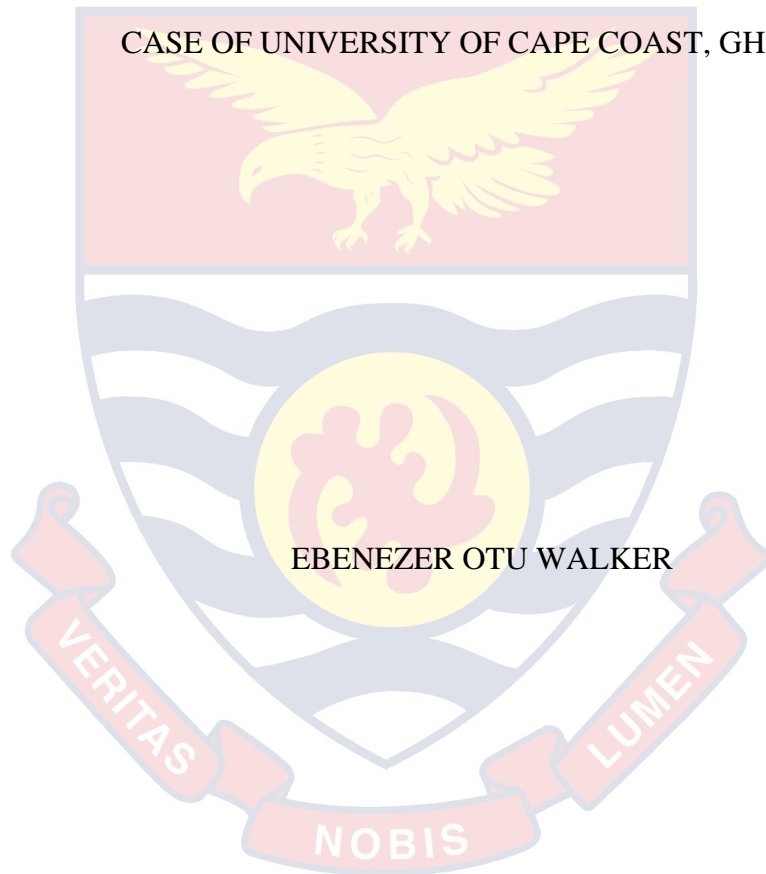UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

INFLUENCE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES ON THE

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: THE

CASE OF UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST, GHANA.

EBENEZER OTU WALKER

2019

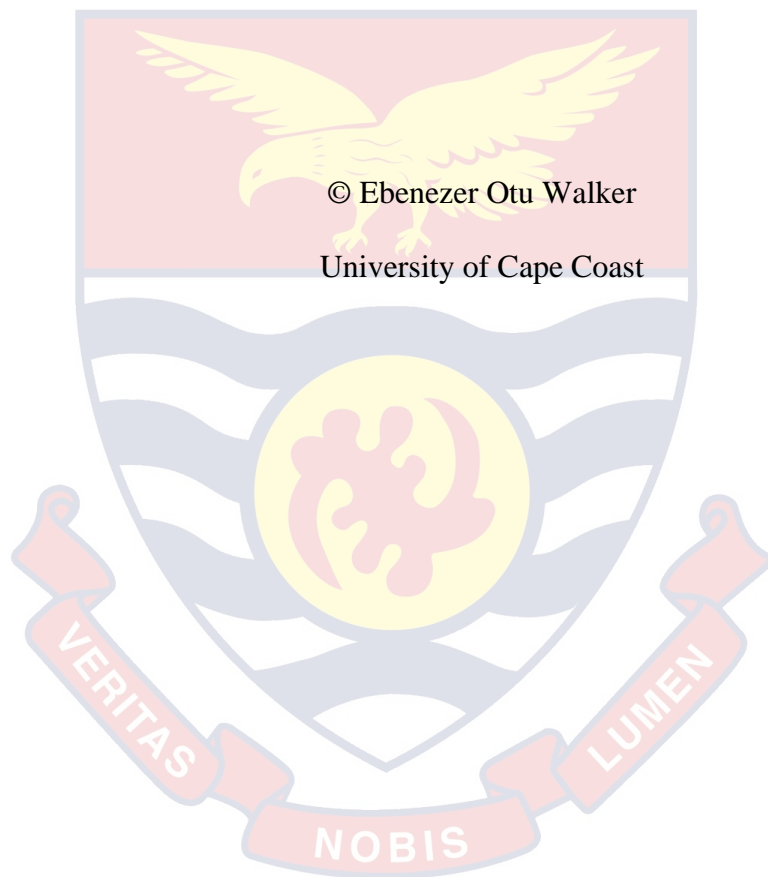© Ebenezer Otu Walker

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INFLUENCE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES ON THE

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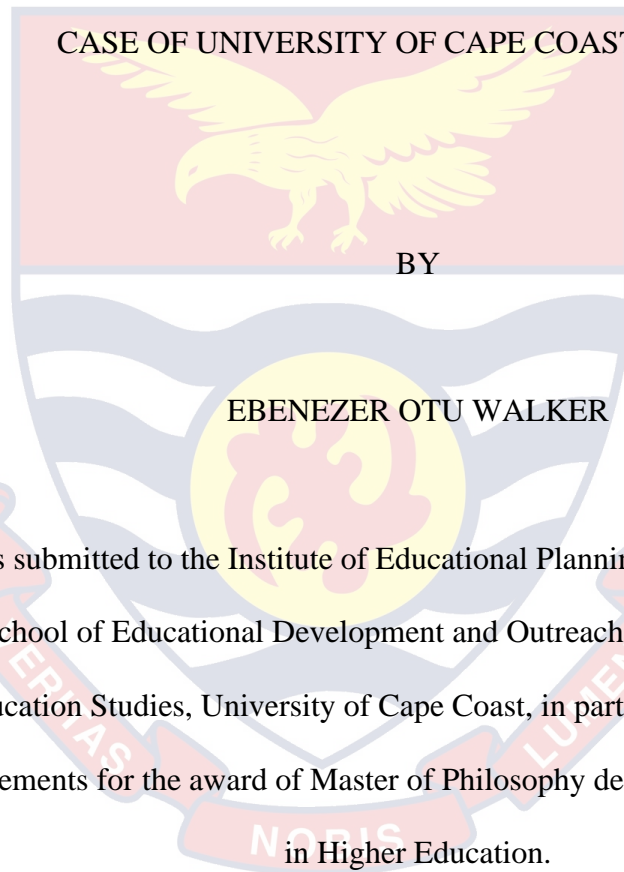CASE OF UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST, GHANA.

BY

EBENEZER OTU WALKER

Thesis submitted to the Institute of Educational Planning and Administration,

School of Educational Development and Outreach, of the College of

Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the award of Master of Philosophy degree in Administration

in Higher Education.

July, 2019

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: …………………   Date: …………………………

Name: Ebenezer Otu Walker

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature: ………………   Date: …………………..

Name: Prof. Ephraim Oluchukwu

Co-Supervisor's Signature: …………………........   Date: ………………….

Name: Dr. Fancis Ansah

ABSTRACT

Ratification of international conventions on the right of persons with disabilities over the past decades, has led to increased matriculation of students with disabilities in higher education. This has strengthened the need for quality assurance practices to be inclusive. The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which quality is assured for student with disabilities in the University of Cape Coast. Teaching and learning, student support services, physical infrastructure and facilities were used as a quality assurance practices to explore the extent to quality is assured for students with disabilities. Purposive and convenient sampling methods were used to sample Fifteen (15) students with disabilities and five (5) Directorates of the University. The findings revealed that whiles the University's Quality Assurance policy (QAP, 2010) has largely assured the quality of teaching and learning, student support services, physical infrastructure and facilities to enhance the academic experiences of students with disabilities; students still encounter attitudinal, technical, structural and administrative challenges when accessing these services and facilities. The above challenges serve as barriers to their full inclusion and participation on campus. It is recommended that periodic orientation is organised for lecturers on the appropriate adaptations, accommodation and modifications needed to ensure teaching and learning. Again the University should ensure that pavements and walkways are free of obstacles in order to avert injuries and enhance the mobility of disability students.

KEY WORDS

Disability

Inclusive Education

Quality

Quality Assurance

Quality Culture

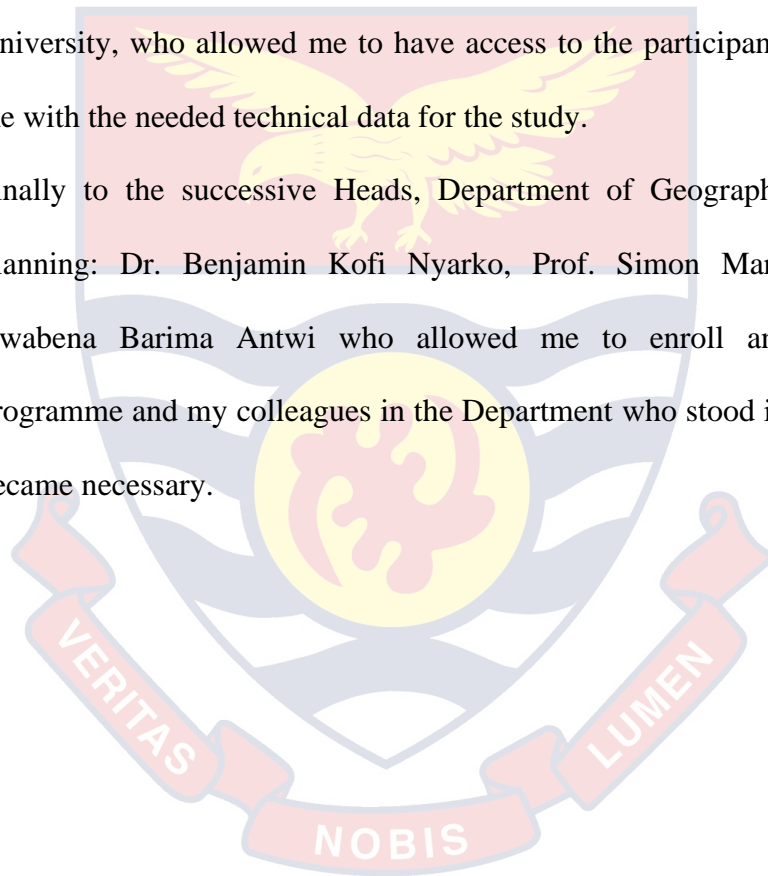Quality in Higher Education

Service Quality

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My deepest appreciation to Prof. Ephraim Okwukwuku and Dr. Francis Ansah of the Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, University of Cape Coast, for painstakingly supervising this work and offered the necessary guidance and encouragement.

I also acknowledge the support of the Coordinator and Staff of the Resource Centre for Alternative Media and Assistive Technology (R-CAMAT) of the University, who allowed me to have access to the participants and supported me with the needed technical data for the study.

Finally to the successive Heads, Department of Geography and Regional Planning: Dr. Benjamin Kofi Nyarko, Prof. Simon Mariwah and Prof. Kwabena Barima Antwi who allowed me to enroll and continue the programme and my colleagues in the Department who stood in for me when it became necessary.

DEDICATION

To my family: Eunice, Sika, Otu and Sekyi Walker.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

DAQF   Academic Quality Framework

ADA   Americans with Disability Act

CELT   College of Education Lecture Theatre

CEQAM   Comprehensive Educational Quality Assurance Model

EMQ   Engagement Model of Quality

EUA   European Universities Association

EQA   Evaluation and Quality Assurance

GQM   Generic Quality Model

INQAHE   International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in

           Higher Education

ICF   International Classification Function

MMQP   Massey's Model of Quality Process

QMFHE   Quality Management Framework for Higher Education

R –CAMAT Resource Centre for Alternative Media and Assistive

           Technology

RUM   Responsive University Model

SWDs   Students with Disabilities

UCC   University of Cape Coast

LOM   University as a Learning Organization Model

WHO   World Health Organization

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Over the past few decades, the pace of ratification and implementation of various international conventions on the right of persons with disability, has led to increase enrolment of students with disabilities in higher education institutions, and this has strengthened the need for quality assurance practices to be inclusive (Healey et al., 2006). This study sought to qualitatively explore how quality assurance practices influence the academic experiences of students with disabilities.

Literature in both the manufacturing and service industries has acknowledged that quality is an important factor for the growth, sustainability and performance of organizations (Anderson et al, 1994). Higher education institutions as a service industry are also expected to provide quality services like any other service industry (Ruben, 1995). However, the concept of quality in the service industry is elusive and is mostly influenced by expectations and interests of the person(s) who constructs the definition (Bernhard, 2012).

Quality in higher education has been defined variously to reflect different point of views. (Harvey & Green 1993) considered quality as fitness for purpose, excellence, and value for money. In his view, quality is the ability of educational programmes to meet the aspirations of the mission of a higher education institution.

According to (Colby, 2000) quality in higher education involves students who are healthy and have the willingness to participate, learn and support their families and communities. From his assertion quality education should

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transcend the person who directly received the education. (Sahney, Banwet & Karunes, 2003) on the other hand emphasized that, education quality involves diverse concepts and dimensions aimed at supporting students to develop attitudes, skills, knowledge, and values necessary to prepare them for work and to be responsible citizenship. His position is that quality education is the one which ensure holistic transformation of the individual for the benefit of society.

However to sustain quality education, (Campbell & Rozsnyai, 2002) indicated the need to develop explicit quality assurance and evaluation systems and procedures as basis for assuring quality. That is quality assurance ought to be the bedrock for Higher education institutions to guarantee continuous quality education delivery to learners. Quality assurance requires taking the necessary initiatives to improve international partnerships, exchanges, interactions and enhancing inclusiveness in higher education (Kristoffersen & Woodhouse 2005, as cited in Rezić, Tomić, & Majstorović, 2010, pp. 245-248). According to (Vlăsceanu, Grünberg & Pârlea (2007), quality assurance should be comprehensive and guarantee continuous evaluation of higher education systems or programmes, in other to maintain the quality standards it has set for itself. The logic in their submission is that quality assurance generally thrives when appropriate benchmarks are designed to account, enhance and sustain quality.

For quality assurance to thrive, it is imperative that its underlining policies, principles and strategies ought to be inclusive, in order to address the needs of all students regardless of their peculiar circumstances (Barrie, Ginns & Prosser, 2005). Inclusive education as pointed by (Stubbs, 2008) comprises of

policies, procedures and programmes intended to make the right to quality, appropriate, relevant and universal education a reality. In this regard, inclusiveness in is to eliminate exclusion tendencies, which consciously or unconsciously create disabling environment for individuals with peculiar challenges to have relatively equal learning opportunities and experiences. (UNESCO, 2005) maintained inclusive education is an endless quest to identify the most appropriate ways of responding to diversity in other to enhance the learning experiences of all students.

Considering the significant of inclusion on disability, (Ainscow, 1995) indicated that higher education institutions must continuously restructure their infrastructure, culture and the social environment, in other to entrench inclusive practices for the benefits of persons with disabilities. To him infrastructure, culture and the social environment are critical areas where inclusive practices can focus. Similarly (Stubb, 2008) specified that higher education institutions must create enabling environment; by building accessible environment, access to the curriculum through alternative forms of communication: braille, sign language, alternative script and appropriate support services for students with disabilities. The use of 'enabling environment' in his definition indicates the depth of   inclusiveness and poses the question as to how inclusive should higher education institutions be, in other to meet the needs of all students regardless of the cost implications.

According to (Leonardi, et al., 2006), disability denotes impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions. Similarly, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2015) also defined disability as a complex phenomenon that represents the relationship between the characteristics of a person's body

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and the characteristics of the community he or she lives in. The Western Australia Disability Services (WADS Act, 1993) described disability as an enduring condition that limits the daily activities of the individual; it is a state by which the individual is socio-economically restricted. They considered disability as a condition that is permanent and limits the individual's from daily life activities.

The definitions above recognize disability as having a functional relationship between an individual with impairment and that person's contextual factors; denoting both personal and environmental factors. In other words, they recognize disability as a condition with relative connotations.

Statement of the problem

Ratification of international conventions on the right of persons with disabilities over the past decades, has led to increased matriculation of students with disabilities in higher education. This has strengthened the need for disability concerns to be incorporated into strategic plans and quality assurance policies, in order to give legitimacy to inclusiveness (Riddell et al., 2005). It means special consideration should be given to students with disabilities in higher education quality assurance programmes to enhance their inclusion.

Many studies have been conducted to look at quality assurance and disability in higher education from various perspectives (Fuller et al, 2004). However, it appears that no study has been carried out to look at inclusiveness of the quality assurance practices. This study therefore seeks to contextually explore the extent to which the quality assurance practices in the University of

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Cape Coast is influencing the academic experiences of students with disabilities.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to explore the extent to which quality is assured for student with disabilities.

Objective of the study

The general objective of the study is to explore the extent to which quality assurance practices in university of Cape Coast is influencing the academic experiences of students with disabilities. Specifically, the objectives were to:

1. Explore the extent to which quality assurance of teaching and learning was influencing the academic experiences of students with disabilities.

2. Explore the extent to which quality assurance of students support services was influencing the academic experiences of students with disabilities.

3. Explore the extent to which quality assurance of physical infrastructure and facilities was influencing the academic experiences of students with disabilities.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do you think the Lecture room sitting and seating arrangements are suitable to you as student with disability?

2. To what extent do you think the inner layout of the library is accessible or user friendly to you as student with disability?

3. To what extent can you confirm that the Sports and recreational facilities on campus are accessible and user friendly as student with disability?

4. To what extent do you feel comfortable crossing the roads on campus without assistance?

5.   To what extent do you think the use of walkways/pavements on campus enhance your mobility without assistance?

Significance of the Study

The study would inform Higher Education Institutions about the academic experiences of students with disabilities so that the necessary interventions could be made in policies to address their challenges.

It is also for policy makers to institute measures to make higher education environment progressively inclusive so that challenges faced by disability students in higher education could be addressed.

It would also encourage other researchers to research further into other aspects of quality assurance in higher education, so that relevant information could be obtained to improve quality and quality assurance practices in the delivery of higher education in the country.

Delimitation

Even though quality assurance in higher education is a broad concept with multifaceted dimensions, the study was narrowed to exploring how quality assurance practices in the University of Cape Coast were influencing the academic experiences of students with disabilities. Quality assurance practices in the University are diverse however, this study was restricted to teaching and learning, students support services and physical infrastructure and facilities.

Limitations

Owing to time constraints, inadequate financial and material resources, the study did not cover all disability students in Higher Education Institutions in Ghana. It sampled students with disabilities from just the University of Cape Coast. However, this will not have any significant effect on the findings of the study.

Definition of Terms

1. Assistive Technology

Is an alternative learning media that assist persons with disabilities to live and work independently without support (Association of Specialized & Cooperative Library Agencies ASCLA, 2010).

2. Disability is the generic term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions (Leonardi, et al., 2006).

3. "Implementing units"

The Institutes, Schools, Faculties, Departments, Sections and Units in the responsible for assuring quality in the University of Cape Coast (QAP, 2010)

4. Inclusive education

Involves using policies, programmes and processes to ensure that all foreseeable prejudice and barriers are removed or minimize to enhance the inclusion of disabled people in other to make universal right to quality, reliable, relevant and appropriate education feasible (Stubbs, 2008).

5. Quality

Characteristics that subjectively differentiate a product or service for the person seeking the product attribute (DuBrin, 1997).

6. Quality Education

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It includes the use of various interventions to facilitate the growth of behaviours, talents, awareness and values required to train students for college and to be responsible citizens (Sahney, Banwet & Karunes, 2003).

7. Quality Assurance

Is a continuing, ongoing process of evaluating the efficiency of a higher education systems, structures and programmes (Vlăsceanu, Grünberg & Pârlea, 2007).

8. Service

Service output is usually demanded at the time it is created and offers an added value in the form of convenience, entertainment, timeliness, comfort, health (Singh, 2016).

9. Service quality

Service quality is a measure of how well the level of service offered matches customers subjective expectations (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985).

Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter, which is the introduction, includes: the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, significance of the study. Other issues would include limitations, delimitations, and the organization of the study.

Chapter two covers literature review on key areas of the study; concept of quality, quality in higher education, service and service quality, quality assurance in higher education, inclusive education, disability and conceptual framework.

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Chapter three contains the methodology of the study. It consists of the research design, population, sample and sampling procedure, data collection instrument, pre-testing, data collection procedure and the data analyses.

Chapter four of the study aimed at analyzing the data collected to come out with the findings. The last chapter, chapter five will look at the summary of the major findings, conclusions drawn and recommendations made.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study was to explore the extent to which quality is assured for student with disabilities. The study focused on how quality assurance practices influence academic experiences of students with disabilities in higher education. The chapter review literature on theories and concepts of: quality, service and service quality, education quality, quality assurance, disability, inclusive education, support services and physical infrastructure.

Concept of Service and Service Quality

Service is any socio-economic endeavor whose output is intangible, and is intended to bring added value as well as satisfaction to the end user or the recipient of the service. Service output is usually demanded at the time it is created and offers an added value in the form of convenience, entertainment, timeliness, comfort, health (Singh, 2016). The definition presupposes that just providing a service will bring added value to the recipient. However, the value of service provided is based on the subjective judgment of the end user or consumer of the service. (Hill, 1995) indicated that, provision of service process cannot be complete, unless the recipient is willing and able to consume it. Buttressing this point (Clewes, 2003) maintained, that although the customer is an integral part of the service process, when the operation or method of service delivery ends, the service necessarily has to ceases. He inferred that service delivery is the sole preserve of the service provider. Nevertheless, the role of the end user is rather quite critical in ensuring that the service provision process is complete.

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It has been argued that because of the labour intensive nature and extent of social interaction involve in service provision, every service act provided at each service session, tends to be heterogeneous and exclusive (Hill, 1995). However, these variations are subject to the opinion of both the service provider and the service receiver. (Berry, Zeithaml & Parasuraman, 1985) opined that service quality can vary considerably from one person or situation to another, even within the same institution due to differences in the process of service delivery. This view assumes that service quality is dependent on the subjective judgment of the consumer.

According to (Eshghi, Roy & Ganguli, 2008), service quality is the consumer's overall valuation of a provided service. Similarly, (Bitner & Hubbert, 1994) viewed service quality in as consumer's subjective impression about the relative inferiority or superiority of services received. In other words, it is the degree to which the service act meets consumers' needs or expectations (Asubonteng, McCleary & Swan, 1996). Apparently, they all emphasize on the expectation of the consumer as the basis for evaluating service quality. Similarly, (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985) described service quality as the difference between consumers' expectations of a service and their perception of actual service received. In this regard, when perception or actual service received exceeds expectation of the service, the consumer interprets service quality to be high. On the other hand, when perception of actual service received is lower than expectation of the service, the consumer judge's service quality to be of low quality.

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Considering service quality from an educational point of view, (O'Neill & Palmer, 2004, p. 42) defined service quality in higher education as the difference between what the student expects to receive and his / her perceptions of actual delivery. They believe that if a student's perception of the actual education he receives exceed expectation, it implies education quality is high quality and vice versa. (Marzo-Navarro, Pedraja-Iglesias & Rivera-Torres, 2005) has argued that if students have a positive view that they have earned quality education, their satisfaction will be high; and this confidence will encourage them to reach more learners and have the same experiences. However, the difficulty from the views above is how to objectively assess service quality without the influence of the consumer or the end user. This makes the measurement of service quality even more challenging than proposing a definition.

Concept of Quality

The concept of quality has become significant to the governance discourse of higher education institutions globally. This renewed interest in quality, is centred on two factors: first, to improve the extent to which knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired by graduates would be necessary in bringing the desired economic transformation and secondly the extent to which higher education institutions would be efficient in spending tax payers' resources (Westerheijden, Stensaker & Rosa, 2007).

The concept of quality has been a challenging task for scholars and stakeholders in contemporary higher education to define and explain. In the literature, it has been defined variously with different connotations, attributes and dimensions such as: excellence (Peters & Waterman, 1992); fitness for

conformance to specifications (Gilmore, 1974); meeting customer expectations (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985); Relative (Baird, 1998); dynamic (Boyle & Bowden, 1997). Other authors have argued that quality is a philosophical concept that lacks general theory and definition (Westerheijden, 1999).

Looking at quality from customers (students) perspectives (DuBrin, 1997), described quality has ascribed value or attribute which can be determined by the recipient of the product or the service. Similarly (Singh, 2016) also viewed quality as customers perception and valuation of how a product or service meets their expectations. It is also considered as customers' actual experience with a product or service, which is measured against its specified or unstated standards (Feigenbaum, 1983). The above assertions envisage quality only from the customers' subjective perspectives which makes the acceptance of their definitions challenging.

(Grönroos, 1990) on the other hand looked at quality from technological and functional point of view. He indicated that technical quality is the physical characteristics of the product which can be assessed objectively regardless of the customer's opinion. The functional quality dimension is the relationship between the service provider and the recipient of the service, which is often perceived subjectively (Shewhart, 1931), also defined quality from subjective and objective perspectives. He explained 'subjective quality' as what the customer perceives as quality, whiles the 'objective quality' notion is concern with the features of the product which is not based on the judgments of the customer. Nevertheless, he indicated that the subjective notion of quality is closely linked to the usefulness or value of the objective physical features of

the product. Invariably the two definitions appear to differentiate the customer subjective view of quality and the scientific perspective, which in itself is subjective.

(British Standard Institution BSI, 1991) also defined quality as the overall features of a product or service that is able to meet its specified or implied needs. In its view, the totality of those characteristics becomes the basis for which quality is measured or perceived. However, the total features of a product or service cannot be construed as the definition of its quality. (Ellis, 1993), also defined quality as the basic requirements that must be met to achieve specific objectives for the satisfaction of the customer. The difficulty in his assertion is who determines the basic requirement standard or value for the satisfaction of customers.

Looking at quality on the basis of dimensions, (Garvin, 1988) proposed eight dimensions of quality which in his opinion, could describe both product and service quality, although they tend to be more product-oriented:

Performance – is concerns with the main operational characteristics of a product. Example, the performance of a television set involves sound, picture quality and natural colours. In the educational environment performance is the ability required of graduates;

Feature – relates to the essential component of the performance functions. In the higher education settings, features may be the university offering courses such as computer programming that are not primary but, could facilitate application of core skills;

Reliability – has to do with the possibility that a product will function within a specified period of time. Reliability in the higher education situation,

can relate to the extent to which attitudes, skills and knowledge learned can be right, reliable and current (Garvin, 1988);

Conformance – relate to the degree to which the product complies with the minimum established standards or specifications. Conformance in the higher education context could mean the extent to which an educational institution meets commitments to its students as well as its mission (Garvin, 1988);

Durability – relates to the lifecycle of the product. In the higher education environment, it can be related to the extent to which students can continue to sustain the education they have acquired or learnt and make it relevant (Garvin, 1988);

Serviceability - is concerned with maintenance, after-sales-services, and field supports. This dimension is related more to products. In higher education, it is concern with how an institution treats grievances from students, employees, and other stakeholders;

Aesthetics – relates to the subjective appreciation of the appearance or quality of a product and service provided. In higher education context, aesthetics looks at how students appreciate the education they receive as been of high quality and;

Perceived quality – this refers to the subjective perception of customers about a product or service. According to (Garvin, 1988) aesthetics and perceived quality are those features which are subjective to the customers' opinions.

(Harvey & Green, 1993) on the other hand identified quality from five dimensions:

Quality as exceptional - this dimension view quality as something unique. In the educational context, it represents the ability to perform to the highest level or being able to meet the minimum set standards of excellence (Harvey & Green, 1993). In their assertion, quality can only be realized if the minimum standard is attained by learners. However, for services, it would be difficult to consistently determine standard for services provided and received;

Quality as perfection - quality as perfection means an outcome is consistently judge faultless. It focuses on ensuring that the processes of attaining quality outcomes have zero defects. It is difficult to apply the perfection dimension of quality to the service provision context since no service could produce identical or similar outcomes (Watty, 2003);

Quality as fitness for purpose - this dimension considers quality as conforming or meeting organisational mission. In the educational environment, fitness for purpose has to do with the ability of an institution to accomplish its mission. It has been argued that the fitness for a purpose concept is misleading as it raises the question of whose purpose and how fitness is to be assessed (Moodie, 1986).

Quality as value for money **-** this view perceives quality in terms of efficient and effective use of resources to achieve a certain level of output. In the educational context, 'value for money' could mean using fewer resources to turn-out more students.

Quality as transformation - is the ability of the teaching and learning process to change the learner from one state to another appreciable state. In the educational context, transformation is where the student develops new skills, knowledge and competencies.

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The difficulty in establishing universally accepted definition for quality has also been highlighted by (Pirsig, 1974) in his book *"Zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance"*. He indicated his confusion in the search for what quality is? Pirsig's expressed as:

". . . quality—you know what it is, yet you don't know what it is. But that's self-contradictory. But some things are better than others, that is, they have more quality. But when you try to say what the quality is, apart from the things that have it, it all goes poof! There's nothing to talk about. But if you can't say what Quality is, how do you know what it is, or how do you know that it even exists? If no one knows what it is, then for all practical purposes it doesn't exist at all. But for all practical purposes it really does exist. What else are the grades based on? Why else would people pay fortunes for some things and throw others in the trash pile? Obviously somethings are better than others— but what's the "betterness"? -- So round and round you go, spinning mental wheels and nowhere finding anyplace to get traction. What the hell is Quality? What is it?*"* (Pirsig, 1974 p. 163-164).

The definitions and explanations above denote the difficulty in arriving having a universal definition of quality. From the study point of view, quality is the consumer's subjective judgment of a product or service after use or consumption.

Concept of Quality in Higher Education

Concern for quality in higher education has come at a time when the important role of higher education in promoting economic growth and [development] is increasingly recognized (Materu, 2007). This has directed the attention of higher education institutions to focus on assuring and

continuously improving on quality (Amaral, 2007). Similarly (Kerr, 1987) maintained that expansion of higher education opportunities, deregulation of higher education systems, demand for stronger links between universities and economic development and the emerging international competition among universities have all necessitated the quest for quality in higher education. Highlighting on the need to entrench quality, (Aly & Akpovi 2001) indicated that long-term survival of higher education institutions depends on the quality of their teaching and other support services they offer.

(Vlăsceanu, Grünberg & Pârlea, 2007) defined quality in higher education as a multi-dimensional, multi-level and complex term that relates to the contextual settings, mission and objectives of an institution. They considered quality as a subjective concept which can only be explained within the context of the institution. (Cheng & Tam, 1997) also described higher education quality as the input, process and output of the education system that provides services to meet the explicit and implicit expectations of both internal and external stakeholders. This view point is quite problematic since stakeholders' expectations are multi-faceted and may be difficult to satisfy.

Emphasizing on multi-dimensional nature of quality in higher education, the World Declaration on Higher Education (1998, Article 11a, p. 10-11) stated that "quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional concept, which should embrace all its functions, and activities: teaching and academic programmes, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, equipment, services to the community and the academic environment . . ." This statement highlights the significant of   making quality in higher education all-inclusive.

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Furthering the quality discourse in higher education, the quality culture argument has been deliberated. (Harvey & Green, 1993) argued that, quality culture is the one in which everybody in the institution is responsible for quality. In their view, it is the responsibility of each employee and unit of an institution to ensure the quality of their work. (Vlăsceanu, Grünberg & Pârlea, 2004) also defined quality culture as a as set of shared, accepted and incorporated quality standards in organizational culture and management systems. They indicated that for quality culture to thrive, institutions must recognise and dedicated to quality control measures. Clarifying the linkage between quality culture and institutional culture (Barnett, 1992) posited that higher education should fused the quality culture into the institutional culture where every employee will be responsible and committed to total quality care.

Concept of Quality Assurance

Stakeholders' expectations and demand have necessitated the need to make quality assurance a critical issue in higher education policy and reforms (Kahsay, 2012).

Quality assurance is a set of procedures, processes and activities that are carried within an institution or accreditation organization to ensure continuous quality delivery of higher education (Borahan & Ziarati, 2002). This assertion recognizes the importance of both internal and external quality assurance processes as necessary avenues for assuring continuous higher education quality. According to (Vroeijenstijn, 1995), quality assurance is the maintenance and improvement of quality systems and structures to ensure continuous quality education delivery. His claim is an indication that higher

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education institutions should constantly be improving and striving to reach its mission and vision.

(UNESCO, 2004) described quality assurance as a comprehensive review of education programmes in order to ensure that adequate standards for education, academics and facilities are maintained. It suggests that quality assurance aim at maintaining standards that will give credibility to institutional programmes. Similarly, (Hayward, 2001) interpreted quality assurance as the use of a structural and systematic appraisal process, to determine whether sufficient criteria for schooling, scholarship and facilities are being met, preserved, and enhanced. Supporting this view (Materu, 2007) maintained quality assurance has to do with the processes, activities, facilities, behaviours as well as quality management systems needed to maintain and improve quality performance. This view indicates that quality assurance will thrive if quality control measures are complemented by effort of people.

According to (Wilger, 1997), quality assurance is a collective process by which a university strives to guarantee that the quality of educational process meets the standard it has set itself. In this regard, quality assurance is seen as an internal issue however; both internal and external stakeholders are interested parties to institutional quality assurance. (Harvey, 2011) suggested that quality assurance is the policies, methods and procedures that higher education institutions need to evaluate and develop their performance. The views above acknowledge that quality assurance requires actions, attitudes, activities, systems, and procedures, support structures policies and programmes to progressively maintain and enhance academic quality. To meet the expectations of both internal and external stakeholders, higher education

institutions are required to continuously maintain and improve quality of its programmes.

Quality Assurance Models for Higher Education

The following discussions will outline quality assurance models which can be applied in higher education institutions:

Transformative Model (TM)

This model was developed by (Harvey & Knight, 1996), and it is premised on the belief that quality education thrive on quality culture of continuous improvement. It considers education as a participative process where students are considered as partners, clients or customers. The model hinges on two main concepts: *enhancing* and *empowering* the participants (the student): Enhancing is where quality education is a seen as a 'value-added measure' which enhances participants by changing them. It measure quality by the extent to which the educational experiences of participants progressively enhances their previous abilities, skills and knowledge. Empowering on the other hand has to do with developing students' critical thinking ability (Kahsay, 2012). In this wise, quality assurance processes should focus on areas that will enhance and empower the participants.

Quality Management Framework for Higher Education (QMFHE)

This model was propounded by (Csizmadia, 2006). The underlining principle is that *education* and *support* processes influence the quality of learning outcomes. The model has three main dimensions: (i) input; (ii) through-put; and (iii) output dimensions. The *input* dimension: involves external influences such as: governmental expectations, accreditation agencies, students' demands and resources. The *through-put* dimension has to

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do with the specific educational processes such as: academic, governance and support processes within the institution. The *out-put* dimension includes elements such as: student satisfaction with courses, student-employer satisfaction with degree programmes, study results, research output and services (Kahsay, 2012).

University of Learning Model (ULM)

The proponents of this model (Bowden & Marton, 1998) indicated that, *learning* and *knowledge* formation should be the emphasis of higher education. Whiles teaching, research and service should be the means for learning and knowledge acquisition. In his opinion, student learning is not just a matter of teaching, but also depends on how students perceive the learning environment in general Kahsay (2012).

Comprehensive Educational Quality Assurance Model (CEQAM)

This model was proposed by Boyle & Bowden (1997). The assumptions under the model is that requirement for comprehensive quality assurance approaches should include: (i) an all-embracing vision or purpose of the organization, (ii) effective leadership and management, (iii) policies and plan for human resource development and employee involvement and trust (iv) customer focus that includes knowledge of needs and expectation and customer satisfaction, (v) evaluation and continual quality improvement, and; (vi) structures, policy and procedures that support primary purposes and processes.

The model stipulates that three elements: (a) Program quality assurance system; (b) Faculty development; and (c) Assessment of student learning, all shape the critical outcome element, which is quality and continuous quality

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improvement in student learning. According to Boyle & Bowden (1997), Faculty Development is the critical determinant and has a functional relationship for Program quality assurance.

The Engagement Model of Quality (EMQ)

This model was developed by (Haworth & Conrad, 1997). It is based on the notion that students must be meaningfully engaged in the learning process through interaction with others and conducting worthwhile tasks. It emphasized that the involvement and engagement of scholars, administrators and students in a teaching and learning environment that is mutually beneficial is essential to quality education. In their view, critical dialogue, mentoring and cooperative should be the bedrock of quality teaching and learning (Kahsay, 2012).

The Responsive University Model (RUM)

The Responsive University Model was propounded by (Tierney, 1998). The assumption underling the model is that quality relationships are determined by *mutuality* and *equality*. This can be viewed from students, community and national perspectives. He pointed out that University should be student centered in programmes, community centered in outreach and national centered in research. These require that the academic programmes are review regularly in line with the internal and external demands and changes (Kahsay, 2012).

Generic Quality Model (GQM)

The model was developed by Srikanthan & Dalrymple (2002). They argued that there is functional relationship between quality in higher education and quality of student learning. The model has three core elements: (i) a clear

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emphasis on 'transformation' of the learners (and of the institution); enhancing them through adding value to their capability and ultimately 'empowering' them; (ii) A synergistic learning partnership, based on the premise that high-quality services are rooted in collegial and inclusive environments that call for widespread participation; (iii) a significant commitment to improve learning that considers the critical importance of creating tangible mechanisms to preserve the commitment in order to stimulate progress (Kahsay, 2012).

University Learning Organization Model (ULOM)

The model was propounded by (Senge, 1990). The underlining assumption is that learning is valuable, continuous and most effective when shared (Kerka, 1995). It maintained that for quality assurance to be successfully implemented; an institution must work as a learning organization with the commitment to ensuring continuous quality improvement (Lim, 2001). The model specifies five elements that are critical to determine whether an organization is a learning organization which include: team learning, building shared vision, awareness of mental models, personal mastery and systems thinking.

Focus of Quality Assurance in Higher Education

The focus of quality assurance in higher education is to ensure that the quality of their educational programmes are maintained and improved to meet local and international standards (OECD & World Bank, 2007). To fulfill this expectation, higher educations have to adopted quality assurance criteria for evaluating the quality of its educational programmes (Woodhouse, 1998). One main criterion used for assuring academic quality is accreditation. Accreditation *is* the process of continuously give legitimacy and credence to an institution and institutional its programmes (Harvey, 2003). He views

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accreditation as legimately endorsing a higher education institution and its programmes.

Accreditation is a mechanism by which a government institution is approved or allowed by statute to assess an educational institution and its services in order to decide if they meet the required level of excellence (Vlsceanu, Grünberg & Pârlea, 2007). Institutional accreditation-assesses an institution to determine if it meets the minimum quality requirements in terms of staff credentials, study programs, pupil intake, learning facilities, and technology (Harvey, 2003). Programme accreditation is a continuous process and each accreditation visit expires after the minimum time required (Vlsceanu, Grünberg, & Pârlea, 2007). It is to assess the programmes of the various academic departments to ascertain their legitimacy.

Scope of Quality Assurance in University of Cape Coast

Quality assurance has become the conduit through which the University of Cape Coast is progressively creating inclusive environment for all students regardless of their circumstances. In this regard, the university is continuously strengthening its existing processes at all levels; management, academic units and support services and has put in place quality enhancement mechanisms to monitor their activities (QAP 2010). The quality assurance policy covers almost every aspect of the University's systems, with explicit quality performance benchmarks for measuring quality standards. The scope of the policy is largely captured in the strategic thrust (QAP 2010, p.6-7), which proposed among other things to:

(1) Provide integrated and modern information and communication technology facilities;

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(2) Create organisational culture that enhances efficiency, discipline and commitment;

(3) Improve upon physical infrastructure and support services to enhance teaching, learning and research;

(4) Create a conducive working environment which recognizes equal opportunities for facilities, staff and students?

Inclusive Education

Increase participation of students with disabilities in higher education has given credence to the need for quality assurance practices to be inclusive (Healey et al., 2006). Inclusive education is defined as an educational atmosphere where equitable opportunities are provided for each pupil, regardless of their circumstances, to ensure maximum participation (Ainscow1995). In this regard, the university must use explicit measures to create enabling environment. (Forlin, 2013) looked at inclusive education as a situation where higher education institutions make the learning environment equitable and conducive for each student as a matter of right undertaking. He considered inclusiveness as a right and not an option.

According to (Messiou et al., 2016), inclusive education, pays careful attention to offering high-quality education to all students and activities that will ensure maximum participation. It means higher education institutions need to create equal opportunities in order to accommodate disadvantaged students. In order to give credibility to comprehensive education strategies, it is necessary that higher education institutions incorporate disability issues into the institution's strategic strategies and quality improvement policies (Riddell et al., 2005). In his opinion, when inclusive educational practices are

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enshrined in policy, it makes its implementation easier. In Ghana, Parliament enacted the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715), with legislative provisions intended to remove barriers, and to ensure social inclusiveness by creating access and protection for persons with disabilities. Inclusion in higher education will be feasible when there is an enabling environment. Enabling Environment is the physical, social, and attitudinal environment that can either disable people with disabilities or enhance their participation and inclusion (WHO, 2015). It is argued that raising awareness and challenging negative attitudes is one of the surest means of creating enabling environment (WHO, 2011).

Disability in Higher Education

The question as to who is a disability person, and what condition quality one to be describe as having a disability has led to variations in the definition of disability.

The (Western Australia Disability Services Act, 1993) defined disability as any continuing condition that affects a person's capacity to communicate, interact with others, learn, get about independently and restricts everyday activities. Thus a condition needs to be permanent to be described as a disability. Similarly, the (International Classification of Functioning ICF, 2007 as cited in WHO, 2011, p.3), describe disability as any restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered 'normal' for a human-being. Again (WHO 2006, p. 4) posited that "disability is the umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. In this respect, disability arises as a result of the negative aspects

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of the interaction between an individual with a (health condition) and that individual's contextual factors (environmental and personal factors)".

Considering attitudinal and environmental factors as barriers to disability, (Buntinx & Schalock, 2010) argued that the disability is better understood in the wider sense of human functioning. In this regard, disability can be defined as the limitations in individual *functioning* within a social context that substantially disadvantage the person. For disability students to have positive outcomes in their academic experiences, it is important for managers of higher education institutions to minimize exclusion tendencies, in other to create inclusive learning environment for disability students. It is has been observed that pejorative attitudes, coupled with inaccessible buildings and risky transport systems, are some of the major challenges normally facing persons with disabilities in higher education (Barnes, 1991).

However, it is significant to point that there are some unusual barriers to integrating students with disabilities in higher education, not only in terms of gaining physical access to services, but also in relation to teaching, curriculum, learning and assessment (Riddell, Tinklin & Wilson, 2004). In their view, these challenges limit the capacity of higher education institutes to accommodate individuals with disabilities.

Disability Models

The Medical Disability Model

The model considers disability as a problem that is directly caused by illness, accident or another health condition that needs competent continuous medical treatment (WHO, 2011). Similarly, Lang (2016) indicated that deficits in the functional, physiological and cognitive abilities of the impaired

individual as the main causation of disabilities Lang (2016). The attribution of disability to only personal medical condition is problematic; since other environmental factors could also impede impaired condition to create disabling environment.   The main focus of this model is on curing or correcting the source of the disability through the use of equipment, medication etcetera, in order to enhance the individual's quality of life (Cole, 2011).

The Social Disability Model

The social model looks at disability as a restriction or inability of a person created by a social environment that takes little or no account of persons with physical impairments and prevents them from inclusion in mainstream social activities (Oliver, 1996). He argued that disability is something imposed on top of impairments by unreasonably being isolated and excluded from full participation in society.   Buttressing this assertion (Hahn, 1986, p.128) indicated that, disability is as a result of "the failure of a structured social environment to adjust to the needs and aspirations of citizens with disabilities rather than from the inability of the disabled individual to adapt to the demands of society." To him disability is a social construct that can be reverse by the social environment.

(Lang, 2016) criticized the position of the social disability on the grounds that the individuals' own experience of living with a disability on a daily basis, has an important and valid role to play in disabling a person with impairment. It has also been argued that the individual feelings of suffering, fatigue, restriction, depression and the overall uncertainty that persons with disabilities

necessarily suffer, has not been properly considered by the proponents of the social model (Crow, 1996).

Bio-Psycho-Social Disability Model

The Bio-psycho-social model is a neutral model which serves as a link between the medical and the social models. The assumption under the model is that, disability is both medical and social construct thus, is neither an exclusive attribute of a person nor the social environment. It argued that disability is as a result of difficulties encountered in the three areas of human functioning: impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions. According to the model, *impairments* – are particular defects in body functions or changes in body structures such as blindness. *Activity limitations* – denotes the difficulties in executing activities for instance walking. *Participation restrictions* – are the problems resulting from involvement in any area of life - for example, facing discrimination in employment or transportation.

According to (Leonardi et al., 2006), negative interaction between an individual with 'health condition' (impairment) and that individual's contextual factors (environmental and personal factors) will create disabling condition. On the other hand, positive interaction between an individual with 'health condition' (impairment) and that individual's contextual factors – (environmental and personal factors), will remove barriers which can create enabling condition. It is the negative aspects of the interaction that will hinder persons' with health conditions to full participation in society (WHO, 2011).

The model use the phrase 'health conditions'   instead of impairment and identified personal factors as: motivation and self-esteem, which can influence the extent a person could participates in society. The environmental factors as

described by the model include: products and technology; the natural and built environment; support and relationships; attitudes; and services, systems, and policies (ICF, 2007).

Conceptual Framework

Based on review of the literature on service quality, educational quality, quality assurance and disability models, the conceptual framework was on premised on quality assurance. (Hughes, 1988) argued that because there is no agreement on the definition of quality in higher education, it would necessarily mean that the indicators for quality evaluation will inevitably be different. In the view of (Clewes, 2003) any higher education stakeholder (students, government, professional bodies) has a specific perception of quality that depends on their individual needs. Similarly, the European Universities Association (EUA, 2006), has indicated that it will be unrealistic to apply a shared definition of quality to different higher education institution with different missions and visions. (Cheng & Tam, 1997) also maintained that various institutions may use diverse indicators to assess education quality.

The study adopted and modified selected quality assurance practices from the University of Cape Coast Quality Assurance Policy Document (2010). The framework comprises of three broad areas of QA practices: teaching and learning; students support services; and physical infrastructure and facilities, with sub-indicators. The sub indicators were used to solicit responses on the extent to which the assurance practices were influencing the academic experiences of students with disabilities.

For teaching and learning, the indicators were: lecture notes, assistive-technology, exams assessment, lecture room environment and the impaired

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condition. Indicators under students' supports services were: access to Library services, access to transportation services, access to sports and recreational services, and safety and security. Indicators under physical infrastructure and facilities were: access to pavements and walkways, access to road infrastructure, access to lecture theatres and sports and recreation facilities:
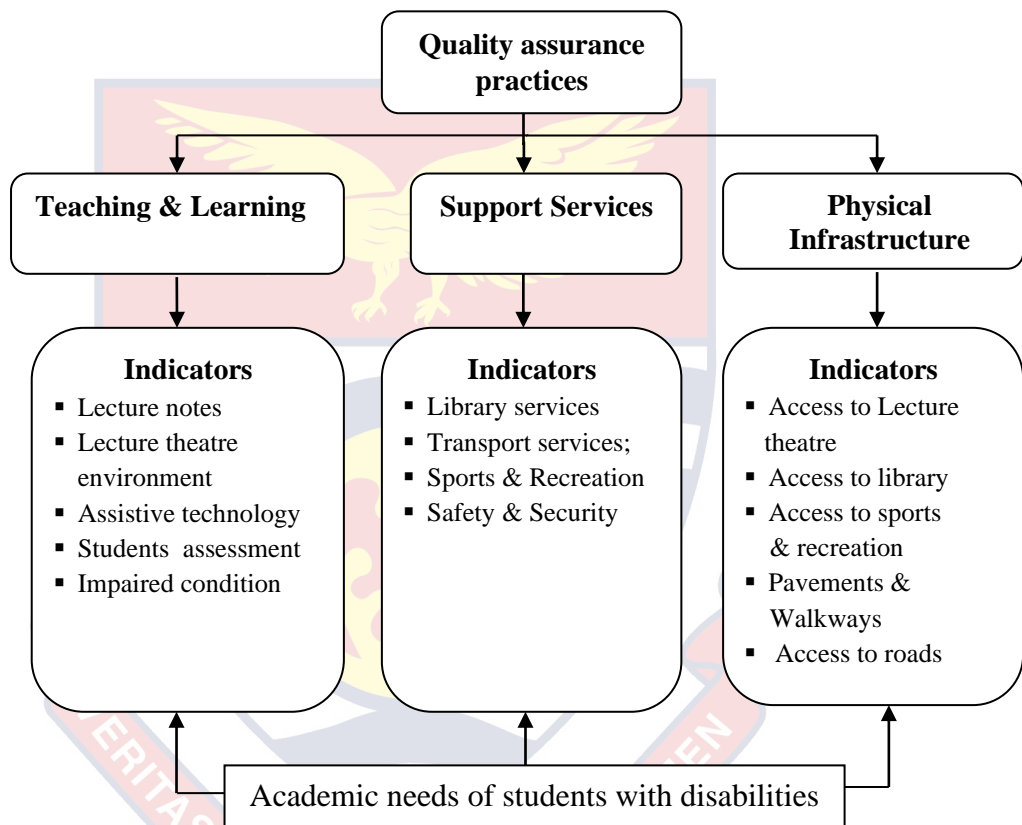

Figure 1: Quality Assurance Practices

(Author's Construct, 2019)

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The study aimed at exploring the influence of quality assurance practices on the academic experiences of students with disabilities. The chapter discusses the research design; approach; target population; sample and sampling procedures; data collection instrument; ethical considerations; and tools for data processing and analysis.

Research Design

A research design is equivalent to a plan or a map used in finding solutions to research problems (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). The research design underpinning this study is the interpretivist or the social constructivists' philosophical paradigm. This paradigm requires the researcher seeking answers to respondents' subjective meanings of their experiences, which are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas (Creswell, 2014). The interpretivist philosophy allows the researcher to explore participants' views on the quality assurance practices in University of Cape Coast and the extent to which these practices were influencing their academic experiences.

It also offered the opportunity to appreciate how people understands and interprets issues in their own context (Sanders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). One advantage is that, there is high level of validity because data collected tends to be trust worthy and honest. However, it is very subjective and gives room for the researcher biases.

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The study adopted the qualitative research approach, which tries to investigate phenomenon from the view point of study participants. It aims at exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or group of people ascribe to social or human problem (Creswell, 2014), and involves studying the meaning of peoples' lives, under real-world conditions (Yin, 2011). The rationale for using qualitative study approach was to explore from different perspectives how quality is assured for students with disabilities.

Qualitative study gives the researcher the opportunity to interpret the complexities of participants' perspectives and to discover new viewpoints on prevailing situation (Ochieng, 2009). However, findings of qualitative study cannot be extended to wider populations with the same degree of certainty as quantitative analyses. This is because the findings of the research are not tested to discover whether they are statistically significant or due to chance (Ochieng, 2009). There are also no fixed rules to follow, or step-by-step guides to a qualitative study, but rather the choices and actions of the researcher determine the strategy (Creswell, 2012). Given that qualitative studies can use varied designs such as ethnography, phenomenology, case study, this study was restricted to a case study.

A case study 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 and in which multiple sources of evidence is used" (Yin, 1984, p. 23). Case study allows a researcher to carefully scrutinize research data within participants' specific context and situation (Zaidah, 2007). The rationale is that case study is suitable for small populations and also supports the use of interviews, so it allowed the

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researcher to utilize interviews to explore the views of the participants on the extent to which quality assurances practices were influencing their academic experiences.

Using case study helps to explore and explain the complexities of real life situations which may not be captured through experimental or survey research (Zaidah, 2003). However, it provides very little basis for scientific generalisation since they use a small number of subjects and also its methodology is considered to be 'microscopic' due to the limited sampling cases (Yin, 2011).

Population

A target population is a group of individuals or (organizations) with some common defining characteristic that a researcher can identify and study. It is that group about whom we want to draw conclusions (Creswell, 2012). The justification for selecting University of Cape Coast as the study area was that increase enrollment of students with disabilities has necessitated the need for the university to be more inclusive. Hence, it is appropriate to look at how the university's quality assurance practices are creating equal opportunities for persons with disabilities, to enhance their inclusion. The study targeted 28 disability students and seven (7) Directorates and Sections: Directorate of Academic Planning & Quality Assurance, Directorate of Physical Development & Estate Management, Directorate of Student Affairs, Sport & Recreational Unit, Transport Section, Resource Center for Alternative Media and Assistive Technology (R-CAMAT) and Library.

The rationale for choosing students disabilities as the target population is to explore their peculiar academic experiences with regards to the quality

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assurance practices. The study found the selection the seven Directorates and Sections appropriate because they are the "implementing unit" for the implementation of the quality assurance policy in the university. Their inclusion allowed the researcher to solicit their views on the extent to which their roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the quality assurance practices were influencing the academic experiences of students with disabilities.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

Sample is part or representative proportion of a population. According to (Creswell, 2012), sample is a subgroup of the target population that the researcher intends to study for generalizing about the target population. The study sampled fifteen (15) disability students, and five (5) Directorate and Sections using purposive and convenient sampling respectively. Purposive sampling is a non- probability sampling, undertaken on the basis of the researcher's knowledge of the population and as a result of this knowledge a decision is made concerning which individuals to select in order to provide the best information to address the purpose of the research (White, 2007). The use of purposive sample was appropriate for the study because it allowed the researcher to focus and sample only students with disabilities and the appropriate Directorates and Sections that can provide the needed information relevant to the objective of the study. The convenient sampling allowed the researcher to sample participants who were accessible and willing to participate in the study.

The participants were sampled because the researcher considered them to have information that would be relevant to the objective of the study, thus

their responsibilities have either direct or indirect implications on the academic experiences of students with disabilities. Their inputs to the study were therefore very critical in shaping the validity and reliability of the study.

The Quality Assurance Directorate has oversight responsibility on quality assurance issues in the University of Cape Coast, it was therefore imperative that the views of the Directorate was sought in a study that was exploring quality assurance concerns. Their inputs were sought for clarifications, and better appreciation of the implementation of the policy, and how it is influencing the academic experiences of students with disabilities.

The Directorate of Physical Development and Estate Management, is responsible for the infrastructure development on campus, so their inclusion in the study allowed the researcher to explore how the physical infrastructure on campus is contributing to assuring quality for disabled students. The rationale for including the Sports and Recreation Section was to explore the extent to which the section is quality assuring sports and recreational policies, activities and infrastructure for students with disabilities.

The Transport section is in charge of managing transportation in the University of Cape Coast, their inclusion allowed the researcher to explore the extent to which the transport section is quality assuring the transport mobility of students with disabilities. The Resource Centre for Alternative Media and Assistive Technology Centre (R-CAMAT) is in charge of managing students with disabilities on campus, so sampling them for the study allowed the researcher to explore the extent to which technical and administrative supports they offer to disabled students quality assure their inclusiveness in the University environment.

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Data Collection Instrument

Since the study adopted the qualitative approach, semi- structured interview was considered appropriate. Semi-structured interview is where the researcher is exploring for specific information which can be compared and contrasted with information gathered from other interviews (Dawson, 2012). Interviews are more powerful in eliciting narrative data that allows researchers to investigate people's views in greater depth (Kvale, 2003). According to (Creswell, 2012), interview offer opportunity to participants to express themselves in a manner that suit them, since they are given the luxury of seeking clarity from the interviewer as well as making decisions on what questions they would want to answer.

The use of interview was guided by the research design, research approach and the objective of the study to explore how quality is assured for students with disabilities. In order to obtain in-depth understanding of the study, standardized open-ended interview guide was used. Standardized open-ended interview is a type of interview which is structured in terms of the wording of the questions, and participants are always asked identical questions, but the questions are worded so that responses are open-ended (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003, as cited in Turner, 2010, p. 756). Using standardized open-ended interview allowed the researcher to ask standardized questions based on the objectives of the study. It also allowed the researcher to compare and contrast the responses of the participants on the questions. It allowed the researcher the flexibility of asking the necessary follow-up questions for clarification and to probe further on the responses where necessary.

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The study developed two distinct interview guides for the sampled participants. For the disabled students, the interview questions centered on the three objectives of the study, quality assurance of teaching and learning; quality assurance of student support services; and quality assurance of physical infrastructure and facilities. It allowed the researcher to explore of the views of the participants on the extent to which the quality practices were influencing their academic experiences.

The five departments: Directorates of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance, Resource Centre for Alternative Media and Assistive Technology, Transport Section, Sport Section, and the Directorate of Physical Development and Estate Management were also interviewed. The interview guide was structured to elicit responses on how the responsibilities of the various directorates are assuring quality for students with disabilities. Though the five Sections have distinct responsibilities, their roles converge to influence the academic experiences of disabled students. The interview afforded the researcher the opportunity to compare and contrast the responses from the directorate with the responses from the students in the data analysis, conclusions and the recommendation of the study.

Pilot-testing

The study was piloted to test the consistency, accuracy and credibility of the research instrument. The interview guide was discussed and reviewed with my supervisor to ensure that the instruments address the intended purpose and objective of the study. The study was conducted with an introductory letter from the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA), University of Cape Coast to the Disability Unit, University College of

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Education, Winneba. The pilot study was conducted between Friday 8th May, 2018, and 15th May, 2018, with five (5) disability students. The researcher discussed the informed script with each of the participants to seek their consents, subsequently; five participants were selected with the assistance of a gatekeeper. In qualitative research, gatekeepers are used to assist the researcher in gaining access and developing trust with the community of study (Hatch, 2002). The interview periods averaged approximately 25 and 35 minutes, and were recorded with digital tape recorders.

The pilot test enabled the researcher to merge, remove or change some of the questions to ensure the consistency and credibility of the instrument for the main. According to (Kvale, 2007), pilot test help to identify flaws, or limitations within the interview design that allow necessary modifications to the actual study. However, it is maintained that since quality of interview guide improves as the interviews progresses, the need for qualitative interviews to be piloted is not relatively clear (Harding, 2013).

Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations used in the study involved: informed consent, voluntary participation and clearance. Informed consent is a consistent and indispensable aspect of both qualitative and quantitative research and it involves providing participants with "accurate and complete information" that would allow them to gain complete understanding of the study (De Vos et al., 2009, p. 59).

The researcher sought the consent of   University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board (UCCIRB) before going to the field. Permission was also obtained from the Resource Centre for Alternative Media and

Assistive Technology (R-CAMAT), University of Cape Coast, by a letter from the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA), to use participants of the Centre for the study. Through the Resource Persons at the Centre, the researcher engaged the participants one-on-one to explain the purpose of the research in order to seek their consent to participate in the study at a convenient date, time and location.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher presented introductory letter from the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration to each of the Faculty, Department, Section and Unit where participants were sampled for the study. For the participants with disabilities the researcher contacted them at the R-CAMAT. The study grouped the disabled participants into two categories, the physically disabled and visually disabled. The rationale for using these two groups of disabled persons is that the University of Cape Coast admit just these two groups of disabled students.

The researcher made two visits a week to the R-CAMAT from (August, 2018 to first week October, 2018) to look for participants who were available, and willing to participate in the study. The researcher then explained the rationale for the study, to seek their consent for the interview, and in some cases, the researcher rescheduled an appointment with participants at their convenient time and venue for the interview. The interviews were conducted with a Sony IC Tape Recorder and note pad as a back-up. Tape or voice recording is a means where verbal interview sessions are recorded.

The use of a tape recorder allowed the researcher to replay and listen to the audio recordings to enable him to transcribe the exact responses from the

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respondents. Tape recording gives an accurate summary of the interviews captured during the interaction, and also to be used for safe reference. It also eliminates the omissions, distortions, elaborations, condensations, and other modifications of data associated with written interviews (Dawson, 2012). However, one major disadvantage associated with tape recording is, in case of malfunctioning of the tape recorder, all previous recordings will be lost.

Data Processing and Analysis

The researcher obtained secondary sources of data from the University of Cape Coast Quality Assurance Policy (QAP, 2010), document. The policy document permitted the researcher to familiarize with specific content information under the following headings: *Chapter One* (Notion of quality 1.2; Traditional quality mechanisms in Ghanaian Universities 1.3); *Chapter Two* (Trends 2.1; University of Cape Coast Vision/Mission 2.2; Quality Assurance at University of Cape Coast 2.3; Policy Objectives 2.4; Scope of the Quality Assurance Policy 2.5; Expected Outcome/Benefits of the Quality Assurance Policy).

Chapter Three (Guiding Principles 3.1; Policy Statements 3.2); *Chapter Four* (Directorate of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance DAPQA) 4.1; Roles of the Implementation Units 4.2); *Chapter Five* (Implementation /evaluation strategies); and *Chapter Six* (Policy Review and Amendments). The content information informed the researcher to adopt a conceptual framework for the study, and for the analysis and interpretation of the results.

Specific content information on the Persons' with Disability Acts 2006, (Act 715) was also adopted to enhance the study. Specifically the following sections were reviewed: Access to public places (S.6); Access to public

services (S.7); Facilities and equipment in educational institutions (S.17); Refusal of admission on account of disability (S.20); Library facilities (S.22); Transportation (S.23); A person with disability as a pedestrian (S.25); Access to sporting events, festivals and cultural activities (S.38) were examined. The Acts allowed the researcher to look at the extent to which disability rights informed the drawing-up and implementation of the University of Cape Coast quality assurance policy. The researcher also obtained some statistical information from the Disability Association of University of Cape Coast on the total number of disability students on campus as at the time of the study.

Data obtained from the interviews or the voice recordings were transcribed, coded and categorized into different theme headings for analysis and interpretation. The transcription was done by the researcher and four trained assistants for a period of six weeks. The transcribing was done to allow the researcher to get a written record of the interviews to facilitate the coding and categorization of the responses into themes. Transcribing is the process of converting audiotape recording or field notes into text data (Creswell, 2012). One major disadvantage of transcription is that it is time consuming (Opdenakker, 2006).

The transcribed responses were coded to allow the researcher ascribe the text into broad themes. According to (Creswell, 2012), coding is the process of segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data. The themes permitted the researcher to categorize or group the coded responses into precise headings for easy analysis. The analysis were done to explore the extent to which quality is assured for students with disabilities on teaching and learning; students supports services; and physical infrastructure

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and facilities to ensure their inclusiveness. The analysis and the interpretation were done manually.

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CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter analyses and discusses the influence of quality assurance (QA) practices on academic experiences of students with disabilities in University of Cape Coast. The analyses and the discussions are structured by the broad themes of the conceptual framework; quality assurance of teaching and learning, quality assurance of students support services, and quality assurance of physical infrastructure and facilities.

Findings and Discussions

This section discusses and presents the findings on how quality assurance of teaching and learning; quality assurance of support services; and quality assurance of physical infrastructure and facilities are assured for students with disabilities. The discussions provide insight into quality assurance practices in the University.

Objective One (1): Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning is the core business of the University of Cape Coast (QAP, 2010), and from the policy point of view, the teaching and learning processes has been quality assured for students with disabilities. The findings however suggested that participants still face some barriers in the teaching and learning process. Themes which emerged out of these barriers are: lecture notes, assistive-technology, exams assessment, and the lecture room environment.

Lecture Notes Recording/Brailing

The findings indicated that generally the same method of dictating lecture notes applies to all students, and it this teaching method comes with a lot of challenges for the visually impaired. It appears that the process of taking lecture notes has not been quality assured for students with disabilities. Participant (P. 5) a visually narrated his experience:

"Sometimes it is very difficult, the lecturer won't speak out especially when its lights out, it makes it difficult to record. Sometimes using the braille you get what the lecturer says, sometimes he jumps over some and that makes the notes incomplete".

Similarly participant (P. 9) a physically impaired explained:

"Sitting down and taking notes sometimes, to me personally when I sit for a long time I have waist pains, so sometimes I get tired along the line that is my challenge, so it's not all lecture notes that I take".

These findings support a study by (Boyle, 2013) on note taking which pointed out that, recording notes during fast-paced lectures could be overwhelming for students with disabilities. They have to listen to the lecture content and at the same time try to distinguish the important points from less important ones, as well as processing the verbal information before recording or writing down the lecture notes.

Another issue aside the note taking is the difficulty in using the braille effectively during lectures. Participants indicated their inability to cope with the pace at which lecture notes are dictated, as well as lecturers who unconsciously write 'difficult words' on the board instead of spelling them to their hearing. A participant (P. 10) remarked:

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"You cannot speed up with the lecturer, and the lecturer will not dictate the notes according to how you write with your braille and sometimes words are written on the board which puts you at a disadvantage".

It became evident that some lecturers are not mindful of the presence of disabled students in the lecture theatre, and are also oblivious of any inclusive strategies to mitigate the challenges they face in taking lecture notes. (Castello & Monereo, 2005) indicated that lecture notes have a huge impact on quality of teaching and learning outcomes. Lecture notes serve as a bridge between the content being delivered by teachers and students' construction of that knowledge. It will be appropriate if lecturers could slow down the pace of dictating lecture notes to allow participants to use their braille effectively to record lecture notes. A study by (Maydosz & Raver, 2010), revealed that slowing down lecture note dictation could mean compromising with the cumulative credit hours lecturers have with students.

Another challenge with note taking was the long hours the visually impaired students have to spend in organising post-lecture notes. Participants indicated they have to spend long hours to listen and transcribe recorded lecture notes into braille text. Participant, (P 4) explained:

"To be honest it is quite challenging because you record for three hours course, you come back you have to play for three hours meaning you have to make room, if you are doing six courses, three hours for each course, you have to find a day to braille them. It means you have a double work so you have to squeeze time to be able to do that".

Similarly participant (P 5) indicated:

"It consumes time a lot. It becomes difficult playing back and may be jotting something down because you can't be playing one lecture over and over again because you have plenty lecturers to attend so it becomes difficult".

From the above quotes it is seems the visually impaired students in University of Cape Coast spent more hours to organise their lecture notes, than the 'normal' students. Whiles all students would have to spend some time at certain periods to organise their lecture notes, those with disabilities would have to spend long hours transcribe their printed or recorded lecture notes into braille (Magnus, 2009). In a similar study (Lewin-Jones & Hodgson, 2004), pointed out that transforming a printed material to other formats is a great loss of time to students with visual impairments. To lessen this challenge, students with visual impairments need to be assisted with alternative learning media for note taking (Harris & Oppenheim, 2003).

Assistive Learning Devices/Technology

It was also revealed that the University provides technical and assistive learning technologies such as tape recorders, braille sheet, text-to-braille embossers, and Non Visual Desk Top Access (NVDA) to assure the quality of teaching and learning. For example the visually impaired are offered tape recorders when they came to the University first year. A participant (P. 5) clarified:

"Well, immediately you come to first year, you will be given a digital recorder by the library so when you are given the recorder, it is your own duty to know how to use it for the whole four (4) years programme usually they are not quality recorders so it will malfunction along the line".

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Another participant (P. 11) added:

"With recorders, when we came to the University first year, our resource centre in collaboration with the University's library provide us with recorders, so I think that is done every year to fresher's but unfortunately our batch did not get better recorders and now we are facing challenges".

This support from the university goes a long way to assure quality teaching for participants. (Ball, 2009) pointed out that assistive learning technologies are critical tools for taking lectures notes and enhancing inclusion of disability students in higher education. They also provide increased access to learning activities, support individual study success, and compensate for limitations (Stodden et al., 2006).

The Disability Centre (R-CAMART) of the University corroborated the provision of the tape recorders to the visually impaired and other supports they provide for the physically disabled. A Senior Officer explained:

"For those with vision disability, we have technical persons at the Disability Centre who offer several technical supports, such as: text –to-speech, magnifiers, and then we also have braille, tape recorders to assist them in their academic work. We have also provided assistive technology reading rooms for both the physically challenged and the visually disabled where for example we have provided Non visual Desk top Access (NVDA) software to aid them in accessing the net and for assignments. These are basically some of the things that we do, and then we also see to their welfare".

Another assistive technology the University of Cape Coast use to assure quality of teaching and learning for the visually impaired is the braille. The findings revealed that free braille sheets are provided for quizzes, assignments

and end-of-semester examinations. However it was revealed that the students buy their own braille sheets for private notes at a relatively high cost. Participant (P. 11) explained:

"In fact, that is a big challenge we face as people living with disability especially the blind. With braille sheets it is very expensive because if I decide to make notes for the semester for about seven courses, I must get like four or five packs of braille sheets, and one cost Thirty Five Ghana Cedis (GH ¢35.00) Cedis and a pack contains 300 pieces".

Similarly, participant (P. 5) indicated:

"If there is any handout to buy, the sighted colleague would buy just the handout, but I will buy the handout and buy the braille sheets".

The expressions above are a clear indication that whiles pursuit of higher education generally comes with various monetary cost to students, it appears it brings additional unavoidable cost to students with disabilities, due to their conditions. World report on disability indicated that the economic and social costs of disability are quite significant but difficult to quantify. It stressed that students with disabilities as well as their families and friends, employers and the society as a whole incur direct and indirect costs (WHO, 2011).

It also became apparent that the physically impaired had some challenges with of the technical supports given to them. For instance, even though they have a special study room but the computer desk and chairs are not adjustable; this makes them difficult to access. A study by (Ahmad, 2015) indicated that students who use wheel chair, may have their computer desks adjusted to a comfortable height, to pull up to the computer to work; or repositioning the keyboard and monitor to help in enhancing accessibility. In a related study

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(Fuller et al., 2004) reported that, students with physical disabilities are heterogeneous with diverse support needs, and must not be treated as a homogeneous group.

The provision of assistive learning technologies reinforces the University's QA policy on support services and facilities which is intended to: provide facilities and services needed to enhance teaching, learning, research and to sustain the welfare of staff and students (QAP, 2010, p. 17).

Student Assessment

The findings revealed that the Disability Resource Centre provides various forms of administrative and technician supports such as; braille-to-text transcribing for quizzes, assignments, end of semester examinations, and management of exams among others. However, it appears students face various forms of barriers when it comes to students' assessments. Major themes which emerged were schedule for writing quizzes, and difficulty in accessing examination results:

Schedules for writing quizzes

The finding indicated that though students with impairments are allowed to take their quizzes at the University's Disability Resource Centre, some lecturers schedule quizzes at dawn and/or on weekends when the Centre is not opened.

Participant (P. 2) explained:

"The consideration is very low because most of the quizzes are being taken at dawn and weekends and you know because most of us we write our quizzes here [Resource Centre for Alternative Media and Assistive Technology], which is located in the library and the library doesn't operate at dawn and

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weekends. Some of the lecturers don't understand the reason why they are supposed to wait for their quizzes because of one or two persons at the weekends. I quite remember I took one course in first year I told the lecturer that Sunday he is going to write the quiz is not going to help me. He said that; and me too one person cannot decide for about three hundred people".

Similarly, participant (P. 4) indicated:

"It differs from lecturer to lecturer, you know they are supposed to bring our quiz papers to our Centre [Resource Centre for Alternative Media and Assistive Technology] for them to braille for us to write, but sometimes they refuse to bring it, so you have to chase, sometimes you get there and the venue has changed and you know our Department is at the library which is open at o'clock nine (9am). So when a lecturer fixes his or her quizzes at the 5: 30am or 6:00am, it becomes very challenging sometimes you have to wait after the students have finished.

Accessing of examination results

Participants indicated that the face a lot administrative barriers in retrieving their examination results. Participant (P.2) explained:

"Whiles all our friends are receiving their results, you will check your portal and you will be having incomplete (IC) results. You go and consult them [Department], you will be told either you did not write a quiz or exams, meanwhile you yourself you know that you took part in those activities, and you need to now struggle following here and there before you realize, you have waste most of your time, so is affecting our academic experiences".

The above quote indicates that even though the assessment process is largely quality assured, it is still saddled some technical and attitudinal challenges.

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Lecturers invariably control the assessment process, and any adverse attitude exhibited could mar the teaching and learning process as well as affecting the quality of teaching and learning for the disabled students. A study conducted by (Hadjikakou, Polycarpou & Hadjilia, 2010) pointed out that the unwillingness of faculty members to give the needed supports to students with disabilities in higher education is a major challenge to their academic progress. In a similar study, it was maintained that it will require a concerted effort between lecturers, support services and students to ensure that the learning needs of impaired students are extensively met (Van Jaarsveldt & Ndeya-Ndereya, 2015).

Interaction with the Disability Resource Centre corroborated some of the issues raised by the participants. For instance, a Senior Officer at the Disability Centre elaborated on the difficulty in retrieving examination results. He remarked:

"Even though they write their exams there [the Disability Centre], going for their exams papers and then coming from the different Departments and Faculties where they wrote these exams becomes a problem for both the resource persons' and the students. When they write assignments they cannot write like you and I can, so they will use the braille, somebody will transcribe it so that the lecturer who has no knowledge about braille will also read what the general thing that we know, so all of us must in our small way improve the system to assist them".

The quotes from the participants and the Senior Officer suggest that, some areas of the assessment process have not quality assured for students with disabilities. Yet the University's policy on student assessments indicates

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clearly among other things to: "approved and widely publicised mechanisms and regulations for both continuous and end of semester assessments" and "students should have confidence in the assessment process" in other to ensure high academic standards (QAP, 2010, p.15, I & iii).

It is appears there is a gap between policy's position and practice, and there is clear indication that the regulation how impaired students should write their quizzes and examinations are not generally adhere to. A study by (Van Jaarsveldt & Ndeya-Ndereya, 2015) have indicated that, the personal responsibility of individuals in adhering to legislation, policies and procedures is very critical in enhancing inclusive educational practices in higher education institutions.

Lecture Room Environment

The lecture theatre environment is one critical area that can adversely affects the quality of teaching and learning outcomes. The findings indicated that major issues surrounding the lecture theatre environment is not quality assured. Participants specified attitudes of lecturers, attitudes of students, sitting arrangement, and the psychological environment as major challenges confronting them in the lecture theatre:

Attitudes of lecturers

Participants revealed that attitude of some lecturers in the lecture theatre, negatively affects their lecture learning experiences. A Participant (P.11) explained the in the lecture room:

"Some lecturers I don't know if they are now getting to understand what disability means or they understand and act the other way around. Some

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lecturers' attitudes towards people leaving with disability are not encouraging. Even some of us it discourages us from being in this University".

Similarly, participant (P. 12) said:

"Sometimes a lecturer would demand that you should be there [lectures] at a particular time, they don't consider that you have a disability".

However, other participants gave good accounts of other lecturers whom they indicated are supportive. Participant (P. 5) said:

"Some lecturers, they do help us a lot. Everything they write on the board, they will spell it out. So they tell us everything and some of our colleges also help us, taken notes and what have you but some other colleagues they are not helpful at all, I think they even forget you are even in the lecture theatre".

A Participant (P.11) also remarked:

"But with others it so encouraging and even motivates you to study hard"

From the quotes it is evident that whiles some lecturers are not supportive, others are supportive in ensuring inclusive lecture room environment. Nevertheless, it appears these supportive attitudes are out of benevolence rather than personal appreciation and commitment to the tenets of quality assurance. Attitudes of lecturers towards disabled students have been well discussed in the literature. A study by (Farone, Hall & Costello, 1998), to assess the perceptions of University Faculty members towards students with disabilities concluded that, faculty, Staff, and Administrators bad attitudes towards and inability to accept students with disabilities are due to lack information regarding disability issues, and lack of were not receptive to accommodation. (Kruth & Mellard 2006) also indicated that, some students

feel a sense of intimidation and rejection and considered faculty members as group of people who are not sensitive and unaware of their educational needs.

On the contrary, Abu-Hamour (2013); Koo (2017); Vukovic (2016), have reported of some faculty who hold positive attitudes toward students with disabilities and are willing to provide the needed teaching and accommodations to ensure their inclusion. To address the bad attitude of lecturers (Lombardi, Murray & Dallas, 2013), suggested that targeted professional training should be organized for faculty to bring attitudinal change.

Lecture Theatre Seating/Sitting Arrangement

The findings revealed that the Lecture theatre seating arrangement has not been quality assured for students with disabilities, as they sit like the 'normal' students. It was evident that no special sitting and seating arrangements are designed to assure their inclusion. Participant (P. 13) indicated:

"No, it is not easily accessible, the reason being that they have not made any special places for people with disabilities to sit even though University of Cape Coast has students with disabilities, but they don't provide specific place for you to come and sit so when you get to a lecture room and a lecturer is there, he may rather direct you to sit here or there, but as for University they don't provide special places for us".

From the quote, it clear that the visually impaired depends so much on their recorded lecture notes, to the extent that where they sit in the lecture hall is very critical in determining the quality of their recorded lecture notes. That is, there is a correlation between the sitting/seating position at the lecture hall and the quality of lecture notes recorded by students with disabilities. The

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importance of lecture room sitting arrangement to disabled students has been discussed extensively in the literature. For instance (Van den Berg et al., 2012) indicated that, the lecture theatre sitting arrangement can enhance the academic and social development of the impaired students. Similarly (Wannarka & Ruhl, 2008) also opined that seating arrangements can have consequences for students' academic engagement and development. In the context of this study, if the seating arrangements are modified, clearly access will be improved for participants.

Even though the participants found the seating and sitting arrangements as a barrier, they have not officially reported but, they have developed their own coping strategies to overcome these barriers. A participant (P. 1) explained:

"I only feel comfortable when there is sitting place at the front for me to occupy there, and then maybe if the class is cooperative then you can get the lecture clear, but sometimes you record and some people misbehave at times, making noise you can't record those noise".

Follow-up at the Academic Planning and Quality Assurance confirm that some of these challenges are not reported to the directorate. However, it was indicated that since quality assurance is an ongoing process, the Directorate will keep improving the environment for students' with disabilities. The officer remarked:

"Our work is that we go round to look at the infrastructure facilities whether they favour the disability or not. However, if the students did not complain to us we cannot say that they have a challenge even though there might be a challenge."

From the above comments, it appears that there is a gap between what the students were experiencing and the position of the University's quality assurance policy which indicated among other things to ensure integration, inclusion and equal opportunities for all students (QAP, 2010). That is to remove barriers which will make the lecture theatre less stressful for those with disabilities.

The Psychological Environment of the Lecture Theatre

The study revealed that, the extent to which quality is assured for teaching and learning is also influenced by the psychological environment of the Lecture theatre. The psychological environment for this study is the individual's perceived subjective assessment of the attitudes, behavious and comments in the lecture hall, which tend to affect the way he or she learn. Participants singled out attitude as the only challenge they face psychologically. Participant (P.14) explained:

"Sometimes some of the students turn to discriminate among students with disabilities. I remember when I came last year; I asked somebody certain things, but the kind of attitude. They don't pay much attention to you so when they realized that you are progressing, that attitude turn to change because they want to benefit academic way. If I feel discriminated, it would have some psychological feeling within yourself and you might be saying, is it because of my disability that this person is acting like this! And this will also have an impact on the way you function".

Participant (P.1) equally indicated:

"Some do not know, they haven't met any person with disability so for their first time they try to speak some words that will bring you down or discourage

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you. So in that sense if you do not motivate yourself, then you end up not being confident in the class or may not even speak".

From the quotes above it evident that, the unfriendly attitudes of the other 'normal' colleagues, creates negative psychological environment in the lecture theatre for those with disabilities. This is in support of a study (Van Jaarsveldt & Ndeya-Ndereya, 2015) which reported that, distancing behaviour marginalises students with disabilities, tends to show a lack of respect for their human dignity and deprives them of a sense of equality in relation to other students regardless of the intention. Similarly, (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009) concluded that, in a diverse learning environment as the lecture theatre, the physical presence of impaired students does not automatically ensure participation and academic success, except there is quality culture that promotes inclusive practices and norms.

However, the perceived negative psychological environment in the lecture theatre may be attributable to low self-esteem which affects how some impaired students perceive the lecture theatre environment. This view is supported by (Roberts, Crittenden & Crittenden, 2011), who assert that the perceived negative attitudes in the lecture theatre by students with impairments, might be as a result of negative perception about their disability. Notwithstanding this view point, (Mittler, 2000) maintained that a supportive psychological environment is as important as an accessible physical environment.

Objective Two: Quality Assurance of Students Supports Services

Objective two was to explore the extent to which quality assurance of student support services was influencing the academic experiences of students with disabilities. It emerged from the policy stand point that, the University has assured quality for almost support services, the experiences in practice, was different. Participants narrated numerous barriers they encounter daily in trying to access some of the support services. Themes which emerged from the responses included: access to library services, access to transportation services, access to sports and recreational services, and safety and security supports.

Access to Library Services

One major barrier pointed out by participants is the difficulty in accessing the main library. For instance, the physically impaired indicated that they cannot access the upper floors of the library due to faulty elevator. Participant (P. 9) stated:

"For the physically challenged, the problem is when I have to get books so that I can do some references, that one, I have a little challenge because there are some books that are at the first and second floors, so sometimes I'm not able to get them. It is not every time that someone will be at the desk to assist? For me I don't go to the first floor just the ground floor".

The situation seemed quite challenging that the visually impaired were making a case for their physically impaired colleagues. A visually impaired participant (P. 13) explained:

"The inner layout is also not all that accessible especially to the physically challenged, because the elevator is no more working so if you want to go to

the last but one, and the last floors, you cannot since they can't also use the stair cases. We the visually impaired, we have to go with friends".

The above quote revealed the sentiments of the remaining participants. It appears there was no urgency to repair the elevator to facilitate their movement. A study by (Haadjikakou & Hartas, 2008) maintained that effective provision for students with disabilities depends on culture of acknowledging and responding to difference.

Significantly, participants revealed that when they encounter these technical structural barriers, the library attendants sometimes support them. (P. 6) commented:

 "A few that I have getting in touch with, are polite towards me".

Similarly, (P. 11) remarked:

 "In fact some are polite and kind. I even have people I do joke with".

(P. 5) also added:

"Well they are doing well. Although some don't have any background in special education, that is how to deal with persons with disabilities, but they've learnt from their colleagues so they doing well".

Receiving support from library staff is critical to the quality assurance process, and has implications for how students experience the University environment (Kuh et al. 2010). In a similar study (Richardson and Wydell, 2003), concluded that the motivation for impaired students to attain and remain on campus generally depends on the supports they receive from others. A study by (Jacklin & Robinson, 2007) also concluded that personal and interpersonal aspects of support are most important to the majority of students with disabilities.

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The attitudes of the library staff clearly support what is espoused in the University's quality assurance policy which outlines among other things that: "all staff of the University shall perform their duties with dedication, honesty, loyalty, discipline and courtesy. It states further that, supporting and technical staffs shall provide quality, and reliable service to promote scholarship." (QAP, 2010, p. 21-22).

Transport Services

Road transport plays a critical role in the mobility of students with disabilities on campus. The findings revealed that major areas of the transport services have not been quality assured for students with disabilities. Participant indicated type of shuttle buses on campus and attitude as main obstacles to accessing transport services:

Campus vehicles

Participants indicated that almost all the cars shuttling on campus have no special places for disability persons and they have high platforms which make accessibility quite difficult for both the physically and the visually impaired. A physically disabled participant (P.8) explained:

"For us in wheel chairs it is difficult boarding the shuttles, so in most cases I use my wheel chair and I make sure that I move earlier so that I am not late for lectures".

Participant (P.1) a visually disabled indicated:

"You always get colleagues to assist you to board the shuttles, some people will even offer you the front seat so that you will be comfortable".

Attitudinal issues

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It also became evident that at the time of this study, the University has free shuttle services for students with disabilities, accessing this free service comes with attitudinal   challenges. A participant (P. 15) remarked:

"When we came to the University, they told us that shuttles are free for people with disabilities, but some people [drivers] take the fare meaning if you don't have money, you have to walk".

Similarly, (P. 5) explained:

"When we came to level 100, our senior colleagues told us that we have the privilege of using the shuttle without paying, but sometimes we do pay especially when we are entering in threes, they feel reluctant, and so me I don't want a case where the driver will talk anyhow, so I just pay".

Perception of disability

The situation is even worse for the physically disabled who pointed out that for them it is a must to pay since the drivers do not think that they deserve the free bus services. This was how a participant (P. 8) recounted his ordeal with a shuttle driver:

 "Even one day I had a quarrel with one of the drivers when three visually disabled students entered his vehicle, he did not collect money from them, but as I was also entering, I was told to pay. When I questioned, he told me that they can't see, but me I can see. And I told them but won't they sit on chairs, and the response was won't you also sit on a chair, so a certain man paid for me".

Another participant (P. 11) a visually disabled confirmed the quote above and made a case for his physically disabled colleagues. He remarked:

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"I know that anybody with disability must not pay the fare when you pick shuttle but here lies the case that our physically challenged colleagues they do pay when they take shuttle. It is only the visually disabled who do not pay so that one there is a problem".

It appears the attitudinal challenge also has to do with some colleague students who feel reluctant to join them in the same car. A physically disabled participant (P. 8) narrated an encounter with a colleague student when trying to board a taxi on campus. He remarked:

"I experienced something that nearly killed my morale in this University. I was going to sit in one of the taxis at the taxi rank, and a certain lady was sitting in that taxi, so when I just entered the taxi, the lady got out and I saw her going to take another car, and even her demeanor, in fact I was surprised thinking she didn't want to sit with 'such people', when I came to the hall I slept throughout".

The attitudes of their colleague students and the campus shuttle drivers are clear indication of low appreciation for the plight of persons with disabilities. This problem will be best resolve if disability awareness is created to promote positive attitude and to increased empathy towards persons with disabilities (Foley et al., 2007). Issues about disability awareness have been discussed extensively in the literature. For instance a study by (Depoy, 2000 as cited in Yung & Kin, 2016) indicated that disability awareness, as perceived from the cultural and social paradigm, is a step to remove social and environmental barriers to enable the full social, physical and spiritual participation of individuals with disabilities in the community.

Sports and Recreational Services

The findings revealed that most the sporting and recreational activities on campus have not been quality assured for students with disabilities. Themes that emerged include: limited time to engage in sporting activities, lack of sports and recreational facilities for students with disabilities, and inaccessible sporting facilities:

Time for sports and recreational activities

Participants explained that because they have to spend extra hours in organizing their academic work, it is difficult for them to engage in extra curriculum activities such as sports and recreation. A participant (P. 14) indicated: *"I hardly have time for sports because of the timetable"*.

 *A*nother participant (P. 15) said:

"I have never engaged in any sports on campus, I don't have time for sports".

It appears students with disability do not have much social life on campus due to their disabilities. Lack of time for sports and recreational activities among students with disabilities have been discussed in the literature. For instance, a study by (Young, Ross & Barcelona, 2003) indicated that lack of time and lack of knowledge of sporting and recreational programmes and activities as significant constraints to disability students' participation in sport. In a similar study, (Ghebremedhin-Asihel, 2005) also pointed that lack of time serves as a constraint to students with disabilities engaging in sports and recreation.

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Inadequate sporting and recreational activities

It also emerged that there was not enough sporting activities for students with disabilities to participate. There is only one sporting activity called the ''goal ball' for the visually disabled. A participant (P.9) indicated:

"Last year I heard of the goal ball, for the visually disabled, it is only the visually impaired and the blind that are benefiting, the physically challenged are neglected". Unfortunately, the visually disabled indicated that the 'goal ball' is deluged with lots of challenges: involving the quality of the ball, ineffective dissemination of information and schedules for the sport. Participant (P. 13) explained*:*

"The goal ball we use, is not in good condition what we have, they have to use cello tape to rap it. It uses a sound in the ball and since the ball is not in good condition, it is difficult to play".

Poor organization of the goal ball

Participants said they are not involved in the decisions and preparation towards the playing of the goal ball to the extent that sometimes the blind fold the sighted colleagues to play in their place. Participant (P. 13) narrated his experience:

"In terms of inter-hall sometimes we get the information very late. This year in particular, some of us who are doing teaching practice, I remembered one day we returned from school and we were told that 'Hall x' is playing with 'Hall z', and that it was left with some minutes, and when we got there they have already started and the sighted colleagues have been blindfold and were playing, and the game is not for them".

From the above quote, it is evident that even though the 'goal ball' is meant for the visual impaired; it seems they are sidelined in the organization of the sport.

Access to sports and recreational activities

Some of the physically impaired said participants were also of the view that there were some sporting activities like basketball they can engage in, but access to the few basketball courts was a challenge. This was how participant (P. 3) explained:

"Some of the[sports] facilities are not user friendly, the basketball court for instance, all the various hall have basketball courts, they are not friendly because physically challenged too they play basketball ,but the court they have made a step before you get on them, so if you are using wheel chair you can't enter them unless somebody help you".

A senior officer at the Sport and Recreation Unit of the University confirmed what the participants had said, but indicated that it is yet to include other sporting activities for all disabled students. He pointed out that, recreational equipment and facilities for the disabled are more detailed, and come with architectural and financial constraints. He remarked:

 "We have included in our annual inter house programmes a competition we call 'goal-ball' which is specifically geared towards our brothers and sisters who are visually challenged. So we get them and at the end of the day we are able to select even the best among them for them to go to the next level to compete. So these are the games we have for them, but as for the others we are still to get there. Their sports is more detailed because you need to put in a lot of things, so we will say that we are not there yet, but at least for a start we

are including those who are visually challenged for now in our programmes, so that is where we are now".

The quotes above suggest that sports and recreational activities have not been quality assured for students with disabilities. It can be argued that lack of access is a major barrier to participants' lack of motivation to engage in sports and recreational activities. A study by (Yoh et al., 2008) identified that physical activity of students with disabilities was affected by the lack of access and lack of adaptive equipment serve as barrier to their low motivation in sports and recreation. Students with disabilities are not motivated to engage in sports and recreation for various reasons. (Darcy et al., 2017) identified a person's disability type and/or level of support needs, community/organizational support, time, equipment, economic, intrapersonal and interpersonal needs and transport as obvious constrains that can influence their participation in sports.

Contrary to the above views, (Kiuppis, 2018) argued that unlike in education where access need to be created for all, the provision of opportunities and structures for doing sport seems to be generally much more oriented towards the choice of those who decide to do sport. In a similar context (Spaaij, Magee & Jeanes, 2014) maintained that when dealing with inclusion in sport, it is significant to recognise that non-participation is not equal social exclusion, as this occurs when people want to participate but cannot.

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Objective Three: Quality Assurance of Physical Infrastructure and

Facilities

Objective three sought to explore the extent to which quality assurance of physical infrastructure and facilities was influencing the academic experiences of students with disabilities. It emerged that even though the University by policy has quality assured practically all the physical infrastructure and facilities, it appeared from the participants that there still challenges in accessing some of the infrastructure and facilities on campus. Themes which emerged from the responses included: challenges with access to pavements and walkways, access to road infrastructure, access to lecture theatres and sports and recreation facilities.

Pavement and Walkways

The University has provided number of stretches of pavements on campus to assist the mobility of students with disabilities but, participants pointed out a number of barriers they encounters using them. They mentioned obstructions on the pavements (potholes, light poles); curb height and curb cut; and reckless parking on pavements and walkways.

Obstructions on pavements and walkways

One major barrier to the mobility of disabled students is the various obstacles on the pavements. A participant (P. 2) explained how broken pavements affect his mobility:

"The SSNIT junction getting to the senior club house, two pavements are broken so sometimes if care is not taken you can fall in it. Also at Alumni hostel, the pavements ends, and you begin to walk on the road, sometimes you may move onto the road".

Similarly (P.10) indicated:

"Walking on the pavements you find gutters and you will be challenged by cars if you are getting down from the pavements".

Participants also identified light poles as other form of obstacle they encounter on some of the pavements. They indicated one major stretch of pavement on campus which is occupied by light poles. A participant (P.13) said:

"There are potholes on the pavements, and when you are moving from here [Casely Hayford hall] to science, is better to use the pavement on the left, the right pavement is not accessible because there are light poles on it".

Equally (P.11) remarked:

"In fact they are not comfortable for our movement. For instance when you are going to CELT, the pavement on the right there are light poles which means you can't use the pavement".

The quotations above revealed the sentiments of the other disabled students. Pavements and walk ways are meant to assist students with disabilities to navigate smoothly, reduce mobility time, and help to overcome barriers that hinder their mobility. However, it appears participants rather face constant obstructions which defeats the purpose of the pavements. It has been pointed out that pavements and sidewalks are expected to have a clear path without any hanging, protruding or obstructing objects (Mitchell & Rickert 2010).

Curb Heights and Curb Cuts

It also became evident in the study that some of the pavements have high curb heights and without curb (kerb) cuts, which create a huge barrier to both

the visually impaired and the physically impaired, as it becomes difficult to ascend and descend from the pavements. A participant (P.8) explained how unfriendly it is to use the pavements:

"Most of the pavements are not comfortable to use. For instance look at this place [pointing the pavement around the Sasakwa Centre], you can see that some of the pavements are tall so in case of climbing if you don't take care you will fall. So most of them are not user friendly, they just did it for 'normal' students to walk on".

The quote above is not isolated from the experiences of the other participants. Curb height and curb cuts are critical component in constructing any standard pavement. However, it can be argued from the responses that the plights of the various categories of disabled persons on campus were not factored in the construction of these pavements. Issues of curb heights for persons with disabilities have been elaborated in the literature. For instance, the (UNDP, 2010) have maintained that sidewalks should be constructed with curb cuts to facilitate wheelchair and visually disabled users in accessing these sidewalks. Similar studies have also concluded that a pavement should have a minimum curb height of 130 millimetres, since this height is significant to alert any driver of a change in height if the driver is to the pavement where the driver is not expected to be (Hoy, 2003; McNulty, 2003).

When the Directorate of Development and Estate Management of the University   was contacted, it was admitted that there were light poles on some of pavements mentioned above, but it was indicated that there were plans to realign all such poles to make the pavements easily accessible. An Officer explained:

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"It has come to our attention and the University has plans and is on the table right now to realign the location of the light poles, and then provide more of the street lights".

The response of the officer was a frank admission of the problem as indicated by the participants. The difficulty however is, between now and the time these light poles are removed, mobility of students with disabilities will significantly be obstructed.

Reckless Parking on Pavements

Another challenge with the use of the pavements is recklessly parking by drivers. Participants indicated that in discriminate parking on the pavements, poses a great threat to their mobility as they normally bump into parked cars. A participant (P. 1) explained:

"The way the cars are parked by the road, it sometimes poses challenges to my walking. Let say I will be coming early to lectures, I may not find any vehicle on the way, so as I'm going back to the hall, I have in mind that there wasn't a vehicle, only to go and bump into a vehicle".

Similarly, (P.10) revealed:

"No because even walking on the pavements you find gutters, and you will be challenged by cars if you are getting down from the pavements".

The two statements above is an indication of the diverse challenges which confront disabled students on daily bases as they strive to navigate their way through campus. The issue of reckless parking on pavements and sidewalks has been reported in the literature. (Siebers 2010, p. 79) maintained that "society treats handicapped parking places and accessible pathways as empty

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spaces to fill, locations marked by accessibility inevitably become handy collecting points for trash, building materials, or delivery trucks".

Regardless, of the negative experiences indicated above, the visually impaired participants indicated that, in the absence of any obstruction on the pavements, using the white cane on is the ideal means of mobility for them. A participant (P.1) expressed how comfortable it is to navigate on pavements with the white cane:

"I feel comfortable when I have my own assistive device that helps me, that is the white cane. If I'm on the pave way using the white cane I feel comfortable, because the cane will guide me and give me the boundary that I will not cross that line".

Another participant *(*P. 3) added:

"The pavement helps, because those who use the white canes, they use the side ways of the pavement as a medium of movement".

Equally participant (P.13) remarked:

"It helps us to get to the lecture hall quite early, because of the way it is we just use the white cane then you go, so when you leave the hall early you can get to the lecture hall before lecture starts".

The above quotations are an indication that with improved infrastructure and technology, the life of students with disabilities on campus can be enhanced. (Addo, 2012) indicated that, the use of the white cane offers students with visual impairments enough information to identify a sharp change in height.

Road Infrastructure

The findings revealed that, road safety and security measures such as road signs and markings, traffic lights, road ramps have been well designed by the University to assure quality for all students. However, participants indicated that they face countless barriers which make it difficult for them to easily access the roads. Themes which emerged includes: safety at pedestrian crossings, and attitude of road users at pedestrian crossings.

Safety at Pedestrian Crossings

The main barrier for students with disabilities at pedestrian crossings points is the sense of fear they experience when they get to pedestrian crossing points. Participants indicated that they do not feel safe accessing the roads without assistance due to attitudes of drivers who refuse to stop for them to access the roads. Participant (P.13) indicated:

"Crossing alone is somehow difficult; we have to get someone because some drivers don't have that heart to stop for you to cross, so you have to get someone to assist you".

Similarly (P.2) remarked:

"As for the markings they are there, but the other people who are using the road their understanding of it. Let use the pedestrian crossing you know that this is the place where you can cross, without assistance, but the other users, the drivers how they will stop for you to cross is a problem on campus. If you are in front of the main library wanting to cross to the other side, you will be standing there for about thirty minutes and no one will stop for you to cross unless somebody stop the cars for you.

Equally, Participant (4) said:

"The drivers do not respect the zebra crossing, the drivers they don't understand that the person even holding the white cane is visually disabled so sometimes you even stand by the road side for about two minutes cars will be moving nobody even stop for you to cross".

From the above quotes, it appears enforcement of the road traffic laws on camps is weak, and lack of quality culture to demonstrate the right attitude towards students with disabilities at pedestrian crossings. Persons with disabilities in most instances require more time to cross the road, which means they have to wait for a longer time if they do not have crossing priorities. Participants singled out drivers' attitudes as one of the major threat at the pedestrian crossing points. This view is significant since quite a sizeable number of these drivers on campus are either university staff with private cars or University's official drivers who are deemed to be part of the quality assurance system. It is therefore surprising that in an environment as the university, drivers cannot appreciate and respect the rights of other road users such as impaired students.

Studies on road crossing have indicated that, street crossing in developing countries is one major area where the visually impaired are most susceptible to danger hence, their dependence on sighted persons for transportation decisions (Frye, 2013). Attitude plays an important role in assuring quality enabling environment for persons with disabilities which means, any negative attitude towards them implies a denial of some inclusive benefits. Attitudinal barriers has been recognised as the basis of all other environmental barriers persons with disabilities face, and perhaps the most difficult to change (Pivik et al.,

2002). Similar studies identified negative attitudes and limited physical access as the foremost obstacles faced by persons with disabilities (Gilson & Depoy, 2000).

Follow-up at the Directorate of Physical Development and Estate Management confirm the sentiments expressed by the participants but, it was indicated that periodically education and awareness creation on campus. A Senior Officer recounted:

"We are constantly doing education for them to know that students should be giving priories especially the disabled students, and if you look at the physical development aspect, we are putting in place as part of the road furniture speed rumps to slow down and give the student the comfort of not being run over by speeding vehicles".

The views expressed by the participants and the explanation from the Directorate suggest that, perhaps the education and awareness creation has not been effective. Drivers form a critical part of the transportation system on campus, so their exclusion from disability concerns can be a setback to the quality assurance endeavours. It has been pointed out in the literature that, continuous education of people in the transportation chain about disability can ensure that accessible systems are developed and sustained for persons with disabilities (Meriläinen & Helaakoski, 2001).

In the view of (Rickert, 2009) such education should start with training for managers, so that they understand their legal obligations. He also stressed that front-line staff should be given training on the range of disabilities, discriminatory practices and the difficulties people with disabilities face when using transport.

Inaccessible Lecture Theatres

Participants indicated that majority of the lecture theatres are not easily accessible or user friendly. They pointed out the various structural barriers they have to overcome daily to gain access to the lecture theatres. A participant (P.15) explained:

"The user friendliness of our structures over here is nothing to write home about because even if you are going to the cafeteria roof top here, I have to park my wheel chair and walk on the gravels which is not easy, craw on the gravel. That is why I am saying that University does not make room for the physically challenged to have that kind of access to the lecture theatres".

Similarly, (P. 2) a visually impaired explained:

"What we learnt from our resource Centre is that most of our lectures are supposed to be at the basement of every lecture theatre but, unfortunately, most of our lectures are upstairs. As for us [the blind] we can walk we don't have problem about that, but those who can't walk, those who are using wheel chairs, it is very difficult to get up to the building. Let's take CELT [a lecture theatre complex] for instance, there is no elevator and even where you can use your wheel chair it is up to a point, not to the top floor. So it sometimes makes accessibility to the place very difficult or challenging for some of us".

The expressions above are not different from the views of the remaining participants. It appears struggling to access the lecture theatre has become the norm in the daily lives of students with disabilities in the university. This position is not different from (Holloway, 2001) study on disability in higher education which revealed that, difficulty in physical access constituted a major obstacle to participation in the university for students with disabilities. A

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similar study in the UK found that more students with disabilities identified greater difficulties in gaining physical access into university buildings (Madriaga et al., 2010).

Access to the Library

The findings also revealed that participant encounter challenges when accessing the main library building. The visually impaired identified open drainage and reckless parking in front of the library as the two major obstacles. A Participants (P.4) with visual disabilities explained:

"Some gutters around the main library, and the pavement between the main library and SASAKAWA, there is a big gutter and people have been falling inside".

Similarly, (P. 12) commented:

"The linked pavement between SASAKAWA Centre to the large lecture theatre (LLT), there is a big gutter and most of the visually disabled have fallen into it".

Another participant (P. 13) also narrated:

"The location is not all that friendly, in that the big gutter around the library some of our colleagues have fallen into it, and most of the gutters are not covered so when you don't take care and navigate your way well, you might fall into a gutter. We have complained to them [management] *and up till now nothing has been done about it".*

Given the critical role of library in the teaching and learning process, it is intriguing that student with visual impairments have to experience daily struggles to access the library. Creating enabling environment for student with visual impairment to access the library should not be an option in a place like

the university. A study by (Losinsky et al., 2003) attested that, accessibility enhances disabled people's rights to participate equally in societal development.

When the Directorate of Physical Development was contacted, A Senior Officer confirmed the sentiments of the participants. He acknowledged that most of the old buildings were constructed without considering the needs of persons with disabilities. However, he mentioned that the university's current policy on infrastructure allows older buildings to be modified with ramps or elevators where possible, whiles new buildings are fitted with ramps and elevators to create access for students with disabilities. He explained:

"Some of the facilities that are currently on-going, we have made provision for lifts to provide access, so that students with disabilities can go to those facilities and learn. Earlier on there has been some buildings and those buildings, were not disability friendly, and so as a policy of the Development Office, all new buildings after that time will have to be given those facilities for students to use. And the old ones, like you take the faculty of Arts, the Communal block, Science block complex, all those places do not have lifts; they go with the vertical stair cases, fortunately they have court yards within, so we have redesigned those courts yards to take care of ramps in some areas. Those areas that we have to provide lifts, we have to look at it".

The comments by the officer demonstrate the University's resolve to create enabling environment to fulfill its vision of creating equal opportunities for all students regardless. This position is in line with the provision in the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (715), which require that by legislation: facilities and equipment shall be provided to enable persons with disability to fully

benefit from the school or institution. Nevertheless, adapting the environment to the needs of students with disabilities should be a process that combines legislation, persuasion, good example and human pressure (Chard & Couch, 1998).

Summary of Key Findings

Summary of the findings on quality assurance of teaching and learning revealed that revealed that there is a gap between policy and practice. Whereas the university's quality assurance policy attest that teaching and learning is quality assured for students with disabilities, in practices it seems there are fundamental areas in the teaching and learning process that have not been quality assured for the disabled students.

Participants' experience gives a clear indication that major areas in the students support services have not been quality assured for students with disabilities. For all the issues raised by the participants, the most challenging is the attitudes of other 'normal' persons who should rather assist in building inclusive environment for them. (Jebston, 2001), pointed out that lack of sense of quality culture in higher education environment, could have fierce consequence on the implementation of any quality assurance policy.

Participants overall experience with the physical infrastructures and facilities, revealed that there are serious structural difficulties when they are accessing most of the built environment. Most of the physical infrastructures were built decades ago when disability issues and education were not generally considered as a fundamental right. This situation has some implications for the delivery of quality education to students with disabilities in the university.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the major findings of the study, the conclusions and recommendations. It also presents the contributions of the study to knowledge and suggestions for further research.

Context of Study

The main objective of the study was to explore the influence of quality assurances practices on the academic experiences of students with disabilities in the University of Cape Coast. Specifically, the study sought to: Explore the extent to which quality assurance of teaching and learning; students support services; and physical infrastructure and facilities are influencing the academic experiences of students with disabilities. The study sampled fifteen (15) disability students, and five (5) Directorates of the University using purposive and convenient sampling respectively.

Adopting the qualitative approach, the study used interview guide as the research instrument. Data collected covered issues concerning teaching and learning, students support services, physical infrastructure and facilities and quality assurance, which were analysed and presented using direct quotations from participants'.

Summary of the Findings

The findings indicated that generally, the University's QA practices cover teaching and learning for students with disabilities to enhance their inclusion and participation in the teaching and learning process. For instance, the process of taking lecture notes, the assessment process, the lecture theatre

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environment have been quality assured to enhance students inclusion and participation in the teaching and learning process. However, these practices come with some challenges:

For example due to the noisy environment during lectures, the visually disabled (VI) students prefer sitting on the front row of lectures in order to have a clear and sound recordings for lecture notes devoid of noise distortions.

It also emerged that the policy where the visually disabled ought to write their examinations at the Resource Centre for Alternative Media and Assistive Technology (R-CAMAT) during working hours was being flouted. Some lecturers insist that students write their quizzes at dawn and on weekends when the Centre is not open to give the needed technical supports. Aside this, those with physical disabilities had to walk long distances at dawn to write quizzes which put stress on them because of their disabilities. Accessing examination results was also a challenge for all students with disabilities due to Administrative and Technical challenges.

Again, it became evident that regardless of the university providing braille sheets for examinations and quizzes, the visually impaired still have to incur extra cost braille. It was revealed that on average they use four packs of braille sheets at Thirty-Five Ghana cedis (GH ¢35.00) per pack, for an average of five courses per semester.

The study also revealed that generally the University has assured quality for support services to enhance the academic experiences of students with disabilities. It emerged that both the visually and physically impaired have challenges accessing some of these services:

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For instance, getting easy access to the main library was a challenge to the visually impaired, due to open drainage and reckless parking in front of the University's main library. It was also evident that the physically impaired cannot access certain sections of the library, especially the upper floors due to the breakdown of the elevator. The significance of their difficulty is that it will be difficult for them to access books and other learning materials for effective studies.

It also emerged that the University's free shuttle bus transport policy for students with disabilities to board the shuttles for free, is practically not working. This is due to attitudes of shuttle drivers who decide to collect the fares from both the physically and visually impaired.

The findings also indicated that major areas of the physical infrastructure and facilities on campus have been quality assured to enhance the participation and inclusion impaired students. However, areas such as pavements and walkways, road infrastructure, reckless parking and inaccessible buildings still remain a challenge:

For instance, the findings revealed that apart from the 'goal ball', which is the only sporting activity for the visually impaired; there is no single sporting activity for students with disabilities. Even though some of the physically disabled indicated their interest in playing basketball, the courts were not accessible.

The study revealed that students with disabilities in general and the visually impaired especially, do not feel safe and secured when accessing the roads without assistance from colleagues. It was indicated that most drivers do not stop for them even at pedestrians crossing points.

The findings revealed that there are light poles on some of the pavements; whiles others have also developed portholes. Most of the pavements have high curb heights or without curb cuts, which make it difficult to ascend and descend off the pavements. The physically impaired on the other hand indicated that because some of the lecture theatres are on upper floors, it

The findings revealed that beside the restrictions, limitations and barriers students with disabilities face, their impaired condition itself has huge negative impact on their academic experiences in terms of mobility, time, and access to teaching and learning, support services and the physical infrastructure.

Conclusions

Assuring quality for the academic experiences of students with disabilities is the one of the most daunting task for every higher education institution.

In reference to the first objective of this study: quality assurance of teaching and learning It can be concluded that the attitudes of some the lecturers, colleague students as well as administrative staff seemed to be the major barrier to assuring quality of teaching and learning for the students with disabilities. The university's quality assurance policy indicates among other things that, quality teaching and learning outcomes will depend on how both academic and supportive staffs assure quality in the teaching and learning process (QAP, 2010). However, this provision is contrast to the responses from the participants. The implication is that the people, who play critical role in assuring quality, are oblivious of inclusive practices to be adopted to enhance the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

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In respect to the third objective: student support services, it can be inferred that largely; students receive various forms of support when accessing these services. However, some of these supports were given out of sympathy and benevolence, rather than as a matter of responsibility. It was obvious that there is low appreciation of quality culture, where people in the university are required to be awareness of and committed to educational quality (Vlãsceanu, Grünberg & Pârlea, 2004).

On the third objective; quality assurance of physical infrastructure and facilities, it was apparent that majority of the buildings are not fitted with ramps and elevators to ensure easy accessibility. Accessibility plays a very significant role in determining the level of inclusiveness disabled people in the university. In this respect, when the lecture theatres and other buildings become difficult for students with disabilities to access, it affects the quality of their academic experiences.

In sum, it can be pointed out that assurance quality for students with disabilities is becoming a daunting task in for the university, due to implementation bottlenecks. For instance, the "implementing units" to implement the policy at the faculties, schools, and the departmental levels are yet to be set up. Besides the operational manual to detail how the implementation can be executed is not yet ready. The bio-psycho-social theory indicates that disability is not just a personal issue, there are environmental factors that can disable the individual and therefore, it will be important for enabling environment to be created to minimise the barriers students with disabilities encounter in their academic experiences.

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Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

Recommendation for Teaching and Learning

The Directorate of Quality Assurance and Academic Planning should periodically organise orientation for lecturers on appropriate adaptations, accommodation and modifications needed to ensure that teaching and learning techniques are inclusive and enhance the learning experiences of disabled students.

The Directorate of Quality Assurance and Academic Planning should made lecturers aware about the examination policy for students with disabilities and strictly ensure that disabled students are allowed to write their quizzes at the Disability Resource Centre.

Students with physical disability will best be served if the University creates special locations in the lecture theatres for them to either enter with their wheel chairs or create a special chair for them to sit during lectures.

Recommendation for Students Supports Services

The Directorate of Quality Assurance and Academic Planning should liaise with the Management of the library to repair or replace the elevator at the main library, in order for the physically disabled to access the various section of the library without any barrier.

The Directorate of Quality Assurance and Academic Planning of the University to have deliberations with the Sport Section and the Directorate of Physical Development and Estate Management, to introduce more sporting

and recreational infrastructure and activities for students with disabilities to ensure inclusiveness.

The Directorate of Quality Assurance should liaise with the library Management and the Security Section to have security men in front of the Library to ensure orderly parking in front of the library in order to improve access and enhance the mobility of students.

The Directorate of Quality Assurance and Academic Planning in collaboration with the Directorate of Physical Development and Estate Management should periodically create disability awareness among all categories of drivers and other road users to enhance the mobility of disabled students on campus.

Recommendation for Physical Infrastructure and Facilities

The Directorate of Quality Assurance and Academic Planning should constantly be in touch with the Directorate of Physical Development to ensure that pavements and walkways are free of obstacles; by removing all the light poles on the pavements on campus to avert injuries and to enhance the mobility of the visually disabled.

The Directorate of Quality Assurance should also contact the appropriate Section to make sure that old pavements on campus are modified with curb cuts and low heights, whiles those under constructed should be design with curb heights and curb cuts that meet international standards, to allow for easy access on and off the pavement to enhance the mobility of disabled students on campus.

Directorate of Physical Development and Estate Management should ensure that all open drainage around the library should be covered to avoid exposing the visually disabled students from preventable injuries.

The Directorate of Quality Assurance and Academic Planning in collaboration with the Directorate of Physical Development and Estate Management should ensure that if possible old buildings on campus are fitted with ramps or elevators, whiles buildings under construction should be fitted with ramps or elevators to make them easily accessible to students with disabilities.

Suggestions for Further Studies

This study concentrated on using quality assurance practices to explore the extent to which quality is assured for students with disabilities. Further studies may be undertaken by exploring comparative experiences of students with disabilities in other Universities in Ghana, using the same methodology and quality assurance indicators.

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APPENDICES

APENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

COLLEGE OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND OUTREACH

INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND

ADMINISTRATION

Introduction: This interview guide intends to *explore the influence of quality assurance practices on the academic experiences of students with disabilities in University of Cape Coast*. The information provided is purely for academic purpose and would be treated with confidentiality.

Date of interview:

Place of interview.

Interviewer name:

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

1	Gender	5	Type of disability
2	Age	6	Residence
3	Course of study	7	Room location
4	Level	8	Nationality

SECTION B

This section looked at Quality Assurance Practices in University of Cape Coast are capable of influencing academic experiences of students with disabilities.

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Quality Assurance of Teaching & Learning

1. To what extent do you think the Lecture rooms are *accessible* or *user friendly* to you as a student with disability?

2. To what extent do you think the Lecture room sitting/seating arrangement is suitable/comfortable to you as a student with disability?

3. To what extent do you think the lecture room environment (Attitude, noise, physical and psychological environment) is conducive for teaching and learning as student with disability?

4. To what extent are you encouraged to join group discussions as student with disability?

5. To what extent do you get assistive learning devices (braille, recorder, audio books etc) for taking lectures notes?

6. To what extent do you find it easy or difficult taking/writing lecture notes as student with disability?

7. To what extent can you confirm that students with disabilities are taken into consideration in organizing class test, quizzes, end of semester examination? In terms of timing, location, materials.

8. To what extent do you think students with disability are receiving equal opportunity in terms of (access, attitudes, learning environment & materials) in teaching and learning?

9. To what extent do you think the distances between the location of your residence and the location of the lecture theatres are influencing your academic experiences?

10. To what extent do you think the nature of your disability is influencing your learning experiences in terms of (time, attitude of lecturers and colleagues)?

Quality Assurance of Student Support Services

Department

1. To what extent do you think the location of your Department is accessible or user friendly for enquiries?

2. To what extent do you consider yourself as part of your Department, thus having a sense of belonging to your Department?

3. To what extent do you think the Administrative staffs/supporting staffs are polite, kind and supportive towards student with disability?

4. To what extent can you confirm that the attitudes of Administrative staffs/supporting staffs are due to their understanding of the quality assurance concept or out of sympathy for students with disabilities?

Library

1. To what extent do you think the location of the main library is easily accessible or user friendly to you as student with disability?

2. To what extent do you think the inner/inside layout of the library is accessible or user friendly to you as student with disability?

3. To what extent do you find it easy/comfortable or difficult in accessing learning materials at the library without assistant (shelves or internet)?

4. To what extent do you generally get the needed learning materials from the main library at any visit?

5. To what extent do you get audio books/journals/ and other electronic resources (assistive device at the library for your studies?

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6. To what extent can you confirm that the main library has Assistive Technology for students with disabilities to access the needed information without any assistance?

7. How easy or difficult is it for you to get assistance at the library as student with disability?

8. To what extent do you think the library staff is polite, kind and supportive in assisting you as student with disability?

9. To what extent can you confirm that the attitudes of library assistants are due to their understanding of the quality assurance concept or out of sympathy for students with disabilities?

Transportation

1. To what extent is the transport system on campus contributing to your mobility and academic experiences on campus?

2. Do you feel comfortable sitting in the shuttles on campus as student with disabilities?

3. To what extent can you confirm that you received orientation from the Transport section on your movement campus when you came as first year student with disability?

4. To what extent can you confirm that the transport section occasionally interacts to identify challenges you face in commuting/ shuttling on campus as student with disability?

Sports & Recreation

1. To what extent can you confirm that you pay sports fees as student with disability?

2. To what extent did you receive orientation on sports and recreation as first year student with disability?

3. To what extent do you benefit from sports and recreational activities on campus as students with disabilities?

4. To what extent can you confirm that the Sports and recreational facilities on campus are accessible and user friendly as student with disability?

5. To what extent does the sport and recreation Unit of the University organizes sports and recreation activities for students with disabilities?

Development & Estates

2. To what extent does the Estate Section educate students with disabilities on the construction of new pavements, road signs, road crossings on campus?

3. To what extent does the Development & Estates Directorate occasionally interact to know the challenges you face in the use of walkways, pavements, road crossings as student with disability?

Disability Resource Centre

1. To what extent does the Disability Resource Centre provides you with assistive learning aids: such as braille, tape recorder, computer, transcribing devices etc for your studies?

2. To what extent do you think the assistive learning aids: braille, tape recorder, computer, transcribing devices are easily accessible for use?

3. To what extent can you explain how you acquire learning Aids or Assistive devices for your studies?

4. To what extent do you think Disability Resource Centre has adequate technical personnel to assist you in your studies?

Quality Assurance Directorate

1. To what extent can you confirm that the Quality Assurance Directorate occasionally interacts with students with disabilities to know their challenges?

2. To what extent are you aware of the work of the QA Directorate in the University's Management?

Security Section

1. To what extent can you confirm that the Security Section occasionally interact with you to know the security challenges you face on campus as student with disability?

2. To what extent do you feel *secured* and *safe* moving or walking around campus as student with disability?

Quality Assurance of Physical Infrastructure and Facilities:

Building Designs

1. To what extent do you consider the design and structure of Lecture theatres conducive for student with disability?

2. To what extent do you consider the nature or designs of buildings (Lecture rooms, library, Departments, Hospital and Hall of residence) in the University accessible or user friendly?

Pavements/Walkways

1. To what extent are you given information or orientation on the construction of new pavement/walkways?

2. To what extent do you consider the nature and design of pavements/walk ways comfortable, accessible or user friendly for your mobility as student with disability?

3. To what extent do you face obstructions when using the walkways, pavements as students with disability?

4. To what extent do you think the use of walkways/pavements on campus enhance your mobility without assistance?

5. To what extent do you consider the walkways/pavement to be enhancing your academic experiences as student with disability?

Pedestrians Crossing, Road Signs and markings

1. To what extent do you consider the nature of pedestrian crossings, road signs/markings and traffic lights, to be enhancing your movement as student with disability?

2. To what extent do you feel comfortable crossing the roads on campus without assistance?

5. To what extent do you consider the walkways/pavement to be enhancing your academic experiences as student with disability?

Pedestrians Crossing, Road Signs and markings

1. To what extent do you consider the nature of pedestrian crossings, road signs/markings and traffic lights, to be enhancing your movement as student with disability?

2. To what extent do you feel comfortable crossing the roads on campus without assistance?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE VARIOUS COLLEGES, DIRECTORATES, INSTITUTES, DEPARTMENTS AND SECTIONS IN UNIVERSITY

This interview guide intends to explore the various Colleges, Directorates, Institutes, Departments and Sections are doing to support the academic experiences of students with disabilities in the University of Cape Coast. The information provided is purely for academic purpose and would be treated with confidentiality.

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE SPORTS AND RECREATION UNIT

Date of interview:

Place of interview:

 Interviewer:

1. To what extent are you aware of the quality assurance practices in the university that enhance the academic life of students with disabilities?

2. What collaboration is your Section having with Units such as the: (a) Disability Resource Centre (b) Student Representative Council (c) Student Affairs; in supporting and addressing the challenges of students with disabilities.

3. To what extent do you consider students with disabilities in planning, design and construction of sporting and recreational facilities on campus?

4. What specific recreational or sporting activity is your section currently engaging the students with disabilities in?

5. What suggestions/recommendations could you give to enhance the academic experiences of students with disabilities?

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APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE DIRECTORATE QUALITY

ASSURANCE

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Date of interview:

Place of interview:

Interviewer:

1. As a Directorate with over sight responsibility for monitoring and evaluating all QA operations at the University, to what extent do you ensure that the Departments, Sections and Units pay special attention to students with disabilities?

2. Given that the University's Quality Assurance Policy Document (2010, p.18-19) emphasis *Integration, inclusiveness* and *Equal opportunities*, do you think students with disabilities require special treatment in their academic experiences?

3. The Quality Assurance Policy Document (2010, p.20-21) admittedly stressed that *positive attitude* of management, academic and supporting staff, is key to achieving the policy objectives. What Education and Training have you being giving to both the Academic and Supporting Staff on quality assurance and on their treatment of students with disabilities?

4. Literature, for example: (Vlãsceanu et al 2004) supports the fact that the Quality Assurance Concept strives best on *quality culture*. How is the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Academic Planning, helping to promote quality culture among the Academic and Supporting Staff of the University of Cape Coast?

5. What challenges do you think students with disabilities face in this university from the view point of quality assurance?

6. What major challenges do you face in the quality assurance practice in the University with respect to students with disability?

7. What suggestions/recommendations could you give to enhance the academic experiences of students with disabilities?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE TRANSPORT SECTION

Date of interview:

Place of interview:

Interviewer:

1. To what extent are you aware of the quality assurance practices in the university that enhance the academic life of students with disabilities?

2. Have you sighted and read the University's 2010 quality assurance policy?

3. What is your basic responsibility as Transport Section to the students?

4. What collaboration is your Section having with Units such as the: (a) Disability Resource Centre (b) Student Representative Council (c) Student Affairs; in *supporting* and *addressing* the challenges of students with disabilities.

5. Given the peculiar circumstances of students with disabilities, do you organize orientation programmes for them on their movement on campus in terms of (transportation, use of pavements, road crossings?

6. What specific support is your section currently giving to students with disabilities?

7. What suggestions/recommendations could you give to enhance the academic experiences of   students with disabilities?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE DIRECTORATE OF PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT & ESTATE MANAGEMENT

Date of interview:

Place of interview:

Interviewer:

1. To what extent are you aware of the quality assurance concept/practices in the University and what the concept meant for the University's academic system or process?

2. Have you *sighted* and r*ead* the University of Cape Coast (2010) quality assurance policy?

3. What collaboration is your section having with units such as: (a) Disability Resource Centre (b) Transport section (c) Quality Assurance (d) Student Representative Council (e) Student Affairs; in *supporting* and *addressing* the challenges of students with disabilities.

4. What is your responsibility as Development Directorates?

5. Given the peculiar circumstances of students with disabilities, do you organize special orientation programmes for them in terms of use of buildings and other infrastructure on campus (eg pavements, lecture rooms, hall, auditorium etc)?

6. What suggestions/recommendations could you give to enhance the academic experiences of   students with disabilities?

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE RESOURCE CENTRE FOR

ALTERNATIVE MEDIA AND ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (R-

CAMAT)

Date of interview:

Place of interview:

Interviewer:

1. To what extent are you aware of the quality assurance practices in the university that enhance the learning experiences of students with disabilities?

2. Have you sighted and read the University of Cape Coast 2010 quality assurance policy?

3. What collaborating is the Centre having with Units such as the: (a) Quality Assurance Directorate (b) Student Representative Council (c) Student Affairs; in *supporting* and *addressing* the challenges of students with disabilities.

4. What specific supports are you currently giving to students with disabilities?

5. What suggestions/recommendations could you give to enhance the academic experiences of students with disabilities?

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND OUTREACH
INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

Tel. No.: 03320-91478
Tel. No. : 03321-30571
Fax No. : 03321-30588
E-mail   : iepa@ucc.edu.gh

University Post Office
Cape Coast
Ghana

Our Ref: IEPA/70/Vol.11/24

13th September, 2018

The Chairperson
Institutional Review Board
UCC

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE
EBENEZER OTU WALKER (ED/AHP/15/0013)

We write to introduce to you **Mr. Ebenezer Otu Walker** an M.Phil. second year student of the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA) of the University of Cape Coast. His registration number is **ED/AHP/15/0013.**

We wish to inform you that the Institute has approved **Mr. Walker's** research proposal.

We would, therefore, be grateful if ethical clearance could be granted him to collect his data. His research topic is: **"Influences of Quality Assurance Practices on The Academic Experiences of Student With Disabilities: A Case of University of Cape Coast"** as a requirement for M.Phil. Degree Programme.

Kindly find attached a copy of his proposal for your perusal.

Counting on your usual support.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

DR. (BRO.) MICHAEL AMAKYI
DIRECTOR

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UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

Tel. No. : 042-33824
Fax No. : 042-30588
E-mail : ucciepa@yahoo.co.uk

University Post Office
Cape Coast
Ghana

Our Ref.

15th October 2018.

The Chairperson,
Institutional Review Board,
University of Cape Coast,
Cape Coast

Dear Sir

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE: EBENEZER OTU WALKER STUDENT REGISTRATION NUMBER -ED/AHP/15/0013

I write to confirm that **Ebenezer Otu Walker**, is one of the MPhil Students I am supervising at the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA), University of Cape Coast. He will require ethical clearance to proceed with his data collection for his thesis titled: *"Influence of quality assurance practices on the academic experiences of students with disability"*.

I would therefore be most grateful if his thesis proposal could be reviewed to enable him carry out the research.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully

Francis Ansah (PhD)
Research Fellow and Academic Counsellor for Mphil Students
Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA)
College of Education Studies
University of Cape Coast
+233506872349
francis.ansah@ucc.edu.gh