meet the standards set by external elements conforming to generally accepted standards as defined by QA bodies, appropriate academic and professional communities (Nkunya, 2008).

**Table 11: Summary of findings of Cross-comparison of Case1and 2**

<b>Research question</b>	<b>Similarities between Cases</b>	<b>Differences between Cases</b>
Q.1.How do participants of the research conceptualis ed quality?	Qualities of input, process quality, intangible qualities such as implicit and abstract are common quality perspectives.	Participants in case-1 conceptualised quality as meeting the standard which is objective and a quantitative measure whereas for participants of case-2quality is fitness for purpose, subjective and qualitative. Moreover, in case-1 output quality and academic commitment are further elements of quality aspects.
2. What are the challenges of internal university environments that affect QA and enhancement according to the different participants?	Lack of thesis writing skills in English, and plagiarism are shared conceptions of challenges between the participants of the two cases.	There is resource scarcity of case-2, in contrast to case-1. However, resources are adequate and mismanagement is a challenge among participants in case-1. Moreover, advice of thesis by novice academic staff is against the university legislation (cloning) and the number of an advisor-student ratio is mismatched. In case-2 absenteeism of students during a tutorial session, deterioration of reading culture in academic staff and students are all challenges that are identified affects student support service.
How do these challenges of host institutions influence quality enhancement practices according to the different participants?		The decentralised quality assurance structure in case-2 promotes the participation of both academic staff and students. Thus, participation in case-2 enhances quality assurance and enhancement practices.Conversely, the centralised quality assurance structure hampers the participation of academics and students in case-1.In turn lack of participation hinders the quality assurance and enhancement practices.

<p>Q3.How do the challenges of the institutional environment influence quality assurance and enhancement practices?</p>		<p>Participants in case-1, lack awareness about the CBHE guidelines, whereas participants in case-2, unanimously have awareness about the CBHE guideline. Unanimously all academic and management Participants of case-1, lack awareness about the CBHE-guideline. Conversely, all the participants in case-2, have awareness of the CBHE-guidelines. Even though both participants have complained about HERQA, complaints of participants in case-2, is based on awareness of legal provisions and practices than case-1.</p>
<p>Q4. How does CBHE contribute to hosting institutions?</p>	<p>CBHE contribute to build the image of both cases.</p>	<p>CBHE working as a partner with case-1 was reported to generate an opportunity in funding to facilitate ICT rooms for undergraduate students including MBA programs. Whereas in case-2, CBHE contributed to host institutions as a benchmark to domestic post-graduate programs and quality of education.</p>

## **Chapter Eight: Summary of key findings, Discussion and Implications**

### **8.1 Introduction**

So far chapters five and six were devoted to the within-case analysis of case-1 and case-2, and their findings were presented independently. Based on the findings of both cases, the cross-case comparison was commenced in chapter seven to identify similarities and differences and deepen the analysis as well. In this chapter, findings of the cross-case comparison are discussed in detail relative to other literature. Findings of similarities and differences are summarized about quality conceptions, influences of internal university environment of host institutions based on the conceptual framework of student support service, organizational capacity, and structure followed by institutional environment presented as follows:

### **8.2 Summary of the Major Key Findings, Reflections, Discussion, and Implication**

In this section, a summary of findings of cross-case comparison is focused on similarities and differences of quality conceptions; challenges of internal university and institutional environments, and their influences on quality assurance and enhancement practices of host institutions followed by contributions of CBHE were presented. The similarities and differences are summarized as follows:

- (1) Despite exploring diverse conceptions of quality from research participants in both cases, similar quality conceptions are categorized into four levels like a national, institution, classroom, and individual level.
- (2) In both cases, there are some participants who define quality as intangible and immeasurable concepts similar to justice, love, and freedom.
- (3) Quality as the process was a common perspective conceptualized among participants of both host institutions.
- (4) In relation to instructional language lack of writing skill in English and plagiarism were common internal challenges identified in both cases.

The main differences between the two host institutions can be summarized as follow:

(1) Quality was conceptualized as an objective and measurable concept and the same standard should be employed among diverse institutions irrespective of the type of HEIs in case-1 whereas participants in case-2 conceptualized quality as subjective and diverse among HEIs depending on their purpose.

(2) In case-1 quality assurance structure of the centre (ASQEO) was not devolved to the lower management structures whereas the centre of IQA in case-2 (CEIQA) has devolved the quality assurance structure to the lower management structures. Thus, quality assurance and enhancement practice are more participatory in case-2 than case-1. In turn, the participation in case-2 enhances quality assurance and enhancement practices whereas in case-1 the lack of participation hampers the quality assurance and enhancement practices.

(3) According to participants' responses regarding organizational capacity resources are more adequate and up-to-date in case-1 than in case-2. Thus, scarcity of resources in case-2 hinders QA and enhancement practices of case-2 compared to case-1.

(4) In line with challenges of the institutional environment, unlike case-2 case-1 participants of case-1 unanimously have awareness about the CBHE guideline. On the other hand, the CBHE program is at work with case-1 without being accredited while the CBHE program was accredited in case-2. This difference suggests that there was partiality in treatment favouring the public HEI between the public and private host institution regarding CBHE programs.

### **8.2.1 Discussion on Empirical Findings.**

This section is set in relation to the findings from the cross-cases analysis with that from literature. How do participants conceptualize quality in hosting institutions of CBHE was the first research question attempted to be responded to in this research because defining quality determines the quality assurance approach that comes next. For example, Green (1994, p.12) points out that any useful discussion on quality assurance in higher education needs to address the fundamental question “what do we mean by quality first?”

In the previous literature, the quality was one of the focus areas of ancient scholars who are found in the 'Great Books' of the Western world (Adler & Goman 1952, cited in Reid, 2018; Vroeijenstijn, 1995). Defining quality began centuries ago and continues today as philosophers, scientists, and others debate the meaning and implementation of quality. From the earliest

contributions of Aristotle and Plato, up to the recent works of Kant and others, the attributes of quality are discussed. For Neave and Vanvught (1991) the interest and attention for quality in higher education goes back to the middle ages, but the concern was not well articulated before the mid-1980s. Despite quality was a central idea in the great books of the western world, it was not excepted scrutiny because of its old age (Reid, 2018).

Findings of this study revealed that quality was conceptualized as a multilevel concept in a continuum that ranges from the national to the individual level. Nevertheless, disparities of the conceptions linked to an institutional, classroom, and individual levels imply that there are no consensuses among participants regarding the conceptualization of the concept of quality. Similarly, in the findings of Harvey and Green (1993, p. 10) “Quality means different things to different people; indeed the same person adopts different conceptualizations at different moments.” One of the challenges in quality definition emerges from the nature of quality for the reason that it is a multi-dimensional and multi-level concept (Campbell and Rozsnyai, 2002; Green, 1994; Vlăsceanu et al., 2007; Westerheijden, et al., 2007). Therefore, reducing the concept to a one-sentence definition is problematic. Because, diverse scholars depict it as being: “notoriously elusive” (Vettori & Lueger, 2008). Furthermore, defining quality in higher education is a challenging task since quality is a rather vague and it has a controversial concept, an elusive-construct, and there are a wide variety of interpretations depending upon the views of different stakeholders (Bobby, 2014; Martin & Stella, 2007; Newton, 2010; Vlăsceanu, Grünberg & Pârlea, 2007).

For instance, Jung (2011) argues that in higher education context teachers may be more concerned with the quality of learning processes and outcomes, whereas students may be more concerned with the costs, flexibility of schedules, and interactions in their learning. Furthermore, external environments such as societal and cultural environments shape quality assurance policies and practices of higher education. Thus, quality assurance depends on reconciling all the three quality perspectives teachers, students and the wider society mentioned above.

Furthermore, scholars consider that quality is dynamic (Boyle & Bowden, 1997) a philosophical concept short of a wide-ranging theory in the literature (Green, 1994; Westerheijden, 1999). Particularly, quality in higher educational institutions is a dynamic ongoing matter (Kontinget

al., 2009). Correspondingly, many scholars state that quality is not a static but rather a dynamic, ever-changing pursuit of excellence that must be considered in the context of the larger educational, economic, political, and social landscape (Harvey, 2005; Opre & Opre, 2006; Ewell, 2010; Harvey & Williams, 2010; Singh, 2010; Bobby, 2014). Thus, quality is a dynamic concept that needs awareness from time to time and from context to context.

Defining quality in a different context is difficult because its meaning varies along with the context and standards set by different organizations like hospitals, factories, and universities that change from context to context (Elassy, 2013). Findings in this study point out that the conception of quality falls into three levels: institutional, national, and individual levels. Of all aspects of quality, fitness for a purpose is a shared conception of quality because it is common among individuals, institutions, and national levels. Though defining quality is difficult, there are some scholars that define quality into two broad perspectives regarding quality conceptions: Those scholars who define quality chiefly, as standards-driven, meet a pre-defined set of standards or exceeding the highest standards in pursuit of excellence. Its exceptionality is emphasized (Cheng & Tam, 1997; Green, 1994; Harvey & Green, 1993; Harvey & Night, 1996; Martin & Stella, 2007; Peterson, 1999; Vlăsceanu et al., 2007). On the other hand, there are scholars who favour stakeholder-driven definitions that employ diverse languages to define quality. Stakeholder-driven definitions are more subjective in nature because varied languages are employed to define quality. Standards are documents that establish technical requirements for products, practices, methods or operations. Differently, findings of this research disclose that participants' include both standard-driven and stakeholder-driven definitions.

Moreover, the findings of this research reveal that some participants in both cases conceptualized quality as an intangible concept, difficult to define or measure. Aligned to this area of conception different scholars, similarly noted that quality resembles intangible concepts like beauty. In the words of Doherty (2008) as beauty is in the eyes of the beholder, so is the meaning of quality is in the eyes of the participant. Others equate quality to love and argue that everybody recognizes and talks about love (Vroeijenstijn, 1995; Cheng and Tam, 1997, all cited in Firdissa, 2006a). Also to some scholars, quality, is like "freedom" or "justice", an elusive concept, instinctively understood, but difficult to articulate (Olakulehin, 2009, p. 1916). All the above conceptions of

quality commonly amplify that, quality has a hidden aspect and challenging to be defined and quantified.

Overall, the finding reveals that there is no consensus in conceptualizing quality among participants in support of this finding. Tamaro (2005) also observed that quality is a value judgment, differently interpreted by different stakeholders, such as governments, employers, students, administrators, and lecturers. Defining quality is difficult because it means different things in different contexts (Elassy, 2013b) and furthermore due to advancing in time the same individual can change his/her conception of quality, as time passes or due to change in context.

### **8.2.2 Challenges of Internal University Environments.**

Internally, the findings of this research identified a lack of writing skills in English; plagiarism; mismatch of student–academic ratio; lack of commitments of academics and management, and poor communication are as key challenges. These challenges affect advising of MBA students of case-1 in thesis work negatively whereas, deterioration of reading culture and students' absenteeism in the tutorial session affects case-2. Similarly, studies of other researches highlight that most public and private universities have inadequate student support services for the students. Likewise, other researchers in line with student support services, shade light that most public and private universities have inadequate student support services for their students. Besides, the literature reveals that the known challenges for the off-shore provision of higher education by Australian universities who work with the non-university partners include the following points: confirming equivalence or comparability in academic standards, and student outcomes; warranting comparability in student learning; ensuring adequate pastoral care and academic skills support; together with limited facilities, especially libraries and social facilities; often limited opportunities for students to develop their English language proficiency (Carroll and woodhouse, 2006; Stella and Liston, 2008). Even though, there is no perfect match between these two studies challenges of English language proficiency comply with the findings of this research. The gap observed may be attributed to differences in experiences, economic and technological advancement which existed between host universities collaborating with Australian universities and host universities of this research. Australian universities have

prolonged experience in off-shore higher education than the partners of Ethiopia host universities which is relatively a recent phenomenon.

A study on internal quality assurance in African public and private Universities by John and Maxel (2017) states that the support services provided by the non-teaching staff are critical elements towards the development of students and academia. Public and private universities, therefore, have to establish a good holistic environment that supports the achievement of quality student learning. Physical and material, as well as social and/or psychological environment which are supportive of the learning, are appropriate to the activities involved (IUCEA/DAAD, 2010).

Alike the two cases, plagiarism is another key internal challenge identified during the analysis of this research. In line with this Ercegovic and Richardson (2004) argue that plagiarism has a global nature, being neither specific to a single country nor to one area of study. In the words of Christensen and McCabe (2006) and Ersoy and Ozden (2011), the use of the internet has substantially contributed to this problem in recent years. As noted in the literature the attitude and commitment of the faculty/teachers have considerable effects on students' levels of plagiarism. Thus, measures to prevent plagiarism, for instance, include automated scoring for examinations and other standardization of admissions procedures, anti-discrimination laws and policies, and legislation that addresses deception.

In addition, causes of plagiarism as reported by students include time constraints, workload, and difficulty of the assignments/projects are the major reasons for tendencies towards internet plagiarism. Petrovečki (2008) cited in (EsraandAhmet, 2014) discovered that the high rate of plagiarism among university students has been reported in four different European countries: Spain, the UK, Bulgaria, and Croatia. Similar results have been found in the Asian countries (Chun-Hua & Ling-Yu, 2007), African and Oceanian continents (Teixeira & Rocha, 2010), unlike the findings from previous studies, this research itself reveals additional causes of plagiarism like the lack of writing skills and a decline in reading culture. Studies conducted in different countries (Chun-Hua & Ling-Yu 2007; McCabe, 2005; Pupovac, Bilić-Zulle, & Petrovečki, 2008; Szabo & Underwood, 2004) have been referring to an increase in the plagiarism rate in recent decades.

With regard to organizational capacity, effective quality assurance depends largely on the availability of highly qualified faculty members, administrators within institutions, and competent professional and technical staff in national QA agencies. The success of accreditation, audits and academic reviews are particularly demanding human capacity. Since the legitimacy and credibility of the results are so dependent on the quality (Materu & Rightti, 2010, p.11). According to (Materu & Rightti, 2010) the three obstacles for the implementation of QA at the grass root level in teaching-learning processes can be attributed to financial constraints, mismatch of teaching approach with current ICT developments, and, teachers workloads due to the massification of students. In this research similarly, the mismatch between students' number and their thesis-advisors was a challenge identified regarding challenges of organizational capacity. To mitigate mismatch in number between students and academics the management have assigned some academic staffs of a lower profile. Demeke, one of the interviewed academic participant, pointed out the problem of capacity through the term 'cloning' to describe those academic staff advising MBA-students doing their thesis without securing appropriate qualification that meets the requirements of the institution.

Findings in a study of IQA in public and private universities in Africa by John and Maxel (2017, p.8) conforms to this research. These researchers state that capacity building is critical in the process of continuous quality improvement, however "the adequate capacities of previous public and private universities in Africa have been eroded due to the increasing enrolment in the public universities and inadequate resources have negatively affected the capacity development". In this regard, Romina (2013) also suggested that a staff development program on a continuous basis will help both academic and supporting staff to clarify and modify their behaviour, attitude, value, skills and competencies. Demographic factors challenged case-1 to assign academic staffs without the capacity prescribed by the legislation of the institution. Similarly, financial scarcity affected case-2 to cope up with the current requirements of case-2. Thus, lower academic capacity due to high enrolment in case-1 and inadequate financial and infrastructure in case-2 were capacity-related challenges influencing quality assurance and enhancement practices in both host institutions. Conforming to this, due to increased student number and diminishing government subsidies, most public universities have been characterized by a reduction in per-

student expenditure and general spreading of available resources more thinly among various key processes like student support services, research, library facilities and personnel. While demand is growing, the capacity of the public sector to satisfy this need is being challenged (Baryhe, 2009; World Bank, 2007).

Without the support of higher management or HEI leadership, quality management in teaching and learning is a 'toothless tiger'. Most probably, in such a case there would be only limited chances of competing and deliberating with other actors within the institution. Unsurprisingly, the relevance of the support by higher management levels is positively correlated with the perceived effectiveness of the quality management approach.

Quality Assurance structure was another factor that affects IQA and enhancement practices in the conceptual framework. Finding in this research comply that quality assurance structure influences the internal context of host universities. QA implementation requires the shared responsibility of all university staff and management. Challenging and changing main mind-sets was essential. Quality assurance can only work when everyone is fully aware of and understands what is involved, and that it takes effort and commitment to make 'quality' happen. Quality in teaching and learning can only happen when all stakeholders from students and frontline staff, to university leadership and government, has input. Belawati and Zuhairi (2007, p.12) argue that "the QA structure alone does not improve QA practice unless all stakeholders contributed its inputs". These research findings revealed that IQA structure was not extended to the lower management structures, such as college and department and program unit in case-1 (the host institution) that works in collaboration with CBHE from Germany. Quality assurance structure doesn't extend to the lower management structures, unlike the private host institution which devolved its structures. Thus, participation was minimal in the public host university as compared to the private host university which implies that in the public one there is a lack of participation that hampers quality to happen. In case-1 participants lack awareness about CBHE guidelines and the structure also was not participatory thus shared responsibility is lacking in case-1 compared to case-2.

For instance, internal quality assurance processes at the University of Bahrain (UoB) are managed by a university-wide structure, though they are led mainly by the QAAC (quality accreditation and assurance committee). The QAAC is an executive committee for quality assurance in charge of coordinating and monitoring overall quality assurance activity at the university (Al Hamad and Al Adwan, 2016). At a decentralized level, colleges and departments have the full authority and responsibility for the implementation of IQA tools in improving their programs. Decentralization helps colleges and departments to maintain the quality of their programs autonomously, through the improvement cycles, while centralization helps to maintain quality across colleges and departments. Findings of this research show that IQA structures in case-1 were centralized as opposed to case-2 with a decentralized structure. The analysis of HERQA's quality audit reports produced for the period 2011 to 2015 (Tesfaye, 2015) shows that three fourth of the total 18 private higher education institutions including case-2 whose institutional quality audit reports have been scrutinized, had appropriate organizational structure. Thus, case-2 seems more autonomous to maintain the quality of its programs. However, participants in case-2 which is a private institution, assume that the Government favours the public institutions in this case case-1. For instance, research participants revealed that the CBHE provider that collaborates with public HEIs work without being accredited while the CBHE at work with the private host university was accredited twice

### **8.2.3 Challenges of (Institutional) External Environment.**

Finally, Mulu (2012) conducted research on Quality and Quality Assurance in Ethiopian Higher Education. The findings concerning the external environment state: Absences of a robust and strong regulatory body that stimulates and facilitates internal quality enhancement processes; poor implementation of government reform policies; poor student preparation at the lower education tiers; and absence of a supportive socio-cultural context are major hindrances. Likewise, findings of this study show that lack of awareness of participants about CBHE regulatory guideline in case-1; 70:30 student placement policy; underprivileged students during preparation for higher education in the lower structure of education (Ayalew, Dawit, Tesfaye & Yalew, 2009) were challenges impeding quality assurance and enhancement practices in Ethiopia. Additionally, findings of a case study on 'Mainstreaming Internal Quality Assurance

with Management University of Talca' in Chile concluded that "institutional accreditation, a regulatory framework for quality assurance, and competition between institutions for status and funds were identified by academic staff as external factors that affect the university's IQA system."(UNESCO, 2017, p.47). Thus, a regulatory framework for quality assurance was a common influencing factor of the IQA system between case-1 and Talca University.

The audit team recommended that HERQA needs to promptly formalize and publish the procedure for recognition of CBHE education being indiscriminately for both public and private HEIs (HERQA, 2010). However, the finding of data analysis of this research demonstrates that HERQA employs no regulation on CBHE operating with public university whereas it employs a very strict model of regulation on CBHE linked to private HEI. In Slovakia for instance there are four models of regulations on CBHE. Verbik and Jokivirta (2005 in IIEP-UNESCO, 2011) distinguish four models of a regulatory framework for cross-border higher education. These are: (a) no regulations of CBHE, in this one, there are no special regulations and controls of foreign providers. The CBHE providers seem to be free to operate in different ways and without seeking any permission or qualifications from the host country. (b) The moderately liberal model requires some qualifications prior to commencing operations for foreign institutions from the sending country. (c) In the third model, CBHE must gain accreditation and/or other formal permissions by both the host and home countries. (d) The fourth model employs very restricting regulations of the host country. Findings of this research show that HERQA's accreditation favours the second accreditation mechanism out of the four listed above because it recognizes accreditation of IGNOU at the sending country.

Historically, the national quality-assurance agencies do not evaluate the quality of imported and exported programs, with notable exceptions. But Hong Kong, Israel, Malaysia, and South Africa, which are receivers of cross-border education, have developed systems to register and monitor the quality of foreign provision. The United Kingdom and Australia are sending countries that introduced quality assurance for the exported cross-border provision by their recognized higher education institutions. Academics who consider QA biased that favours the public HEIs compared to the private ones and, scholars still accuse QA of being both a bureaucratic burden and an illegitimate interference of the central management; namely the Rector's office,

which holds too much managerial power in its hands that “regulate and discipline academics”(Lucas, 2014, p.218).

HERQA developed CBHE guideline to monitor foreign provisions however in public host institutions, both academics and the management lack awareness about the guideline. Thus, the aim of the guideline was not feasible in accordance with the CBHE guideline. In case-1 the collaboration works on MOU alone whereas the private host university participants unlike the public participants they have the awareness work as well based on the permission or accreditation offered in 2019, in addition to the MOU agreement of the collaboration (see appendix. F, p.215). The accreditation forwarded was on the program level because IGNOU was the program accredited by HERQA. Stella (2006, p.268) contends that from a recipient’s perspective demand for CBHE was based on:

The education deficit including the need for capacity building, skill development, expectations for better quality and diversity, and the need for life-long learning, have contributed to the increasing CBHE operations. Tradability, as assisted by technology and economy of scale and the breaking down of language barriers has also promoted CBHE.

With regard to contributions of CBHE to host universities’ experiences from some countries of the world will be discussed briefly. From Chinese context, hosting institutions are beneficial from the contributions of CBHE at the national level. The advantage may encourage the host countries to ban on the brain drain and loss of financial asset, develop human capital, make income, uphold the reputation of local institutions, and form strategic alliances with the countries providing CBHE (Garrett &Verbik, 2003; Gu, 2007; Huang, 2003, 2007; Knight, 2003, 2006; Marginson& McBurnie, 2004; Yang, 2006; Zhang, 2003).In the same way, participants of private and public hosting institutions in Ethiopia (case-1 and case-2) similarly reflected image building and economic gains as the major benefits they obtained from the partnership of the CBHE working in collaboration with them. Differently, in case-2 findings revealed that the home institution has benefited from its partner IGNOU, employing IGNOU’s program as a benchmark to launch their domestic MBA program and other postgraduate programs as well.

#### **8.2.4 Theoretical and Methodological Reflections.**

The conceptual framework has offered a foundation for informing various iterations of my coding arrangement which used as a “working tool in connection with the research questions, this framework has provided an organizing structure” (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008 p. 61) for report findings of this research. In this study, contextual factors in focus are the internal arrangements such as organizational structure, organizational capacity, and the student support service.

One of the drawbacks of a conceptual framework is that it may limit the inductive approach when exploring a phenomenon. To safeguard against becoming deductive, researchers are encouraged to journal their thoughts and decisions and discuss them with other researchers to determine if their thinking has become too driven by the framework.

With regard to the pros and cons of institutional theory Alvesson and Spicer (2018) stated that up to 2000, there were many components of institutional theory. These include Weberian studies of rationalization and comparative studies of institutions. After 2000, the neo-institutional theory has become increasingly principal and indeed institutionalized as a legitimating structure. However, over time these contributions have become increasingly inconsistent and created some notable problems for institutional theory including increasing vagueness, greater misperception as to whether, the focus was a theoretical lens or a phenomenon, more repetitive claims, or a tendency to reinvent the wheel. Currently, institutional theory seems to be employed in a study of whatsoever, from Japanese housewives (Leung, Zietsma, & Peredo, 2014) to the Holocaust (Martí & Fernandez, 2013). Furthermore, institutional theory has been mixed with other research theories and disciplines such as social networks, cognitive frames and institutions (Beckert, 2010), elites (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010), linguistic (Sillince & Barker, 2012), identity (Dhalla & Oliver, 2013), and project management (Tukiainen & Granqvist, 2016). The continuing deviating tradition of organization studies, there have remained a few studies to propose alternative conceptions of institutions based entirely on different theoretical traditions such as actor-network theory (Czarniawska, 2009). Based on these critical views and inadequacies of the theory has engaged the researcher to fully acknowledge the methodological limitations created in the research.

### **8.2.5 Conclusion and Implications.**

The findings in this research provide useful insights regarding the conceptualization of quality; challenges of student support service, organizational structure, and organizational capacity; internal challenges influencing quality assurance and enhancement practices at the host universities; challenges of the institutional (external) environment; and contribution of CBHE to host institutions. The conceptual framework of this research based on the assumption that enhancing the quality of education in general and student learning, in particular, is the primary responsibility of universities. It is influenced directly or indirectly by the three internal university organizational contexts such as student support service, organizational structure and capacity of each university. The research is established with the aim of exploring conceptualizations of quality and influences of the internal and external challenges on quality assurance and enhancement practices in host universities working with CBHE vis-à-vis the participation of internal and external participants in the teaching-learning in both private and public higher education institutions in Ethiopia. Regarding participants' definitions of quality, findings imply that quality definition should not be narrow or specific to local areas alone; on the other hand, definitions by international and regional institutions should not be acknowledged as they are. Thus, in order to define quality, it is important to exhaust all perspectives of the local context and the international dimension so as to find the middle ground between the two extremes. However, findings in this research disclose that there is no consensus in defining quality with time and from one context to the other. Numerous scientific papers have already attempted to define quality, and most of the authors agree that it is not possible to arrive at a precise and unambiguous definition (Abdulahakim, 2014; Macukow, 2000). This is because universities are complex entities as they have their own different purposes and, sometimes there is even conflict among the teaching and/or research or the community engagement or the technology transfer. Similarly, findings within case-analysis followed by cross-comparison reveal that there is no consensus on quality conceptions in case-1 and 2.

Concerning challenges of internal university environment vis-à-vis student support service, lack of writing skills of MBA students and plagiarism in case-1 and student absenteeism in tutorial sessions and deterioration of reading culture in case-2 were the critical challenges identified that

hamper the academic environment. Moreover, the dearth of academic and managers' commitment aggravated the challenges. With regard to quality assurance structures, case-2 has devolved structure. On the contrary, the quality structure of case-1 was not devolved to the lower administrative structures. Thus, participation was minimal in the public host university as compared to the private host university, and this implies that, in the public one, there is a lack of participation of the academic staff and students at the grassroots level. This in turn hinders the quality assurance and enhancement process to happen. Organizational capacity is another internal factor that influences quality assurance and enhancement practices. The mismatched of academic advisors to students in case-1 and resource scarcity in case-2 weakens the organizational capacity that affects quality assurance and enhancement practices.

With regard to the institutional environment, the research finding reveals that in case-2 participants unanimously have awareness about the CBHE guideline. Thus, the CBHE guideline was more familiar among participants of case-2. CBHE programs of case-2 were accredited twice, while that of the public host institution never been accredited or audited so far. Complaints of participants in case-2 were based on awareness of the legal provisions and the accreditation process is more institutional, as compared to personal complaints of case-1, that lack awareness about the CBHE-guidelines and never been accredited so far. HERQA's CBHE guideline has influenced the private host university (case-2) than, it does on the public host university. This implies that there is favouritism to the public host institution. Additionally, current economic pressures at the capital have also an adverse effect on the daily life of MBA students of case-1 that affect the quality of learning than case-2 students, who attend their education without displacement. Regarding the contribution of the CBHE to host universities, the partnership that has contributed to enhancing economic capacity, in image building, served as a benchmark in establishing domestic MBA programs in host institutions.

#### **8.2.6 Implications.**

HERQA's definition of quality in HEIs of Ethiopia needs to cover multilevel stakeholders including the national, institutional, classrooms and personal or individual level in the spectrum, rather than imposing a one-sided common definition. HERQA's definition of quality is set out,

as quality for the purpose to be the sole quality definition in Ethiopian higher education so far. But its definition needs to cover multilevel stakeholders including the national, institutional, classrooms and personal or individual definition in the spectrum.

CBHE guideline was set to control the private home institutions and set aside the public ones untouched even though they are substandard in their provision. Consequently, HERQA has to set CBHE guideline that should be observed and implemented being indiscriminately by both the public and private host institutions that are working in collaboration with CBHE partners.

The support service provided to students during thesis advising needs great emphasis and students of both cases need supplementary support in writing skills, so as to minimize plagiarism. Thus, courses enhancing academic writing skill should be given to students, before they engaged in writing their thesis.

MoSHE should give due attention to case-2 regarding lack of resources because both private and public higher institutions are working towards achieving or meeting overall national objectives by providing educational service to citizens. At the same time, student placement policy needs to be fair between social science and science fields.

In case-1 quality, assurance structure was not extended to the middle and lower management structures so as to address academics and students in a public university. Therefore, the quality assurance structure should be extended to the lower management structures to ensure the participation of academics and students-capacity building of the human sector.

HERQA should accredit both the public and private host institutions fairly.

### **8.2.7 Future Research.**

Each of the major areas of this research, particularly: quality conceptions, the internal, and external challenges that influence quality assurance and enhancement practices, deserve further exploration. Definitions advocated by academic leaders and institutional literature are not necessarily the same as those held by external stakeholders or other stakeholders within the institutions. The perspectives of those institutions excluded in this study such as (private, transnational, and offshore institutions) also need to be taken into account. It would be important

to conduct research using mixed research methods to collect data from stakeholders such as faculty, students of both private and public sectors in the future. Once the concepts and contexts have been thoroughly explored and debated, a comprehensive and feasible study needs to be done to determine the actual cost of establishing and sustaining various options for a national quality assurance system in CBHE. However, a bit advanced nation-wide study needs to be conducted in Ethiopia with a larger sample size was suggested by the researchers, to provide a more representative and general picture about the problem of internet plagiarism. In the future, a survey method seems appropriate, so as to draw more lesson about the emerging area of CBHE in the higher education landscape of Ethiopia.

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**APPENDIX A: - General information**

- 1. Name\_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Position\_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Name of host institution\_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Region where the institution is located\_\_\_\_\_
- 5. What is the type of institution please put 'x' in the box of your choice.  
A. Public.  Private

6. Which is the highest level or (equivalent) to which your institution educates students? Please put 'x' in the box of your choice.

- A. Bachelor  B. Master  C. Doctorate

7. How many students do you have in total?

- Up to 1000
- Between 1000 and 10,000
- Between 10,000 and 30,000
- More than 30,000 (please give an approximate figure: \_\_\_\_\_)

8. How many staffs do you have in total? (Full (time/part-time, all categories included)

- Up to 100
- Between 300 and 500
- Between 500 and 1000
- More than 1000(please give an approximate figure):\_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX B: - Data collection instruments for different categories of Participants**

**I. Document Review** is a systematic way of collecting data by reviewing existing documents. It was used to collect data from official and organizational documents. In order to focus on the topic selected for this study, relevant data, and a document review guide was employed.

### **Relevant Documents reviewed:**

- Higher Education Proclamation (HEP2003 & 2009),
  - HERQA's CBHE guideline,
  - Memorandum of Understanding of CBHE institution and local Universities (AAU and SMU),
  - Brochures of public relation of QA,
  - Strategic and Annual plans of AAU and SMU,
  - Academic Standard and Quality Enhancement guideline of AAU.

### **II. Site visit (Observation):**

Site visit notably helps to understand the context besides what the respondents have responded during an interview and to review some documents on the spot. Observation of learning environments (sites of CBHE programs) will be made to support information collected through interview and document review. This is because, observation and self-review reports are closely connected, which are widely used to follow-up on the self-review reports. In general, the observation process also helps cross-check the data collected from the participants of the interview: MBA students, academics and higher education managers to complement data collected through other methods and become part of most schemes of triangulation.

#### **A. Purpose of the site visit (observation) is primarily to:**

- To support the data collected through document review and interview with academics, the management, and students.
- interact with various such as librarians, resource centre coordinators,
- visit the departments and facilities of resource centres and libraries.
- Check documentary evidence for information on structural organization needs office documents (participants such as department heads, CBHE-coordinators or academic staff could respond they have supported students orally during the interview. for instance, Student supports services

provided by teaching staffs as a research advisor or supervisor has to be supported with documentary evidence. These evidence could be checked during a site visit.

**B. Planning the visit:** request permit papers of the organization and appointment with resource centre coordinators and concerned respondents.

**C. Actual visit:**

- Interacting and interviews with stakeholders (registrar office heads, librarians, and ICT-lab heads).
- Ascertaining details of quality assurance standards set by IQA centres.

**III. Interview Guide for management, Academic staff, selected MBA student representatives and heads of supporting staffs (library and registrar office).**

This interview guide comprises semi-structured interview questions set with the intention of addressing conceptualization of different stakeholders about quality and quality issues related to themes such as organizational capacity, structural organization, student support services and institutional environment.

**Interview guide for Management:**

**Conceptualization of quality**

How do you conceptualize quality in the higher education context? /

How do you define quality? /

What is quality for you?

What do you think of first when I say quality in the higher education context?

**Organizational Structure:**

How is quality structure organized in your institution? / The department?

How do quality managers of your institution communicate information to academic staff and students?

What are the challenges that influence QA and enhancement?

How do the challenges of organizational structure influence quality assurance and enhancement practices?

**Organizational Capacity:**

How do you comment regarding the adequacy of resources available in MBA department to support MBA students?

How current are the facilities employed to support students?

What are the challenges faced regarding the capacity of academics?

**Student Support Services:**

What kind of student support services do you provide to your CBHE programs students?

What challenges have you encountered in line with student support services? And what is the success story?

**Institutional environment:**

Are you familiar with CBHE guidelines?

What do you know about CBHE guideline?

How do the CBHE guidelines influence CBHE working with host institutions?

What are the challenges that influence IQA and enhancement practices.

**Interview guide for Academics of CBHE programs:**

**Conceptualization of quality:**

How do you conceptualize quality in the higher education context? /

How do you define quality? /

What is quality for you? /

What do you think of first when I say quality in the higher education context?

**Structural organization:**

How is quality structure organized in your University?

How about the level, a unit, committee or directorate.

What are the conditions that influence IQA and enhancement practices?

**Organizational Capacity:**

How do you comment on the adequacy of the resources available in MBA department to support MBA program students?

How current are the facilities to improve quality?

What are the challenges linked to organizational capacity?

**Conceptualization of quality**

How do you conceptualize quality in the higher education context? /

How do you define quality? /

What is quality for you?

What do you think of first when I say quality in the higher education context?

**Organizational Structure:**

How is quality structure organized in your institution? /the department?

How do quality managers of your institution communicate information to academic staff and students?

What are the challenges that influence QA and enhancement?

How the challenges do linked to organizational structure influence quality assurance and enhancement practices?

**Organizational Capacity:**

How do you comment regarding the adequacy of resources available in MBA department to support MBA students?

How current are the facilities employed to support students?

What are the challenges faced regarding the capacity of academics?

**Student Support Services:**

What challenges have you encountered in line with student support services particularly during advising students?

How do the challenges you encountered in line with students during thesis advising of MBA student influence IQA and enhancement?

What is the success story?

**How do the challenges of support service influence quality assurance activities?**

**Institutional environment:**

Are you familiar with CBHE guidelines?

What do you know about CBHE guideline?

How do the CBHE guidelines influence CBHE working with host institutions?

What are the challenges that influence IQA and enhancement practices?

**Student Support Services:**

What kind of student support services do you provide to your CBHE programs students?

What challenges have you encountered in line with student support services? and what is the success story?

### **Interview guide for MBA Students:**

How do you conceptualize quality in the higher education context? /

How do you define quality? / What is quality or you?

#### **Organizational Structure:**

How is quality structure organized in your institution? / The department?

How do quality managers of your institution communicate information to academic staff and students?

What are the challenges that influence QA and enhancement?

How do the challenges of organizational structure influence quality assurance and enhancement practices?

#### **Organizational Capacity:**

How do you comment regarding the adequacy of resources available in the MBA department to support MBA students?

How current are the facilities employed to support students?

What are the challenges faced regarding the capacity of academics?

#### **Student Support Services:**

What challenges have you encountered in line with student support services particularly during thesis advising of MBA student?

What is the success story?

How do the challenges of support service influence quality assurance activities?

What kind of student support services is provided to you in CBHE?

How are you engaged in dialogue or discussion on quality issues?

What challenges have you encountered in line with student support services? And what is the success story?

### **Interview Guide for heads of the library and registrar office:**

#### **Conceptualization and Institutional Environment**

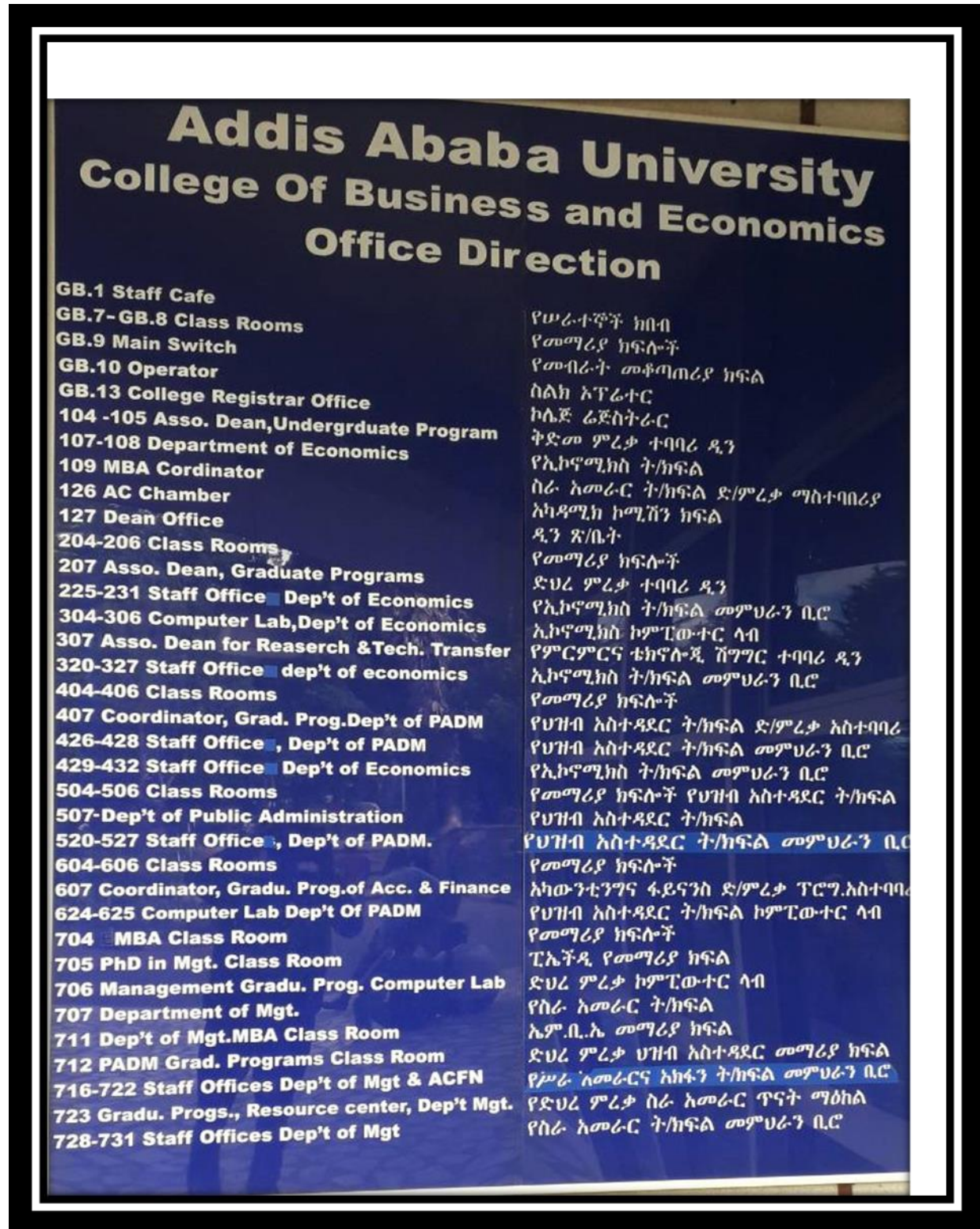
How do the challenges of support service influence quality assurance activities?

What kind of student support services is provided to MBA students in CBHE?

What challenges have you encountered in line with student support services? And what is the success story?



APPENDIX C: -Case-1 organizational structure



**APPENDIX D: - Example of Informed Consent:**

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL STUDIES  
CENTER FOR COMPARATIVE EDUCATION AND POLICY STUDIES**

**Informed Consent**

Dear Sir/Madam,

The following information is provided to help you decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time.

I am conducting this research for the partial fulfilment of a PhD degree in International and Comparative Education. This interview will be administered to Management, academic staffs, and students. The research aims at exploring: **Quality Assurance of Host Universities at work with Cross-border Higher Education Providers in Ethiopia: Exploration of Perspectives and Practices.**

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview. I would like to hear your ideas and opinions. I want to assure you that your responses to the questions will be kept confidential and your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way.

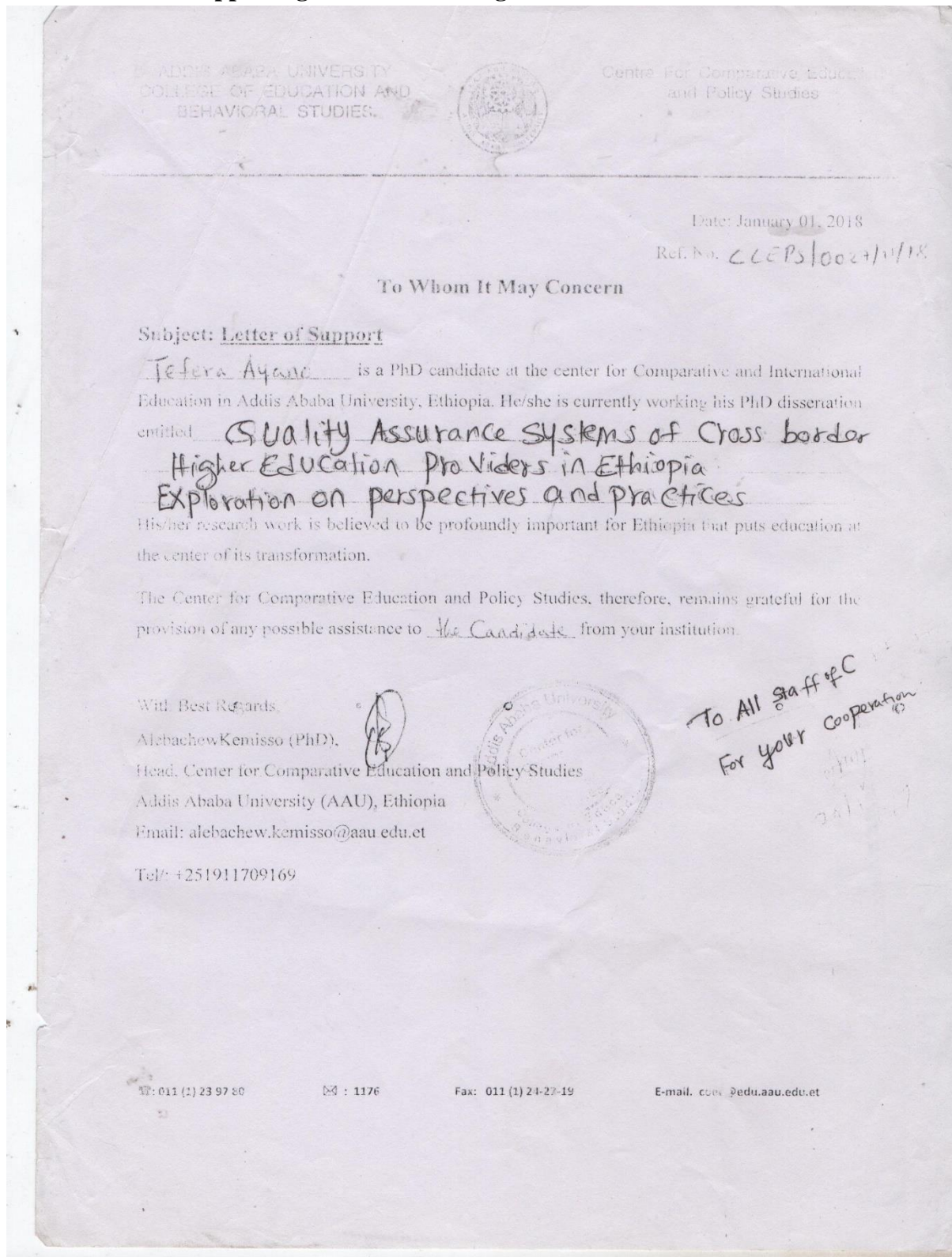
Do not hesitate to ask questions about the study before participating in or during the study. I would be happy to share the findings with you after the research is completed.

Please sign this consent form. You are signing it with full knowledge of the nature and purpose of the procedures. A copy of this form will be given to you to keep.

Name-----

Signature -----

**APPENDIX E: - Supporting letter from College of Education & Behavioral Studies**



ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND  
BEHAVIORAL STUDIES.



Centre For Comparative Education  
and Policy Studies

Date: January 01, 2018

Ref. No. CCEPS/0027/1/18

To Whom It May Concern

Subject: Letter of Support

Tefera Ayano is a PhD candidate at the center for Comparative and International Education in Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia. He/she is currently working his PhD dissertation entitled Quality Assurance Systems of Cross border Higher Education Providers in Ethiopia: Exploration on perspectives and practices. His/her research work is believed to be profoundly important for Ethiopia that puts education at the center of its transformation.

The Center for Comparative Education and Policy Studies, therefore, remains grateful for the provision of any possible assistance to the Candidate from your institution.

With Best Regards,

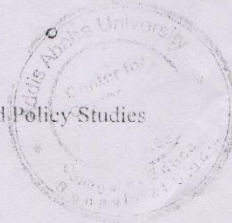
Alemachew Kemisso (PhD),

Head, Center for Comparative Education and Policy Studies

Addis Ababa University (AAU), Ethiopia

Email: alemachew.kemisso@aau.edu.et

Tel: +251911709169



To All staff of C  
For your cooperation

Tel: 011 (1) 23 97 80

Fax: 1176

Fax: 011 (1) 24-22-19

E-mail: ceep@edu.aau.edu.et

**APPENDIX F: - HERQA's documents of Accreditation and CBHE guidelines:**

የከፍተኛ ትምህርት አግባብነትና ጥራት ኤጀንሲ



Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency

ቁጥር RefNo: 09/21/1877/11  
 ቀን Date: 06 መጋቢት 2011

**በከፍተኛ ትምህርት ፕሮግራም ስልጠና ለማካሄድ የተሰጠ የእዉቅና ፈቃድ**

**Accreditation Grant to Provide Higher Education Program**

ተቋም: ቅድስት ማርያም ዩኒቨርሲቲ  
 ካምፓስ: አዲስ አበባ (ሚክሲኮ)

Institution: St. Mary's University  
 Campus: Addis Ababa (Mexico)

ተቋሙ በድህረ ምረቃ ደረጃ በደንበር ተሸጋሪ መርሀ ግብር ህንድ አገር ከሚገኘው ኢንድራ ጋንዲ ናሽናል ኦፕን ዩኒቨርሲቲ ጋር በትብብር በሚሰጠው ትምህርት በቢዝነስ አድሚኒስትሬሽን፣ በኮሚርስ፣ በሩራል ድቪዮፕመንት፣ በኢኮኖሚክስ፣ በሶሻል ወርክ፣ በፕብሊክ አድምንስትሬሽን፣ በሶስዮሎጂ እና በፖሊቲካል ሳይንስ የትምህርት መስኮች ከመጋቢት 2011 ዓ.ም አስከ የካቲት 2016 ዓ.ም ድረስ በየአመቱ በየትምህርት መስኩ ከመቶ (100) ያልበለጡ ተማሪዎችን እየተቀበለ እንዲያስተምር የእውቅና ፈቃዱ ታድሶለታል።

The University is re-accredited to provide education at postgraduate level in Master of Business Administration, Commerce, Rural Development, Economics, Social Work, Public Administration, Sociology and Political Science programs with annual admission of not more than 100 students in each program from March 2019 up to February 2024 at Addis Ababa, Mexico campus in cross-border modality.

ማሻሻያ ለማድረግ እንዲረዳው የግምገማወ ዝርዝር ሪፖርት ለተቋሙ ተልኳል።

The detail evaluation report is delivered to the college for recommended improvements.

*(Handwritten signature)*  
 ትምህርት ሞታ ምክትል ሞኅሪ ሳይሬክተር



**ግልባጭ፤**

- ለዋና ዳይሬክተር ጽ/ቤት
- ለም/ዋና ዳይሬክተር ጽ/ቤት
- ለእ/አ/አ/ግ እና የት/ማ/ማ ዳይሬክቶሬት
- ለሀዝብ ግንኙነት ማስተባበሪያ

**ከትአጥኢ**

PBX  
 011 1 232230/232226  
 011 1 236130  
 011 1 236127

«ጥራትና አግባብነት ለለው የከፍተኛ ትምህርት መረጋገጥና መጎልበት እንተጋለን»  
 "Safeguarding and Enhancing Relevant and Quality Higher Education"  
 In replying please quote our Ref. No  
 መልስ ሲጻፉልን የኛን ቁጥር ይጥቀሱ

27424/1000  
 ድረ-ገጽ  
 Website www.herqa.edu.et

**Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency**



**Guidelines for the Accreditation of Cross-Border Higher Education in  
Ethiopia**



**November 2011**

**Addis Ababa**

## SECTION I: Conditions for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of CBHE

This section provides:

- details of the requirements that must be met by a <sup>CBHE</sup> FHEI for accreditation to operate in Ethiopia and offer its overseas qualifications both through the conventional face-to-face, classroom-based mode and through the ODL mode.
- requirements that should be met by Ethiopian providers to operate overseas.
- details about evidence to be presented by applicants in order to demonstrate that the necessary requirements are met.

### 1.1 Accreditation/reaccreditation (legal framework)

- 1.1.1 The foreign higher education institution (FHEI) should offer either only programs / courses that have been properly accredited by an accreditation authority in its country of origin or through appropriate, authorized self-accreditation that, in the opinion of HERQA has appropriate standing and authority. A local partner that seeks to operate in a collaborative arrangement with a FHEI shall be required to seek accreditation from HERQA.
- 1.1.2 The accreditation permit to operate as a FHEI shall be renewable, subject to review, within a given period depending on the levels of programs. Permission to operate will also be revocable at any time, based on reasonable grounds and following a process which accords procedural fairness.
- 1.1.3 FHEIs accredited to operate in Ethiopia will be subject to the quality assurance requirements of their overseas accrediting authority and any other requirements specified by HERQA as conditions of the accreditation to operate in Ethiopia.
- 1.1.4 HERQA may prescribe any other condition for accreditation, if it is expedient to do so in the overall interest of the higher education system in Ethiopia.
- 1.1.5 The procedures for the review, accreditation, and reaccreditation of a FHEI that seeks to offer Ethiopian qualifications that comply with the Ethiopian standards will be similar to that for the accreditation and reaccreditation of Ethiopian private higher education programs.



## 1.2 Quality and standards of programs and curriculum

- 1.2.1 The FHEI shall provide evidence based statement of relevance of the program if the program is new to Ethiopia.
- 1.2.2 The FHEI shall provide soft and/or hard copy of relevant modules (to be used at least for consecutive three terms in the case of ODL) and other teaching materials prepared as per the standard and quality set by the quality assurance agency or similar appropriate authority in the FHEI's country of origin.
- 1.2.3 The educational programs to be conducted in Ethiopia by FHEI leading to award of degrees shall have the same nomenclature as it exists in their parent country and the degree awarded to students at local institution will be identical to the degrees awarded to on-campus students.
- 1.2.4 The FHEI (for franchising arrangement) shall furnish an undertaking declaring that the degrees awarded to the students in Ethiopia shall be recognized in the parent Country and shall be treated equivalent to the corresponding degrees by the FHEI at home.
- 1.2.5 The academic quality and standards of educational programs should be comparable to those of the awarding FHEI.
- 1.2.6 There shall not be any distinction in the standard of the curriculum, mode of delivery, pattern of examination and assessment etc. and such degrees are fully recognized in their parent Country.
- 1.2.7 The curriculum of the FHEI's program shall provide for local content where appropriate.
- 1.2.8 The FHEI is responsible for ensuring the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities offered through a collaborative arrangement are adequate to enable a student to achieve the academic standard required for its award.
- 1.2.9 The FHEI shall be subject to monitoring and visitation as determined by HERQA/MoE from time to time.
- 1.2.10 HERQA may cause an inspection, whenever it deems appropriate with or without prior notice, to assess the infrastructural and other facilities available and/or to verify the compliance of conditions, norms, standards etc. prescribed by HERQA from time to time.



**APPENDIX G: - sample of Monthly report of quality assurance Unit at Case-2**

