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## Message from the Editor-in-Chief

Hello from TOJQIH

TOJQIH welcomes you.

We are very pleased to publish volume 6 issue 2 in 2019. As an editor-in-chief of The Online Journal of Quality in Higher Education (TOJQIH), this issue is the success of the reviewers, editorial board and the researchers. In this respect, I would like to thank to all reviewers, researchers and the editorial road.

This issue covers different research scopes, approaches which subjects about quality in higher education by valuable researchers. I and The Online Journal of Quality in Higher Education (TOJQIH) editorial team will be pleased to share various researches with this issue as it is the miracle of our journal. All authors can submit their manuscripts to [tojqih@gmail.com](mailto:tojqih@gmail.com) for the next issues.

TOJQIH will organize ICQH-2019 International Conference on Quality in Higher Education (ICQH) ([www.icqh.net](http://www.icqh.net)) in December, 2019 in Turkey. This conference is now a well-known quality in higher education event. It promotes the development and dissemination of theoretical knowledge, conceptual research, and professional knowledge through conference activities. Its focus is to create and disseminate knowledge about quality in higher education. ICQH-2018 conference book has been published at <http://www.icqh.net/publications.php>

Call for Papers

TOJQIH invites you article contributions. Submitted articles should be about all aspects of quality in higher education. The articles should be original, unpublished, and not in consideration for publication elsewhere at the time of submission to TOJQIH. Manuscripts must be submitted in English.

TOJQIH is guided by it's editors, guest editors and advisory boards. If you are interested in contributing to TOJQIH as an author, guest editor or reviewer, please send your cv to [tojqih@gmail.com](mailto:tojqih@gmail.com).

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# DETERMINING EXIT CRITERIA FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY IN PREPARATORY PROGRAMS AT TURKISH UNIVERSITIES

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## ABSTRACT

This study intended to identify the exit criteria in English Preparatory Programs (EPPs) at universities by hearing stakeholders in a three-phase Delphi study. The participants were teachers and students from the EPPs and faculties of 11 universities in Turkey. In the open-ended Delphi, 472 compositions from four universities describing the exit level skills were analysed and 12 participants were interviewed. In the face-to-face Delphi, 23 panellists from 10 universities attended a two-day brainstorming and focus-group meeting. Using the findings of these two phases, a 213-item Likert-type questionnaire was designed to rate the necessity of each skill (online Delphi) with participants from 11 universities. In the first rating, the respondents ( $n=40$ ) evaluated where each skill should be taught along with their necessity. In the second rating, the respondents ( $n=36$ ) focused on skills only in EPPs. The results suggest that the stakeholders have a preference towards teaching academic skills rather than general English.

**Keywords:** English Preparatory Programs, Language Proficiency, English as a Foreign Language

## INTRODUCTION

The wide acceptance of English as a *lingua franca* in the globalized world has affected the instruction at universities. In order to cope with the demands of professional, scientific and social life in international contexts, many universities in Turkey offer content courses delivered through the medium of English ranging from 30% - 100% of their programs. To be able to provide instruction in English, universities have to establish English Preparatory Programs (EPPs) as a legal requirement. These programs can be obligatory or elective intensive language courses depending on the faculties studied, and they aim to teach the language to students before they start their studies in their departments so that they can cope with the courses delivered in English, follow the developments in their fields and communicate in international environments. However, there are inconsistencies and imbalances among the EPPs of universities in terms of their exit level proficiency requirements. The lack of a previously established common framework or minimum set of standards as well as different approaches towards the targeted levels have resulted in this current state of inequality. Despite the problems resulting from this situation, there was lack of adequate research in this field. Hence, this research study was designed to investigate some common basic exit criteria among universities which EPPs could further build upon.

EPPs can be described as intensive pre-faculty courses that students normally attend for one academic year, or two years if they become unsuccessful in the exit examinations. Even though their aim is stated as preparing students for their studies at faculties and the global world, there was lack of specific guidance from the Council of Higher Education (CHE) for a long time in terms of the target level, which led to various interpretations of exit level proficiency. There was only a single statement in the 'Regulations on Foreign Language Teaching in the Institutions of Higher Education and on the Basis of the Implementation of Education and Training in a Foreign Language' (CHE, 2008) which stated that the purpose of teaching a foreign language is teaching students the fundamental rules of the target language, developing their vocabulary, enabling them to understand what they read and listen to and to express themselves in writing and speaking. This statement was too vague to guide the EPPs in making decisions in terms of their programs and language levels. In 2009, after the declaration of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Turkey (NQF-HETR) by the Council of Higher Education, the language level needed was stated to minimum B1 Level for BA students according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (CHE, 2009). However, the scope of this statement was still the whole tertiary studies including faculties, and it did not specifically address EPPs. To date, the problem of the lack of a clear description of the role of EPPs still persists. In addition, Turkey still ranks among the most unsuccessful countries in teaching English, and each year the rank is on the decline. According to Education First index (2017), Turkey ranks 62th among 80 countries and 26th among 27 European countries. Overall, there are serious language planning problems which begin in primary

school education (e.g. Haznedar, 2004) and continue in higher education.

Among the very few recent investigations by local authorities, the research study ‘The English Education in Higher Education Institutions in Turkey – A Situation Analysis’ in 2015 by the British Council with the collaboration of TEPAV (Ministry of National Education and Turkish Economic Policies Research Foundation) maintained that the exit level for EPP students should be B2+ for linguistically challenging departments and B1+ for other departments. However, adopting CEFR in local contexts in Turkey is not without problems. Firstly, besides ignoring national contexts, it was based on mainly social/survival skills for EU citizens rather than academic skills. In addition, some skills are not empirically confirmed and tests are not designed to assess them (Alderson, 2006). Moreover, some skill descriptors are too global to guide program design, teaching and assessment as they are open to different interpretations.

The problems outlined above contributed to a number of different practices in the EPPs across universities in Turkey. For instance, while some universities require demanding target levels and exit exams and they test all four skills (i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking), others may simply administer a single multiple choice exit exam at the end of the EPP. This clearly has consequences ranging from student complaints to lack of comparability among EPPs as some universities do not acknowledge the EPPs of others and require the transferring students to re-study in their own EPPs. The need to identify the exit criteria in a local context was one of the main motivations to undertake this particular research study. It was aimed that the findings could provide a basis towards a framework or a minimum set of common skills required in EPPs which could be later exploited by individual EPPs. With these basic aims, this study sought answers to the research questions “What a) reading, b) writing, c) listening, d) speaking skills and competencies are needed for the exit criteria at English Preparatory Programmes in universities in Turkey?”

## METHOD

The study was implemented using a mixed-method research design, which is often used to understand complex subjects by investigating them from multiple perspectives and dimensions (Creswell, 2005; Opoku and Ahmed, 2013). In this research, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed. Two series of qualitative research stages were used whose results contributed to construct a pool of items regarding the exit level skills at EPPs. Then, a questionnaire was designed using these items and it was administered two times, which was the quantitative stage of the research.

Specifically, the study was conducted using the Delphi method. It is based on gathering and reporting group opinion and is used in making decisions, especially when there is lack or scarcity of previous research. Originated in the 1950s (Dalkey and Helmer, 1963), today it has gained other varieties after the classical Delphi in which a panel of experts provide responses and the group response is responded to by controlled feedback until consensus on a subject is determined through statistical analyses (Hanafin, 2004). In this paper, hybrid Delphi approach was adopted in order to gather multiple perspectives about the subject under focus.

The Delphi method was applied in three main phases apart from the pilot study. The participants were the immediate stakeholders of EPPs, namely teachers and students from EPPs and faculties at a total of 11 universities in the whole study (Table 1). The first phase was an open-ended Delphi stage which consisted of a composition study with four state universities. A total of 2674 compositions were collected and approximately 17% of these were analysed due to time limitations using random and stratified sampling. 12 participants were interviewed to triangulate the data.

Table 1. Participating universities

Type of University	University	City	Phases Participated
State universities	Anadolu University	Eskişehir	1,2,3
	Eskişehir Osmangazi University	Eskişehir	1,2,3
	İstanbul Teknik University	İstanbul	2,3
	Ortadoğu Teknik University	Ankara	1,2,3
	Hacettepe University	Ankara	1,2,3
	Dokuz Eylül University	İzmir	2,3
	Selçuk University	Konya	2,3
	Süleyman Demirel University	Isparta	2,3
Foundation universities	Maltepe University	İstanbul	2,3
	Yeditepe University	İstanbul	2,3
	Bahçeşehir University	Istanbul	3

In the second phase of the study – the face-to-face Delphi implementation, 23 participants, i.e. panellists from 10 universities, attended a two-day meeting at Anadolu University. The first meeting sections were held in the form of brainstorming sessions for each skill. The panellists suggested the exit level skills anonymously through idea cards as described in Selvi (2003). This was followed by focus group discussions when the panellists sat in groups revising and editing the lists of skills obtained during brainstorming.

The results of these first stages were turned into a pool of items which was used to generate a questionnaire for the third phase, which was a classical Delphi application delivered online. At this stage, a questionnaire consisting of 213 items covering all four skill areas was designed obtaining expert opinion. The questionnaire was administered to a group of 40 respondents from 11 universities in the first round. They rated the items in terms of their necessity and commented on where each skill should be taught (i.e. in the EPP, in the faculty, or left to the students' own responsibility). Although in classical Delphi after the results are analysed and evaluated statistically, the respondents are normally informed about the average score of each item, and the items are re-rated giving the respondents an opportunity to change their responses in the subsequent rounds. However, since the concern was only the EPPs in this study, and the mean scores for each item was already above the acceptable scores in literature, the second rating was realized independent of this first round. In the second rating round, the same 213 were assessed whether they are necessary to be taught only in the EPPs with 36 respondents. Each skill was rated in the form of 5-point Likert-type scales. In order to reach a higher degree of consensus, the mean value was set as  $X=4$  even though in literature  $X=3.5$  and above can be sufficient, and the acceptable limit of standard deviation was chosen as maximum  $SD=0.84$ .

The compositions were analysed through content analysis (initial inter-coder reliability was 66% which increased to 70% after negotiation). The semi-structured interviews also underwent content analysis. The face-to-face Delphi findings were evaluated through expert opinion. The questionnaires were analysed statistically using SPSS 11. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for both questionnaires was .993.

## FINDINGS

In this section, the findings of the second round questionnaire of Phase Three will be summarized due to the length of the results. In addition, the findings of round two Phase Three Delphi represent the suggested exit criteria for EPPs, and these are achieved through statistical consensus. In the 213-item questionnaire, the dispersion of the skills that are evaluated is presented in Table 2.

Some skills were clearly identifiable as Academic English skills. There were 36 of these among the four skills. The remaining 177 skills of 213 could be evaluated both as academic and general English skills. Therefore, the participants were asked to rate them in terms of both dimensions. The results support this distinction since many skills that were found necessary as academic skills were eliminated when they viewed as general English skills.

Table 2. The number of questionnaire items

	Academic Skills	Academic and General Skills	Total
Reading	5	46	51
Writing	11	55	66
Listening	8	40	48
Speaking	12	36	48
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>213</b>

Of the 36 academic skills, 16 were accepted as necessary passing the mean value of 4 and above (max.  $SD=0.84$ ). Among the 177 skills that were rated in two perspectives, 127 of them were regarded as necessary as academic skills, while only 60, that is nearly a half of the same skills were considered to be necessary as general English skills.

When the accepted purely academic 16 skills were added to the passing 127 skills that can also be used in academic environments, the total number of agreed-upon Academic English skills became 143. On the other hand, 60 skills were also acceptable as general English skills. The results indicate a dominant preference towards teaching Academic English in EPPs.

In this paper, some sample skills on which the four participant groups reached consensus are presented. The numbers before skills refer to their order within the 213-item questionnaire. In Table 3, some sample academic skills that passed the criteria are presented. These skills focus mainly on being able to follow courses in faculties such as reading books, articles, doing research, taking notes and being able to write in examinations, listening to lectures, talks and discussions, being able to summarize what is listened to, participating in class discussions, asking questions and being able to cover a subject in classes such as making a presentation or giving a talk about an assignment.

Table 3. Sample academic skills accepted as exit criteria

<b>Skill Areas</b>			
<b>Academic Reading</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>SD</b>	
1. Being able to read the course books, articles and course materials of the department to be able to follow courses in faculty	4.2778	.7786	
2. Having the reading ability enough to do research	4.3056	.70991	
3. Being able to read and understand examination questions and assignments	4.7222	.45426	
19. Being able to understand summaries	4.3056	.66845	
<b>Academic Writing</b>			
53. Being able to take notes of the information presented in the classes	4.4444	.50395	
55. Being able to provide written answers to examinations in the faculty	4.6111	.54917	
60. Being able to use common academic vocabulary during writing	4.1389	.76168	
61. Being able to apply essay structures in writing	4.1667	.60945	
<b>Academic Listening</b>			
118. Being able to follow courses (lectures, etc.) in the faculty by listening	4.5000	.69693	
119. Being able to follow academic talks and discussions	4.1111	.78478	
120. Being able to take notes effectively while listening to lectures in faculty	4.4167	.64918	
123. Being able to summarize what is listened to in undergraduate education	4.0556	.79082	
<b>Academic Speaking</b>			
166. Being able to ask questions in classes	4.5556	.60684	
167. Being able to participate in class discussions	4.3611	.72320	
168. Being able to cover a subject in class	4.2222	.63746	

Some sample skills that were rated both academically and in terms of general English are presented in Table 4. The skills with an asterisk are the ones that are eliminated due to their mean value or standard deviation.

Table 4. Sample academic and general reading skills

	<b>Academic</b>		<b>General</b>	
	<b>X</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>SD</b>
15. Being able to make use of print and visual resources	4.2778	.56625	4.0000	.75593
17. Being able to read English publications	4.2222	.68080	3.8611*	.79831
27. Being able to make sentence analysis in long sentences	4.3889	.54917	3.9722*	.65405
41. Being able to do critical reading (being able to make analysis, synthesis, evaluation, making interpretations, reacting, using information in other contexts)	4.2222	.63746	3.7222*	.74108
43. Being able to use reading strategies effectively	4.2222	.68080	3.9167*	.73193

To illustrate, in Table 4 for reading skills, questionnaire item 15 (*Being able to make use of print and visual resources*) passed the elimination criteria both as an academic and as a general skill. On the other hand, items 17, 27, 41 and 43 exemplify the skills that were viewed as necessary to be taught in EPPs as academic skills, but not as general English skills. This indicates that skills such as being able read publications, analysing long sentences, doing critical reading and using reading strategies are preferred to be taught within academic contexts rather than general ones.

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings strongly support a preference for Academic English skills. If it is possible to introduce and integrate some faculty related content or materials during the EPP studies, students might feel more interested and motivated. This finding is supported by Göktürk (1982) who maintained that foreign language instruction should be provided in coordination with faculties in order to give students more realistic goals in learning the language. The idea that EPPs should shift towards Academic English is also suggested by the British Council and TEPAV report (2015). It can be concluded that the EPPs might need to reconsider their programs.

Even though it was claimed that the CEFR descriptors were at times too broad and vague, some skill items in this paper were also too general and need further refining. For instance, the skill in the item '127. *Being able to follow conversations*' in the questionnaire has such a large scope that it involves a number of subskills ranging from being able to discriminate sound and intonation patterns to understanding ambiguous vocabulary including sarcasm. However, analysing each subskill as in this example requires more in-depth research and is impractical to include in a single questionnaire or study. Therefore, further research is needed to explore the details of what a skill involves.

In order to guide EPPs, CEFR level B2 seems to be a good starting point, but it needs further investigation. Future studies might also compare CEFR B1 and B2 level descriptors to the findings of this study to investigate whether adopting CEFR is efficient or not. It is necessary to explore whether there might be a need to have a nationally tailored set of standards for Turkey. This paper might be one of the initial studies towards building a set of minimum standards in this field. With further research, it might be possible to compare findings and guide national policies to develop the quality in EPPs in Higher Education in Turkey.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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## ENHANCING STUDENT LEARNING THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH EXPERIMENT WITH THE SELECTED GROUP OF BUSINESS STUDENTS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

Both the intrinsic and extrinsic values of the teaching are long established as important metrics to measure the effectiveness of teaching practices in higher education across the globe. In this context, the enhancement of pedagogical practice through reflection and research into practice has remained the core to develop tutor's capability to effectively teach and facilitate learning in present day higher education. Business management higher education is no exception. Here also, the significance of action research as a method of revelation, instruction and improvement and as the realization of technical skills, application of the concepts and facilitation of learning, is hard to over-emphasise. In the present action research project, unit 4.5 on marketing of the ATHE Business level 4 curriculum has been chosen for intervention and experimentation. The unit has been introduced for the first time and is the first unit of marketing, that must be taught to the students. As the students did not have any prior knowledge and understanding on the subject, it was indeed challenging for the tutor to make them understand, learn and to develop a clear concept on the subject by ensuring better learning experience. A total number of sixteen students enrolled with the course was chosen for the entire project. During the initial two sessions, the tutor used traditional lecture method, but that failed to generate much impact on the student and this was visible in the class reactions and responses. The same could have been supported through the MCQ test result and the standard feedback collected through questionnaire. As, case study linked problem based teaching is widely considered as an effective method for better business student learning experience across the globe and the literature also supports the same, the same was attempted in the class. Four different cases on well known brands were chosen and mapped with the indicative contents and learning outcomes and were administered in the class for class discussion and analysis. Thus the process based curriculum delivery approach or model was adopted. The tutor also subsequently used MCQ tests designed according to the specific indicative contents covered in the respective cases. Standard student feedback questionnaire was also used along with. Since, the intervention of case study linked problem based learning and teaching was adopted, the average and mode score of the MCQ tests were found to be improved and during the seventh, ninth and twelfth weeks such improvement was quite significant. The feedback collected through the standard questionnaire also shown significant improvement in student learning experience during the period. From the results of this experiment, the tutor realised to adopt this new technique of incorporating case study linked problem based teaching and learning as the effective curriculum for teaching intervention. The tutor also planned to recommend to the awarding body, i.e. the ATHE, to identify the specific cases to be taught in line with specific indicative contents and learning outcomes and to make such practice mandatory in future. A continuous evaluation through feedback collection and through tests (including MCQ tests) have also been recommended.

**Keywords:** *Student learning, Problem based teaching, Action Research experiment*

## Introduction

Both the intrinsic and extrinsic values of the teaching are long established as important metrics to measure the effectiveness of teaching practices in higher education across the globe (Atkinson and Bolt, 2010). In this context, the enhancement of pedagogical practice through reflection and research into practice has remained the core to develop tutor's capability to effectively teach and facilitate learning in present day higher education. Business management higher education is no exception. Here also, the significance of action research as a method of revelation, instruction and improvement and as the realization of technical skills, application of the concepts and facilitation of learning, is hard to over-emphasise (Willcoxon, 1994).

Awards for Training and Higher Education (ATHE) is an Ofqual regulated awarding organisation providing QCF qualifications to over 200 centres around the world (ATHE, 2018). One of the most popular streams, on which ATHE offers properly accredited qualifications, is business management. In the present research project, ATHE level 4 business programme has been chosen and a specific unit, i.e. unit 4.5 on marketing mix has remained the area of action research intervention. Here, action research has been adopted mainly with three key broader objectives such as curriculum enhancement, pedagogical improvement, more effective student learning experience through enhanced student engagement. Such essentialities were realized during the initial sessions as the learners were found the specific unit curriculum more theoretical and less engaging. Such experiences were also captured by the tutor through specific techniques (discussed in chapter 4) as the unit was chosen correctly for its first ever introduction as a separate module. In the process, the specific problem based teaching approach has been adopted as it does not focus on problem solving with a defined solution, but it allows for the development of other desirable skills and attributes (Azer, 2011). As per Shannon and Hunt (2009), such problem-based teaching helps the learners to understand the concepts and lessons better and they become more capable to relate the theories and concepts with practical applications, which might not be otherwise that much effective.

## Research objectives

According to Arnold and Norton (2017), the starting point of action research should focus on either or all of the four areas of concern such as concern for students, concern for staff development, concern for institutional priorities and pursuit for intellectual pursuits. In the present case, the focus has remained for concern for students and to be more precise, enhancing their learning experience and making them competent to apply the learned concepts in real life situations. The present action research project has been carried out with the following objectives:

- i) To experiment the learning improvement by adopting the problem-based teaching with the target students' group.
- ii) To evaluate the improvement in learning of the targeted students over the period since adoption of the problem-based teaching methods.
- iii) To include the practice of problem-based teaching in future curriculum, if found appropriate and effective.

## Review of literature

A literature review is a survey of scholarly articles, books and researches done by others, relevant to the research area. By providing a literature review the researches gives the reader and overview of what knowledge and ideas have been established (Galvan, 2015). In this literature review, attempt has been made to review and discuss the concept of curriculum and curriculum models, Concept of action research, action research cycle, action research methodology, concept and practices of problem based teaching in general and in business related subjects etc.

### *Concept of Curriculum and curriculum models:*

Curriculum is often considered as one of the most common concerns in the field of education. However, before understanding the appropriate curricula for the learners, what is implied through the term 'curriculum' seems to be more important. Because, such question remains inconclusive to a great extent. Variety of definitions have been given to the term 'curriculum' and such definitions owe to divided perceptions of the stakeholders such as students, educators, researchers, administrators, evaluators etc. According to Pratt (1994), Barrow and Milburn (1990), the word 'curriculum' has derived from the Latin verb '*currere*' 'to run'. The same studies have revealed that, Cicero made an extension of this term by adding a metaphor termed '*currucula mentis*', that

means; the educational course of mind'. However, until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the term was not widely used in the field of education. Some of the earlier prominent scholars such as Barrow and Milburn, 1990; Beauchamp, 1997; Goodson, 1994; Longstreet and Shane, 1993; Marsh, 1997; Wood and Davis, 1978 have defined the term from different perspectives, those have guided the further research on the matter till recent times. From the studies and observations made, it can be found the way the term 'curriculum' has been expanded from narrow to broad meaning. Finally, the definition of 'curriculum' given by Kerr and quoted in Kelly (1983, 1999) can be used as the standard and widely accepted. According to the same, 'curriculum' is, 'All the learning which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried on in groups or individually, inside or outside the school (Kelly, 1983, 1999). More recent prominent definitions of the curriculum can be found from Warren (2003) and Gwele (2005). According to Tanner (1980), curriculum has been defined as the planned and guided learning experiences and intended outcomes, those are formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experiences. Warren has defined the concept of curriculum as the 'nexus of teaching, learning, knowledge and context', whereas Gwele has explained the same as the 'planned learning experiences that the educational institutions intend to provide for their learners'. All these three definitions have been found to be somehow similar as the aspects of planned learning, under the influence of guided experience for intended outcomes in the specific contexts etc. are largely mentioned.

Many definitions, concepts, approaches and models on the curriculum theories and models have been found in the knowledge domain. According to Beauchamp (1977), Wood and Davis (1978), 'curriculum' mostly indicates the 'subject/ content' taught to Tanner (1980), the learners; whereas subsequent studies and others have described the concept as 'curriculum as plans' (Tom, 1984; Pratt, 1994), 'curriculum as documents' (Barrow and Milburn, 1999; Brady, 1995), 'curriculum as experience' (Longstreet and Shane, 1993; Goodson, 1994; Marsh, 1997; Barrow and Milburn, 1999; Hyles et. al., 2004; Chen, 2007; Su, 2012; Roger, 2016) etc. Furthermore, the study by Morrison and Ridley (1989), can also be referred to understand the evolution of the concept of 'curriculum' over the period in a more specific manner. According to them, the ideologically, the concentration on the 'curriculum' research has been shifted from 'progressive-student centered approach' to contemporarily more popular and practiced 'democratic and socialist approach', through the subsequent stages such as 'traditional, academic and conservative approach', 'liberal humanistic approach' and instrumentalist approach'. The definition of 'curriculum' as propagated by Kerr and mentioned by Kelly (1983, 1999) as mentioned earlier has however, classified the approaches of curriculum theories in four major categories. These are *curriculum as a body of knowledge to be transmitted*, *curriculum as the product as an attempt to achieve certain ends in students*, *Curriculum as process* and *Curriculum as praxis*.

*Curriculum as a syllabus to be transmitted* can be explained as equating a curriculum with a syllabus. Scholars like Curzon (1985), Kelly (1983), Blenkin et al (1992) have made several observations on such approach. According to Curzon (1985), under this approach, a syllabus tend to follow the traditional textbook approach of an 'order of contents'. Whereas, Blenkin et. al. (1992), have opined that education is transmitted or 'delivered' to students by the most effective methods, that is following the syllabi, under this approach. Kelly (1983), is however, found to be more critical of such approach as according to him, the approach mainly focuses on transmitting knowledge, rather than focusing on quality of learning content. *Curriculum as the product as an attempt to achieve certain ends in students* has been developed and promoted by two American scholars Franklin Bobbitt (1918; 1928) and Ralph W. Tyler (1949). According to this approach, curriculum is considered as the product as an attempt to achieve certain end results, mainly the behavioural objectives. According to the approach of *Curriculum as a process*, attempt is made to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice (Stenhouse, 1975). Under *Curriculum as praxis* approach, curriculum itself develops through the dynamic interaction of action and reflection. *Spiral* and *hidden* models have also been subsequently discussed widely. Bruner (1971) has defined 'Spiral model' as developing a curriculum comprising of the topics those are suitable for the specific level of intellectual development. Therefore, according to him, spiral curriculum model should increase the difficulty of the topics of the curriculum over the period as the learners' ability to understand deepen. Coined by Jackson in 1968, 'hidden curriculum' model has been further explained by Charalambous and Holborn (1991) and later by Richard Nickham (2007) as the curriculum consists of any such things, students learn through experience by attending schools, rather than stated educational objectives.

#### *Concept and theories of action research:*

Stringer (2008) has defined action research (AR) as the either the research initiated for solving an immediate problem or reflecting the process of progressive problem solving, those can be led by individuals, working with others in teams or as part of a "community of practice" for improving the way of addressing the issues and solving such problems. Described by Kurt Lewin (1946) and subsequently revised and adapted many times over



in different contexts. The major subsequent action research theories have been propagated by Chris Argyris (1957), Heron *et. al.* (1971), Paulo Freire (1972) and William Barry (2012). (Refer table 1).

Table 1: Major action research theories

Kurt-Lewin	'Action Research' (1946)	Action research has been explained as a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action and research leading to specific social initiative that uses a spiral of steps and each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action.
Chris Argyris	'Action Science' (1957)	Action science has been explained as the complicated but cyclical process, where human beings design their actions to achieve intended consequences under a set of environment variables, those are uncontrollable and ever changing. Under such variables, actions are designed, where loops of learning can differ from each other.
John Heron, Peter Reason and Demi Brown	'Cooperative Enquiry' (1971)	The major concept of the 'Cooperative enquiry' is to research for desired actions 'with' the people rather than 'on' the people." It emphasizes the full involvement in research decisions of all active participants as co-researchers.
Paulo Freire	Participatory Action Research (2013)	PAR builds on the critical pedagogy as a response to the traditional formal models of education where the "teacher" stands at the front and "imparts" information to the "students" who are passive recipients.
William Barry	Living educational theory approach to action research (2012)	This theory is based on the critical and transformational approach of action research, where attempts are made to overcome the barriers and norms to improve the situation.

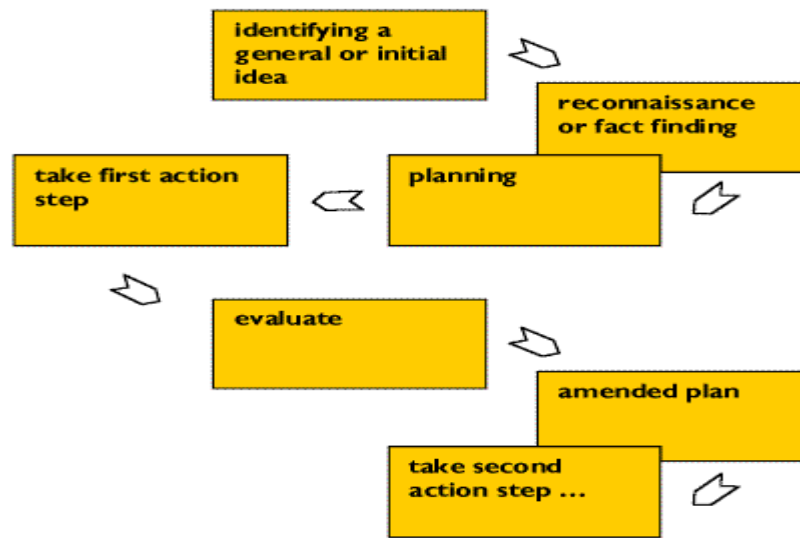
*Action Research Cycle:*

Described by Kurt Lewin (1946) and subsequently revised and adapted many times over in different contexts, action-research can be characterised as a cyclical process (Figure 1) of informed and intentional actions designed to address an identified issue or opportunity. Following steps have been identified in the cycle (Table 2).

Table 2: Steps of action research cycle

Step 1	Identifying a general or initial idea	Initial ideas are generated or received based on initial experience through personal observation, results, unwanted developments initial
Step 2	Reconnaissance or fact finding	Fact findings are done through empirical investigations, fact finding interventions such as surveys, interviews, observations etc.
Step 3	Planning	Based on the findings from the fact finding initiatives, plans are made for new interventions or first time interventions. Planning also includes operational planning.
Step 4	Taking first action step	First round of or stage of interventions towards betterment or desired improvements or outcomes are taken.
Step 5	Evaluate	Evaluation of the results are completed to compare the actual outcomes with desired outcomes.
Step 6	Amend plan	Plans can be amended based on requirements
Step 7	Take second action step	Based on amended plans, second round of or stage of interventions are initiated.

Diagram 1: Action Research Cycle



Developed by Kurt-Lewin, 1946

*Concept of Problem based teaching and learning:*

Problem based teaching and learning has become the Centre of great interest in higher education. Any attempt to find a singular definition for the problem based teaching and learning can be an elusive task (Davis and Harden, 1999). Harden and Davis (1998) have identified such differences from rigid definitions to anything that includes problem solving. Bereiter and Scardamalia (2003) have identified two main types of definitions. According to them, one type of definitions are based on distinctive, well documented instructional approaches that give problems central places in learning activity. Whereas, another types of definitions, they have found, are based on problem centered and task based learning and teaching. However, Myers and Distlehorst (2005) have given a more comprehensive definition of problem based learning. According to the scholars, the basic outline of the problem based learning process is encountering the problem first, followed by problem solving with clinical skills and finally the learning needs are identified. The definition has further added that based on the learning needs, learners are encouraged to apply their gained knowledge to the problem solving in real life. Grant (1996) and Hooper (2010) have explained the concept of problem based teaching and learning as developing the 'know-how' to solve real time problems or to take decisions. Definition by Wood (2003, 2009) has however, defined the concept of problem based teaching and learning as a process that uses identified issues within a scenario to increase knowledge and understanding.

*Practices of problem based teaching and learning in business education:*

Though problem based learning (PBL) has been pioneered by Barrows and Tamblyn at the medical school program at McMaster University in Hamilton in the 1960s, which later became quite popular practice in medical education over the years; have started getting acceptance in the field of management education too. Traditional approaches to business education have been increasingly criticised for having having little relationship with what is important for succeeding in business and management. Getting inspiration from the problem based teaching and student learning from the Harvard Law School, Harvard Business School pioneered the same as the part of their curriculum since 1970s. Gradually, the trend became popular across the globe in the field of business of management education. However, there have been different observations regarding effectiveness of such practice at different levels of professional education, including the business and management education. Large number of studies has also been found in the areas of finding the appropriate problem based teaching and learning strategies in business education and on aligning the same with the business management curriculum. Scholars like Scott (1992), Wenger (2000) and others have emphasized on applying simulation practices to get aligned with the curriculum. According to them, the contextual alignment of such practices with the curriculum can ensure better learning experiences of the learners, rather than pure content teaching without contextualisation. Management scholars like Kotler (2009), Armstrong (2006), Morici (2010) and many others have also agreed on the effectiveness of the simulation based teaching and learning in enhancing student learning experience in management.

*Action research experiment framework in present research:*

The present project has adopted ‘Process theory of curriculum’. The project has adopted ‘Process theory’ as attempt has been made to communicate the essential principles and features of the specific educational proposal (ATHE level 4, unit 4.5: Marketing Mix) in such a manner that is kept open to critical scrutiny by the learners. Case studies have been used to communicate the essential principles of the unit. The curriculum has been planned and delivered in such a manner that the indicative contents of the unit (refer appendix IV) are properly covered through the case studies discussed (refer appendix III) and at the same time learning outcomes are achieved (Table 3).

Table 3: Curriculum alignment Plan adopted

Week	Case study	Indicative contents (overview)	Learning outcomes (overview)
Week4	Coca Cola Marketing Mix overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to marketing mix</li> <li>• Role of the product or service in marketing mix</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the role of the product or service in the marketing mix (Learning outcome 1).</li> </ul>
Week 6	Land rover : the marketing campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of price in marketing mix</li> <li>• Use of pricing to offset the costs of product manufacturing and/or service delivery</li> <li>• Evaluate the role of price in the marketing mix</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the role of price in the marketing mix (Learning outcome 2)</li> </ul>
Week 8 & Week 9	Range rover : Promotion and marketing mix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of place in marketing mix</li> <li>• Use of types of distribution of products</li> <li>• Evaluate the role of place in the marketing mix in a chosen organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the role of place in the marketing mix (Learning outcome 3)</li> <li>• Understand the role of promotion in the marketing mix</li> <li>• (Learning outcome 4)</li> </ul>
Week 11	Zara: The process innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process activities</li> <li>• How role of process in the marketing mix leads to customer focus</li> </ul>	Understanding the role of process in the marketing mix

In above table (refer table 3) shows the way the cases have been mapped and the students have been asked to analyse such cases. Here the content oriented learning has been attempted to facilitated through process orientation.

*Action research cycle of the present project:*

The classic action research cycle, designed by Kurt-Lewin has been adopted in the present project in the following manner (Refer table 4).

Table 4: Action research cycle adopted

Step 1	Identifying a general or initial idea	Based on unsatisfactory class experience and student engagement level, fact finding needs were felt.	Week 1 and week 2 of the lesson
Step 2	Reconnaissance or fact finding	Standard questionnaire was designed to collect student feedback on learning experience and separate MCQ questions were prepared to administer in the class.	Week 2 and week 3 of the lesson

Step 3	Planning	Based on the student feedback and average results on the MCQ test conducted, planning has been done to carry out such feedback collection and MCQ tests after changing the teaching style from lecture method to lecture plus case study discussion and analysis method (refer table 3)	Week 3 and week 4 of the lesson
Step 4	Taking first action step	Introduction of the case method of teaching along with the regular lecture method. Student feedbacks and MCQ tests were continued	Week 5 and Week 6 of the lesson
Step 5	Evaluate	MCQ test results, student feedback through question shows significant improvement in student learning experience	Week 7 –Week 12 of the lesson
Step 6	Amend plan	Curriculum delivery plan should be mapped with appropriate problem based teaching techniques such as case studies etc. on regular basis. Suggestions will be sent to ATHE (the awarding body) to incorporate case studies according to the broader indicative contents and learning outcomes in future.	Future sessions on the same unit (Unit 4.5) and on any unit related to marketing concepts and theories (Unit 4.9 Marketing Communication, Unit 5.2 Marketing principles, Unit 6.3 International marketing etc.)
Step 7	Take second action step	Regular case mapping and case updation, case alignment with the subject contents will be done	Future sessions on the same unit (Unit 4.5) and on any unit related to marketing concepts and theories (Unit 4.9 Marketing Communication, Unit 5.2 Marketing principles, Unit 6.3 International marketing etc.)

*Problem based teaching adopted:*

Based on the poor student learning and engagement experience during initial two weeks of lesson delivery, the problem based teaching was adopted. During the subsequent weeks, case studies, mapped with the indicative contents and learning outcomes (refer table 3) were used in the class. Students were asked to find out the solutions of the cases given (refer appendix III) in the class and they were found quite enthusiastic. Feedbacks and subsequent MCQ test results have also shown significant improvement in the following weeks.

**Data Collection:**

*Concept of data collection:*

Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on targeted variables in an established system, which then enables one to answer relevant questions and evaluate outcomes (Das, 2017).

*Data collection method:*

Based on the type of data to be collected, different data collection methods are popularly used. Such data can be classified as primary data and secondary data as well as quantitative data and qualitative data. Primary data are those data, collected first hand from the sources. Whereas, the secondary data are those data, collected through already available or published sources (Das, 2017). Quantitative data are mostly close ended data and are collected through structured data collection instruments. Qualitative data are normally open ended data (Das, 2017). Primary and quantitative data are collected through structured data collection instruments such as structured questionnaire, structured interview etc. Secondary data are collected from published or available

sources such as books, journals, periodicals, web sites, reports, leaflets, newspapers, magazines etc. Qualitative data are collected through unstructured interviews, observation methods, document review etc. (Das, 2017).

*Data collection in present research:*

Primary and quantitative data collection methods have been adopted in the present research project. Two separate instruments were used to collect data. One instrument, used in the present research is a structured questionnaire, i.e. 'student learning-self-evaluation form' (refer appendix I). The form comprises of eleven questions on different aspects of student learning experiences in the class. The student feedback has been captured through 5 point likert scale, where point 1 has indicated most negative feedback, i.e. strongly disagree and point 5 has indicated most positive feedback, i.e. strongly agree. Out of eleven questions asked through the questionnaire, initial five questions (Question 1-5) have been framed from the inputs of the study conducted by Richard and Guy (2010). The remaining six questions (Question 6-11) have been taken from the study conducted by Heilsber (2011). A set of multiple choice questions (MCQ) (refer appendix II) have also been used to capture the student learning and to evaluate the compatibility of the student feedback with the student performance of such tests. A total number of 16 students have been surveyed and the marks of the same students have also been evaluated and analysed for the purpose of the study. Both the multiple choice question based tests and the 'student learning-self evaluation form' have been administered on the 3<sup>rd</sup> week, 5<sup>th</sup> week, 7<sup>th</sup> week, 9<sup>th</sup> week and 12<sup>th</sup> week.

**Data analysis and findings:**

*Methods of data analysis in the present research:*

Data analysis is a scientific and logical process, by which the set of collected data are inspected, cleansed, transformed and modeled with the objective of discovering useful information, deriving at conclusions, and supporting decision-making (Das, 2017).

In the present research, data analysis has been done through the specific methods. As mentioned in the previous chapter (i.e., chapter 4), two separate type of instruments have been used in collecting data in the present research. A standard questionnaire, i.e., 'student learning self-evaluation form' was administered five times over the period of twelve weeks, whereas five separate multiple choice question set based tests were also conducted in the same frequency. Once these data have been collected, both were analysed through MS-Excel software. Collected data were analysed in the following stages, with the following objectives in line with the research objectives (refer chapter 1).

**Step 1: Analysis of the student learning experience feedback** on each question of the 'student learning self-evaluation form' was done through two subsequent stages. At the first stage, average (mean) and mode were calculated on the week-wise student feedbacks received from individual students and then at the second stage, an average of the mean of week wise response of the questions were calculated to capture the average trend in overall opinion of the students (refer Appendix VII). Finally, the trend in the changes in opinion over twelve weeks was identified (refer table 5: Graph 1)

**Step 2: Analysis of the marks obtained by the students** in the subsequent multiple choice question sets (MCQ) were analysed through the following way. At the first stage, individual students' marks in the individual tests over the weeks were captured. Based on the test wise captured marks, mean score of the batch and the modes of the obtained of the batch of students on weekly basis were calculated. At the third stage, the changes in trend of average marks of the batch were captured (refer table 6: graph 2). Change in the distribution of mode of marks obtained throughout the period has also been captured (refer table 6: Graph 2).

**Step 3:** Comparison has been done to find the **change in learning experience and the student score in subsequent MCQ tests**. This has been done to evaluate the improvement in learning of the targeted students over the period since adoption of the problem-based teaching methods.

**Findings of data analysis:**

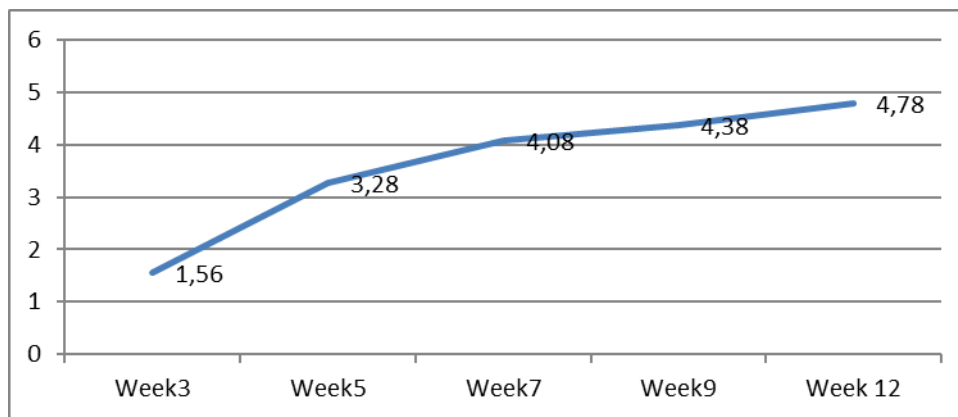
Following are the findings of data analysis.

Table 5: Change in trend in student feedback based opinion over twelve weeks

Question no.	Week3	Week5	Week7	Week9	Week 12
Question 1	1.56	3.37	4	4.56	4.81
Question 2	1.25	3.06	4.31	4.5	4.81
Question 3	1.56	2.81	4.06	4.18	4.56
Question 4	1.62	3.62	4.06	4.25	4.75
Question 5	1.75	2.5	3.93	4.31	4.75
Question 6	1.5	3.31	4.12	4.56	4.87
Question 7	1.81	3.62	4.06	4.25	4.81
Question 8	1.37	3.43	4.12	4.37	4.87
Question 9	1.56	3.56	4	4.43	4.75
Question 10	2.18	3.43	4.25	4.5	4.93
Question 11	1.06	3.37	4.06	4.31	4.75
<b>Average of mean</b>	<b>1.56</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>4.08</b>	<b>4.38</b>	<b>4.78</b>

From the above table significant improvement in the pattern of opinions have been witnessed from the 3<sup>rd</sup> week to 12<sup>th</sup> week. It was merely 1.56 (average of mean) during the 3<sup>rd</sup> week, that started improving since 5<sup>th</sup> week after intervention of changing teaching style. Finally, it reached at the level of 4.78. Following graph (refer graph 1) clearly depicts such changes.

Graph 1: Change in trend in student feedback based opinion over twelve weeks



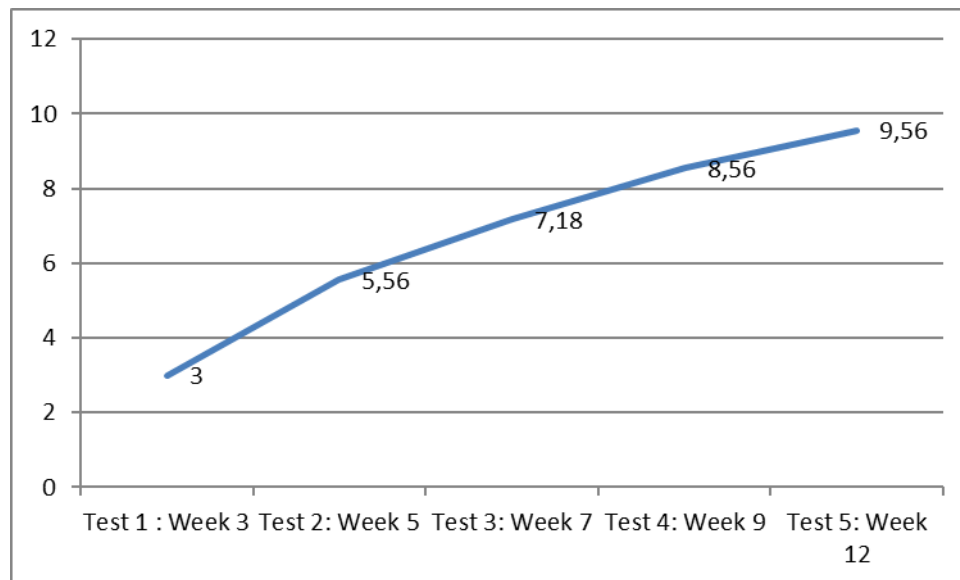
Change in the pattern of student performance in the MCQ tests can also be witnessed through the following tables and diagrams.

Table 6: Change in the distribution of mean and mode of marks obtained throughout the period

Student No.	MCQ test 1 Marks	MCQ test 2 Marks	MCQ test 3 Marks	MCQ test 4 Marks	MCQ test 5 Marks
1	3	5	7	9	
2	4	6	7	10	
3	5	8	9	10	
4	4	7	8	9	
5	2	5	6	8	
6	1	5	7	8	
7	3	5	7	9	
8	4	6	8	8	
9	2	5	7	8	
10	4	6	8	8	
11	2	4	7	9	
12	2	4	6	8	
13	4	5	7	8	
14	1	6	7	9	
15	4	6	8	8	
16	3	5	6	8	
Mean	3	5.56	7.18	8.56	9.56
Mode	4	5	7	8	

From the above table, the significant changes in the average marks of the batch of students can be clearly witnessed. From only 3 as the average marks and only 4 as the mode marks, the student performance improved significantly. These improvements can be seen during subsequent tests. Following graph (refer graph 2) clearly depicts such changes.

Graph 2: Change in the distribution of mean marks obtained throughout the period



Therefore, both the student feedback on the student learning experience and the student learning as captured through the marks in the subsequent MCQ test marks are found to have improved since the problem based teaching and learning intervention (refer: Table 7).

Table 7: Similarity in improvement pattern

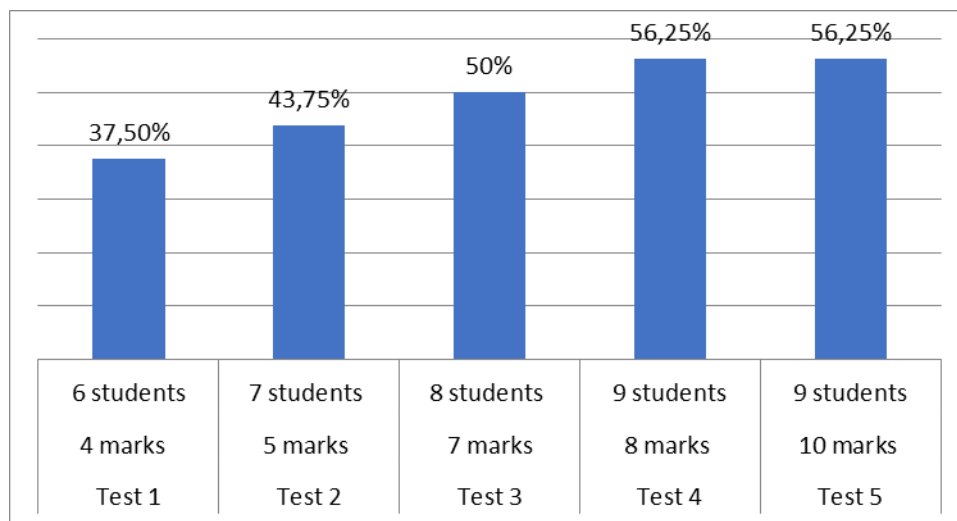
Week	Student feedback average of mean on the learning experience	Mean score of the students' marks in MCQ tests
3 <sup>rd</sup> week	1.56	3
5 <sup>th</sup> week	3.28	5.56
7 <sup>th</sup> week	4.08	7.18
9 <sup>th</sup> week	4.38	8.56
12 <sup>th</sup> week	4.78	9.56

The table clearly shows that maximum positive improvement from the 7<sup>th</sup> week onwards in both the cases, though the intervention of problem-based teaching and learning is initiated from the 4<sup>th</sup> week of the lesson. Such improvements in the student learning can further be captured by the increased mode numbers over the weeks, since the problem-based teaching and learning intervention has been introduced (refer Table 8 and graph 3).

Table 8: Trends of improvement in mode numbers in MCQ tests

Week	MCQ Test no.	Mode marks	Number of students scored mode marks	% of students scored mode marks
3 <sup>rd</sup> week	MCQ Test 1	4	6	37.50%
5 <sup>th</sup> week	MCQ Test 2	5	7	43.75%
7 <sup>th</sup> week	MCQ Test 3	7	8	50%
9 <sup>th</sup> week	MCQ Test 4	8	9	56.25%
12 <sup>th</sup> week	MCQ Test 5	10	9	56.25%

Graph 3: Trends of improvement in mode numbers in MCQ tests



It is clearly visible from the analysis of the MCQ test marks, obtained by the selected group of students that not only mode score has improved over the weeks (from only 4 in the test 1 to 10 in the test 5), but also the number of students have obtained such marks has also been significantly improved, since the intervention of the problem-based teaching and learning practice from the 4<sup>th</sup> week onward. During the first test 6 students (I.e., 37.50%) obtained mode score, which improved to 9 students (i.e. 56.25%) during the fourth and fifth tests.

Therefore, from the above analysis, following key findings can be mentioned:

- 1) Significant improvements have been found in both student feedback on learning experiences and the MCQ test scores over the weeks, mainly since the case study based problem solving teaching and learning has been introduced from the 4<sup>th</sup> week.
- 2) It can also be concluded that such improvements in marks not only is reflected in the increase in the mode marks, but also in the number of students obtained such marks over the period.



### **Overall project evaluation and summary of findings:**

The project was successfully carried out based on meticulous plan and appropriate interventions. The specific group of students were selected for the project as they happened to be taught this completely new unit, i.e. unit 4.5 on marketing plan. Not only the unit was introduced this semester, but also the unit happened to be the first unit on marketing taught to this ATHE level 4 business students at the campus. Moreover, the urgency to intervene in this batch was felt as the problems like lack of student learning was understood by the tutor. Student feedback on learning experience through structured questionnaire and the initial MCQ test performance also supported the concern. However, with the intervention through case study based problem based teaching and learning changed the situation, those could be found in both the student feedback pattern captured through the questionnaire and the MCQ test performances.

### **Recommendations:**

Based on the successful results observed in the student learning, the following recommendations are made.

- ***Recommendation on the unit 4.5 (marketing mix)*** of the ATHE Business.
  - i) The course curriculum must incorporate the properly mapped case studies with the specific indicative contents. Landmark cases are available on the different marketing mix components and such cases must be incorporated in the ATHE Business unit 4.5 (Marketing Mix) curriculum.
  - ii) Specific teaching calendar should be prepared incorporating lecture classes, case study analyses etc. for the ATHE Business Unit 4.5 (Marketing Mix) programme.
  - iii) As the unit 4.5 (Marketing Mix) is a newly introduced unit and this is the first time, an important subject such as marketing is taught, separate problem based teaching workshops can be organized from time to time for the tutors, engaged in teaching.
  - iv) Regular evaluation of the student engagement and learning for the unit 4.5 (marketing mix) must be introduced as a practice through multiple choice questions, taking student feedbacks through questionnaire etc.
  - v) Case studies should be regularly updated and new cases can be introduced over the time for the unit 4.5 according to proper case mapping techniques.

### **Conclusions and the scope of further study:**

The present study has been a great experience of learning. This has helped to understand the way curriculum model can be chosen and applied in the context of a completely new subject. Also, application of problem based learning as the intervention has been found to be effective. Student learning experiences have also been appropriately captured. Based on combination and use of these three major aspects of curriculum modelling, problem based learning and teaching intervention and evaluation of student learning, the present action research project can be considered as a comprehensive and effective approach to experiment and to upgrade the teaching practices.

The study has also helped to identify few areas on which future study can be conducted. It has been found that the number of students improved their learning in the present intervention. However, still the scope of further improvement can be found out. It has been observed that approximately 56.25% of the students of the selected group (refer table 8) have improved their learning. Such number is though a considerable increase from the earlier situations as found during session 3 and session 5, still a need for further inclusion of students in the highest scoring group can not be denied. More cases and problem based teaching and learning techniques should also be considered. Further study can also be done on a larger group of students and comparative study needs to be done between the students studying at different levels of business management. Subject wise comparison can also be statistically analysed.

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**Appendix**

**Appendix I: Student feedback questionnaire (Duplicate)**

**Student's learning self –evaluation form**

**Date of the class:**

**Programme name: ATHE Diploma in Business Management**

**Level: IV (Four)**

**Subject: Marketing Mix**

**Unit number: 4.5**

Sl. No.	Question/statement	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree(1)
1	The instructor stimulated my interest in the Subject in the class today					
2	My understanding of the subject taught in the class today is satisfactory					
3	I am encouraged to ask questions in the class today					
4	The instructor created the challenging environment to learn at my best through problem based approach					
5	The teaching style creates an opportunity for me to do reference work and to do better self-study					
6	I could contribute constructively in the class today					
7	I could find today's class more suitable for overall learning of the concept and practices					
8	I could find myself more prepared to solve problems related to the subject after attending the class today					
9	The learning has been less practical oriented, than being more theoretical today					
10	Today's class has given me the opportunity to clearly visualize the situations and has motivated me to analyse the situation in a much better manner					
11	Overall learning experience in the class today is found to be satisfactory					

Signature of the learner \_\_\_\_\_

For Faculty only:

- Choose the appropriate week, this questionnaire has been filled up by the learners:  
Learning Week 1/3/4/6/8/10 /12 /14/16

**Appendix II: MCQ tests questions**

Week 3: Test 1

**MCQ Test 1**

**Third Week**

**Marketing Mix**

**ATHE Business (Unit 4.5)**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Q.1. Out Of 4ps in marketing mix three are product, promotion, and price, which is the 4th P.

- (1) Purpose
- (2) Place
- (3) Pursuit
- (4) Promotion
- (5) Plan

Q.2. Who suggested product, pricing, place, promotion all these in a company represents "Market Mix"?

- (1) Philip Kotler
- (2) Stephen Morse
- (3) Neil Borden
- (4) Neilsen
- (5) Lorie and Robert

Q.3 What is the not the C of 4Cs, those are considered by marketing mix elements

- (1) Customer Value
- (2) Cost of the product
- (3) Customer convenience
- (4) Creativity
- (5) Communication

Q.4 Choose the correct answer from the following options.

A. What is the core essence of product as strategic tool of marketing mix?

- i) Customer value
- ii) Customer convenience
- iii) Communication

B. What is the core essence of price as strategic tool of marketing mix?

- i) Cost perspective/affordability
- ii) Customer convenience
- iii) Communication

B. What is the core essence of promotion as strategic tool of marketing mix?

- i) Convenience
- ii) Communication
- iii) Customer value

Q. 5. What is not the part of product life cycle, that is considered for marketing strategy making through 4Ps?

- i) Embroyic stage
- ii) Introduction stage
- iii) Decline stage

Q. 6. Maximize market share, service and warranty, penetration strategy, intensive distribution, promotion is the preferred strategy at the

- i) Growth stage
- ii) Development stage
- iii) Introduction stage

Q. 7. What is the fourth stage of customer life cycle

- i) Advocacy
- ii) Develop
- iii) Acquire
- iv) None of the above

Q. 8. You are a marketer of product content. Do you agree that the product content will vary (choose the correct option)

- i) Product contents vary according to component, ingredients and parts of the product from one to another.
- ii) Product content will vary according to customer understanding of the product

Q. 9. You are going to launch the same product in two countries. In one country safety regulation is more stringent than the other country. What will be your first priority in such situation related to the product, you are going to those countries?

- i) You will change the product components according to the safety standards and regulations
- ii) You will change pricing strategy immediately
- iii) You will change the communication strategy immediately

Q.10. One of the ancillary information of the product is

- i) Details of manufacturer
- ii) Ingredients of the product
- iii) Components of the product

Each question carries one mark (Total marks 10 questions X1=10 marks)

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Week5: Test 2

**MCQ Test 2**  
**5th Week**  
**Marketing Mix**  
**ATHE Business (Unit 4.5)**  
**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Q.1. Which is the mode of pricing technique?

- (1) Elasticity
- (2) Market skimming
- (3) Market penetration
- (4) All of these
- (5) None of these

Q.2. You are a late entrant to a market. When you entered the market with your product, three other companies have already been found to be present in the same market. You decided to set the price of your product relatively low to attract more customers to your product, without compromising on quality. What is this strategy called?

- (1) Skimming pricing
- (2) Going-rate pricing
- (3) Value based pricing
- (4) Penetration pricing
- (5) All of these

Q.3. This is the price that a buyer carries in their mind and refers to it when they look at the given product. This is .....

- (1) Psychological pricing
- (2) Segmented pricing
- (3) Product-line pricing
- (4) Reference pricing
- (5) Product-form pricing

Q.4. When different version of products are priced differently but in accordance to difference in their value then it is a form of

- (1) Psychological pricing
- (2) Segmented pricing
- (3) Product-line pricing
- (4) Reference pricing
- (5) Product-form pricing

Q.5. "Place" in 4Ps mean same as

- (1) Promotion
- (2) People
- (3) Distribution
- (4) Demand
- (5) Service

Q.6. This deals with the specification of the actual good or service and how it relates to the target customer. This is

- (1) Price aspect
- (2) Product aspect
- (3) Promotion aspect
- (4) Place aspect
- (5) Planning aspect

Q.7. In Marketing mix which scope of product supports the elements:

- (1) Guarantee
- (2) Warrantee
- (3) Quality
- (4) Packaging
- (5) All of these

Q. 8. Which P is not included in the 7Ps of marketing mix?

- (1) People
- (2) Purpose
- (3) Promotion
- (4) Price
- (5) Physical environment

Q. 9. This is the distribution channel, where end consumer buys from wholesaler or retailer. This is known as

- (1) Direct channel of distribution
- (2) Indirect channel of distribution
- (3) None of the above

Q. 10. Perception of benefits of a product to the customer can be primarily related to the

- (1) The perceived value of the benefits of a product to the buyer only
- (2) The perceived value of the benefits of a product, supported by direct and indirect pricing only
- (3) None of the above

Each question carries one mark (Total marks 10 questions X1=10 marks)

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Week 7

Test 3

**MCQ Test 3**

**7th Week**

**Marketing Mix**

**ATHE Business (Unit 4.5)**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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Q.1. You want to adopt a marketing strategy under which the company sells through as many outlets as possible, so that the consumers encounter the product virtually everywhere they go: supermarkets, drug stores, gas stations, and the like. Your strategy will be:

- (1) Intensive distribution strategy
- (2) Exclusive distribution strategy
- (3) Selective distribution strategy

Q. 2. This is the best promotion tool in any type of marketing.

- (1) Creativity
- (2) Communication
- (3) Tele-calling
- (4) Publicity
- (5) None of these

Q.3. Which is NOT the ingredient of promotion mix?

- (1) Advertising
- (2) Public relation
- (3) Personal selling
- (4) Sales promotion
- (5) Discriminatory promotion

Q.4. Knowledge of which is necessary for effective selling skill.

- (1) Promotional market
- (2) Related market
- (3) Digital market
- (4) Virtual market
- (5) Real time market

Q.5. This concerns with pricing policies for late entrants to a market.

- (1) Marketing skills
- (2) Marketing research
- (3) Elasticities
- (4) Market penetration
- (5) Market skimming

Q. 6. This is the unique product benefit that the competition cannot be claim.

- (1) Unique selling preposition
- (2) Unique sales preposition
- (3) Unique selling price
- (4) Unique strategy promotion
- (5) Unique selling product

Q.7. is the straight reduction in price on purchase during a stated period of time.

- (1) Discount
- (2) Allowance
- (3) Sale
- (4) All of the above
- (5) None of these

Q.8. In order to promote a product continuous approaching of prospect consumer is being done, this is called

- (1) Lead
- (2) Target group
- (3) Call
- (4) Telemarketing
- (5) Prospect

Q. 9. The motive that drive a consumer towards selection of particular outlet, retailers or supply of service is known as

- (1) Public relation
- (2) Futile exercise
- (3) Patronage motives



- (4) Prestige
- (5) None of these

Q. 10. Which is NOT the form of the element of promotion mix among?

- (1) Personal selling
- (2) Advertising
- (3) Sales promotion
- (4) Publicity
- (5) Distributive promotion

Each question carries one mark (Total marks 10 questions X1=10 marks)

Week 9

Test 4

**MCQ Test 4**  
**9th Week**  
**Marketing Mix**  
**ATHE Business (Unit 4.5)**  
**Date: \_\_\_\_\_**

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Q.1. Who suggested product, pricing, place, promotion all these in a company represents “Market Mix”?

- (1) Philip Kotler
- (2) Stephen Morse
- (3) Neil Borden
- (4) Neilsen
- (5) Lorie and Robert

Q.2. What is the not the C of 4Cs, those are considered by marketing mix elements

- (1) Customer Value
- (2) Cost of the product
- (3) Customer convenience
- (4) Creativity
- (5) Communication

Q.3. Choose the correct answer from the following options.

A. What is the core essence of product as strategic tool of marketing mix?

- i) Customer value
- ii) Customer convenience
- iii) Communication

B. What is the core essence of price as strategic tool of marketing mix?

- i) Cost perspective/affordability
- ii) Customer convenience
- iii) Communication

B. What is the core essence of promotion as strategic tool of marketing mix?

- i) Convenience
- ii) Communication

Q.4. Which one is not the promotion activity in marketing?

- (1) Activity
- (2) Public relations and publicity
- (3) Sales promotion
- (4) Market analysis
- (5) Personal selling

Q.5. Advertising is a marketing communication that employs an openly sponsored, non-personal message to promote or sell a product, service or idea.

- (1) True
- (2) False

Q.6. Which one is not the type of direct marketing?

- (1) Direct mail
- (2) Face to face selling
- (3) Telemarketing
- (4) Free sampling
- (5) Direct response advertising

Q.7. This is where mass media is used to promote brands and reach out to the target consumers. These include conventional media as we know it, television and radio advertising, print as well as internet. This is communication that is targeted to a wider spread of audience, and is not specific to individual consumers. This is

- (1) Above the line promotion
- (2) Below the line promotion
- (3) Both of the above
- (4) None of the above

Q. 8. This involves joining up with another business or businesses and pooling the resources to promote all of the businesses. This is :

- (1) Direct response promotion
- (2) Moderate line promotion
- (3) Market analytics
- (4) Cross-promotion
- (5) None of the above

Q. 9. This is the act of exaggerating a product's worth through the use of meaningless unsubstantiated terms, based on opinion rather than fact. This is an unethical practice in promotion called....

- (1) Angel dusting
- (2) Moot colouring
- (3) Bait and Switch
- (4) Puffery
- (5) None of the above

Q.10. This is an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom which prevents manufacturers, retailers or service industry providers from misleading consumers as to what they are spending their money on. This law empowers the judiciary to punish companies or individuals who make false claims about the products or services that they sell. This is known as....

- (1) The Trade Descriptions Act, 1968
- (2) The Business Ethics Promotions Act, 1980
- (3) The Trade Regulations Act, 1970
- (4) None of the above

Each question carries one mark (Total marks 10 questions X1=10 marks)

Week 12: Test 5

**MCQ Test 5**  
**12th Week**  
**Marketing Mix**  
**ATHE Business (Unit 4.5)**  
**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Q.1. E\*trade, General Motor etc. are the following type of brand name/image...

- (1) Geographical brand/image
- (2) Founder brand/image
- (3) Lexical brand/image
- (4) Descriptive brand/ image

Q.2. Dunkin' Donuts, Krazy Glue, Volare, and Sizzler Steakhouse are the following type of brand name/image.....

- (1) Geographical brand/image
- (2) Founder brand/image
- (3) Lexical brand/image
- (4) Descriptive brand/ image

Q. 3. These are built from Latin, Greek, or other foreign root words and modified to best embody the brand personality. These brand names reflect the identity of the inventor of the particular product, services, invented by the brand itself.....

- (1) Geographical brand/image
- (2) Inventor brand/image
- (3) Descriptive brand/ image
- (4) None of the above

Q.4. Just-in-time is a quality process initiative under.....

- (1) Procurement, manufacturing and distribution
- (2) Procurement and manufacturing
- (3) Procurement and distribution
- (4) Manufacturing and distribution
- (5) None of the above

Q. 5. Marketing of other products and services to the existing customer is known as...

- (1) Sweep selling
- (2) Cross-selling
- (3) Intensive selling
- (5) Premier selling
- (6) None of the above

Q.6. Who suggested product, pricing, place, promotion all these in a company represents "Market Mix"?

- (1) Philip Kotler
- (2) Stephen Morse
- (3) Neil Borden
- (4) Neilsen

Q.7. This deals with the specification of the actual good or service and how it relates to the target customer. This is .....

- (1) Price aspect
- (2) Product aspect
- (3) Promotion aspect
- (4) Place aspect
- (5) Planning aspect

Q. 8. In Marketing mix which scope of product supports the elements:

- (1) Guarantee
- (2) Warrantee
- (3) Quality
- (4) Packaging
- (5) All of these

Q.9. Which P is not included in the 7Ps of marketing mix?

- 1) People
- (2) Purpose
- (3) Promotion
- (4) Price

(5) Physical environment

Q. 10. Which is the mode of pricing technique?

- (1) Elasticity
- (2) Market skimming
- (3) Market penetration
- (4) All of these
- (5) None of these

Each question carries one mark (Total marks 10 questions X1=10 marks)

### Appendix III: Case studies

#### Week 4

##### **Coca Cola Marketing Mix (4Ps) overview**

Problem Question:

1. Identify the 4PS of marketing mix strategy from the above case let on Coca-Cola, with special reference to Product Mix of Coca-Cola.
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#### Week 6

##### **Land Rover: the marketing campaign**

Problem Question:

*What are the 4Ps of marketing mix strategy of Land Rover? Can you identify pricing mix component from the above case and how such pricing mix component supports other marketing mix decisions of the company?*

*Task clue: Use websites/portals such as <https://www.cars.com/price>*

#### Week 9

##### **Range rover: Place and Promotion and marketing mix**

Problem Question:

*Identify the 4Ps of Marketing mix strategy adopted by Range Rover in general. Also identify the place & promotional mix adopted by Range rover in international market.*

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#### Week 12

##### **Zara Process innovation as marketing mix**

Problem question:

*Explain how process innovation as a marketing mix helped Zara to improve it's product, price and place mixes in strategy making and caused significant impact in enhancing sales.*

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**Appendix VI: Indicative content and Learning outcomes of ATHE Business Unit 4.5 (Marketing Mix)**

<b>ATHE Unit 4.5 Marketing Mix</b>		
<b>Learning outcome number</b>	<b>Learning outcome</b>	<b>Indicative content</b>
1	<i>Understand the role of the product or service in the marketing mix</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Features and benefits of products or services</li> <li>- Use of marketing mix at each stage of product life cycle</li> <li>- How a business can create lifetime value to a customer by using the customer life cycle</li> <li>- Evaluate the role of product or service in the marketing mix</li> </ul>
2	<i>Understand the role of price in the marketing mix</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of pricing to reflect the perceived value of the benefits of a product to the buyer</li> <li>- Use of pricing to offset the costs of product manufacturing and/or service delivery</li> <li>- Effects of adjusting the price of a product or service</li> <li>- Evaluate the role of price in the marketing mix</li> </ul>
3	<i>Understand the role of place in the marketing mix</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Role of distribution channels</li> <li>- Types of distribution</li> <li>- Direct marketing channel</li> <li>- Evaluate the role of place in the marketing mix of a chosen organization</li> </ul>
4	<i>Understand the role of promotion in marketing mix</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Aims of promotion in marketing mix</li> <li>- How the success of a promotional campaign is measured</li> </ul>
5	<i>Understanding the role of process in marketing mix</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Process activities</li> <li>- How role of process in the market mix leads to customer focus</li> </ul>
6	<i>Understanding the role of people in marketing mix</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Importance of recruiting right people for best customer orientation</li> <li>- Importance to the business of training customer facing and non customer facing staffs</li> </ul>
7	<i>Understanding the role of physical evidence in marketing mix</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concept of physical evidence</li> <li>- How it impacts marketing</li> </ul>

## INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE STRATEGIES IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN GHANA - AN INSTITUTIONAL THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

In Ghana, internal quality assurance (QA) strategies of tertiary education institutions under mentorship are characterized by institutional isomorphism. However, the nature of influence and implications of institutional isomorphism on quality assurance strategies of the colleges have not received research attention. Using illustrative multiple-case studies through in-depth interviews and document analysis, this study sought to examine the influence and implications of institutional isomorphism on internal QA strategies of Colleges of Education in Ghana. It emerged that majority of the quality assurance strategies employed by the participant College were regarded as mandatory regulatory requirements which must be complied with. Some of them were also deliberately copied from mentor institutions for reputational purposes with few of them developed based on professional norms. The study concludes that, QA strategies of the participants Colleges of Education appear to be about obsession with compliance with little desire to promote internal culture of continuous improvement because everything is based on meeting regulatory requirements and copying for recognition. Based on the conclusion drawn, we recommend that the Colleges pay more attention to the normative isomorphism to balance off the coercive, and mimetic dominance in their QA strategies in order to promote the culture of continuous improvement, which is critical for teacher education delivery.

**Keywords:** Internal quality assurance strategies; institutional isomorphism, context-relevant; colleges of education, Ghana

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Quality assurance has become the focus of attention and a central element of higher education globally. Contemporary higher education institutions are required to have robust and resilient internal quality assurance strategies in order to be publicly recognized and accepted as providing quality higher education institutions. Today's massified higher education systems are under tremendous pressure to institutional quality assurance (Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumberg, 2009). The usual response to this demand on new higher education institutions has been a reliance on institutional isomorphism, especially those from the developing countries where the concept is emerging. They are compelled by environmental forces to adopt existing quality assurance practices in order to gain legitimacy and credibility. According to Leiber, Stensaker, and Harvey (2015), the aspect of context and how it influences IQA is widely under-researched from an empirical point of view. Meanwhile, general quality assurance frameworks usually do not provide context-relevant solutions for specialized higher education institutions such as teacher education institutions.

Internal quality assurance strategies of Colleges of Education (teacher education institutions) in Ghana are characterised by institutional isomorphism pressures because nonconformity to established standards may threaten their legitimacy and existence as tertiary teacher education institutions (Newman, 2018). However, how institutional isomorphism pressures are able to provide context-relevant quality assurance strategies for the Colleges of Education to fulfill their mandate has received less research attention. Meanwhile, strong

isomorphic pressures towards conformity can lead institutions to adopt structures that are sometimes against the interests of efficiency and rationality (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Therefore, this study sought to examine influence of institutional isomorphism on internal quality assurance strategies of Colleges of Education in Ghana through multiple-case studies. The goal of the study was to examine the nature of influence and implications of isomorphic pressures on internal quality assurance strategies of Colleges of Education in Ghana. It was intended to unearth the practical realities of institutional isomorphism with its associated benefits and challenges in the Colleges of Education in Ghana.

### **1.1 Ghanaian Colleges of Education in context**

Over the past forty years, initial teacher preparation for basic education (from pre-school to grade 9) in Ghana is offered by dedicated institutions (present Colleges of Education) has undergone a number of modifications. These modifications are a result of policy changes, which aimed at producing well-trained teachers to meet the basic education needs of the country at various times (Addo-Obing, 2008). In the early 2000s, following a comprehensive review of the educational system in Ghana, the Government published a White Paper and declared that “all Teacher Training Colleges will be upgraded into diploma-awarding institutions and be affiliated to the education oriented universities” (Government of Ghana, 2004). In this regard, 38 Public Teacher Training Colleges operating at a level equivalent to level 4 of the International System of Classification of Education (ISCED 4) were re-designated as Colleges of Education (CoEs) to offer tertiary education in 2008. The number has since increased to forty-six (46). They are made up of (1) One male only, Six (6) female only and Thirty Nine (39) mixed CoEs. The general mandate of the CoEs is to train teachers for the primary schools and junior high schools. Prior to their elevation and re-designation as tertiary institutions, the then Teacher Training Institutions (TTIs) were under the Ghana Education Service (GES). This is the agency responsible for pre-tertiary education. The Teacher Education Division, one of the divisions of the Ghana Education Service, directly supervised the TTIs. Thus funding, appointment of staff and determination of requirements to enrol in the institutions were the responsibilities of GES. However, the assessment and certification of the products of TTIs has been the responsibility of the University of Cape Coast. This makes University of Cape Coast a mentor university for Colleges of Education in Ghana. The University over the years has collaborated with the Teacher Education Division of GES to develop and constantly evaluate the curriculum of CoEs to enable them to produce competent professional teachers for Basic Schools in Ghana (Opare, 2008). Meanwhile, Newman (2013) stated that since the re-designation of TTIs as COEs in 2008, the institutions have faced challenges regarding supervision, infrastructure, governance and autonomy. This has raised concerns about quality in the operations of the Colleges of Education.

### **1.2 The quality assurance context of the Colleges of Education**

Internal quality assurance until 2012 when the CoEs received upgrade to tertiary status was not a topical issue in the colleges. As indicated earlier, the CoEs were only under the monitoring and supervision regime applicable to pre-tertiary teacher education institutions in the country. They did not have any regulatory requirement to establish their own internal quality assurance mechanisms for their operations. Their elevation to tertiary status brought them under the supervisory regime of the National Accreditation Board (NAB) of Ghana. The NAB was established by the government of Ghana in 1993 with the enactment of the NAB LAW 1993 (PNDCL 317) which has since been replaced with the National Accreditation Board Act, 2007, Act 744. NAB has the mandate to safeguard standards and enhance the quality of tertiary education as a quality Assurance Agency. The birth of the NAB as regulatory agency of the Ministry of Education therefore is to ensure that the country’s tertiary education system continues to be responsive to the fast- changing world and to make its graduates progressively competitive in the world of work (NAB, 2007). NAB’s role, according to Dadzie-Mensah (2012) rests on decisions in getting the tertiary institutions to do the right things towards enhanced quality in the Ghanaian higher education. NAB attaches great importance to institutional audit and the role of the internal quality assurance in higher education institutions. It is therefore a requirement for all higher education institutions in Ghana to have internal quality assurance units or directorates. As a result, the Colleges of Education in Ghana have the responsibility to put in place resilient internal quality assurance systems to enhance quality in their operations and outcomes. The responsibility for enacting quality is theirs even though they are affiliated to a university for mentorship. They must have their own quality assurance strategies that are context-relevant as tertiary institutions with specialised mandate that may be different from their mentor University.

## **2.0 THEORETICAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY**

Institutional Theory perspective guided this study because the study was undertaken to answer the question of ‘how context-relevant is institutional isomorphism in quality assurance strategies of Colleges of Education in

Ghana? This theory focuses on particular aspects of social structures that are inherent in organisations including higher education institutions. According to the theory, conformity to the rules, norms and values of the institutional environment is compulsory for the sake of legitimacy (Covaeski, Dirsmith, and Larry 2003). DiMaggio & Powell (1983) consolidated inputs on Institutional Theory from several of its proponents and found that institutions in making a transition between one condition and another consist of three possible mechanisms of isomorphism.

Firstly, there is the Coercive Isomorphism, in which the organisation is led to adopt new structures through compulsion such as from the mandate of a law. This suggests that higher education institutions of any kind in Ghana have to comply with quality assurance regulations of the National Accreditation Board of Ghana to be considered legitimate by the state and the society. The National Accreditation Board requires all Colleges of Education to establish quality assurance unit within the institutions to address quality assurance issues. Bell and Taylor (2005) highlight that quality assurance regulations work as strong forces to mould organizations. Although the Colleges of Education are still under mentorship by universities and regulatory bodies, internal quality assurance is a basic requirement to gain legitimacy as tertiary education institutions.

Secondly, there is Mimetic Isomorphism in which the organisation follows the lead of another organisation with the purpose of reducing uncertainty (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Mimetic Isomorphism evolves when there is uncertainty in the system that enhances the process of imitation. Quality Assurance in higher education is a concept that has been in existence for quite some time; however, changes do occur as time changes to suit current trends. As a result, Colleges of Education in their quest to establish strong quality assurance unit, could copy quality assurance structures and tools from other higher education institutions with strong quality assurance structures provided such quality assurance structures fit the context of the Colleges of Education.

The third mechanism is the Normative Isomorphism, which is the pressure to use professional norms for organisation progress and development. Professionalism is interpreted as “the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work, to control and to establish a cognitive base and legitimation for their occupational autonomy” (Tsevi, 2015). The organisation adopts the new condition based on the recommendations of experts within the organisation. The Colleges of Education as a result of their attainment into the tertiary level are required to attain some level of professionalism. In fact, the minimum requirement for teachers in the colleges is master’s degree in a specialised field. The Normative Isomorphism however suggests that Colleges of Education in Ghana are influenced by the professional associations within them to apply specific standards and ethics to develop their own quality assurance strategies that are robust, resilient and context-specific relevant to train quality teachers for pre-tertiary education in Ghana.

These three pillars of Institutional Theory have been used to examine the context-relevant nature of internal quality assurance strategies of colleges of education in Ghana.

### 3.0 STUDY METHODS

A multiple qualitative case study approach was employed for this study. To help understand complex real-life situational dynamics requires either experiences or specific cases that can provide lessons (Eisner, 1998). Although, it is unusual for the outcome of a case study to generalize in the way that natural science data can, this is possible (Denzin, 2009). It has been claimed that knowledge transfer occurs through outcomes of case studies (Eisner, 1998). The reason for choosing this design was that the study was about deep insights into the context-relevant nature of internal quality assurance strategies of the different groupings (female only, male only and mixed sex) of colleges in the midst of institutional isomorphism. This made multiple-case study a natural design option for the study. Yin (1994) emphasized that multiple cases strengthen the results by replicating the patterns thereby increasing the robustness of the findings. Literal replication (where the cases are designed to corroborate each other) and theoretical replication (where the cases are designed to cover different theoretical conditions). Participants from three (3) different Colleges of Education contexts were purposively chosen and were interviewed in-depth at their offices. The selected Colleges of Education were made up of one female only College of Education, one male only College of Education and one mixed sex College of Education. A total number of four (4) participants in each case college involving the College Principal, Vice-Principal, Quality Assurance Officer, and Assessment officer was selected. These officers are the initiators and lead implementers of quality assurance strategies in the Colleges of Education and therefore considered to be information rich for a study of this nature. In all nine (9) key informants were used for the study. Before the commencement of each interview, permission was sought from the participant, the rules of the interviews were explained to them so they were not left in doubt as to what to expect during and after the interviews (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2011). Participants were given a consent form to fill to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. All



the interviews lasted for an hour and twenty minutes and were audio taped. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity by using pseudonyms to represent them. Additional data was also derived from documents. Quality Assurance Policy documents and the Harmonised Statutes for the Colleges of Education in Ghana were analysed and relevant data extracted. Data from interviews were transcribed and were analysed together with relevant institutional documents thematically. Transcriptions were sent back to participants to confirm before analyses. The themes that emerged included: coercive quality assurance strategies, mimetic quality assurance strategies, normative quality assurance strategies, usefulness of isomorphic quality assurance strategies, challenges of isomorphic quality assurance strategies, and context-relevant nature of quality assurance strategies of the colleges. These themes have been presented and discussed in the next sections.

#### 4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The goal of the study was to examine the influence of institutional isomorphism on internal quality assurance strategies of Colleges of Education in Ghana to determine the implications of institutional isomorphism on quality assurance strategies for the promotion of continuous improvement in quality. This section presents and discusses the key themes that emerged, including coercive, mimetic and normative influences and related challenges. The implications for promoting a culture of continuous improvement in quality are also discussed.

##### 4.1 Coercive influences on quality assurance strategies

Findings from respondents indicated that majority of the internal quality assurance strategies of the participant Colleges were mandatory requirements by regulatory bodies and mentor institutions. The mandatory strategies that emerged are: the establishment of QA unit, QA strategies for staff recruitment; QA strategies for student recruitment, QA strategies for staff professional development and QA strategies for monitoring and supervision.

###### 4.1.1 Establishment of a QA Unit

It was found that all the participant Colleges have established an internal QA Unit as a strategy to promote standards in the institutions. However, this was not an institutional idea but a mandatory requirement by the NAB. A respondent from the male only college had this to say,

*As a basic requirement for all colleges of education we have tried our best to establish quality assurance unit which is headed by a quality assurance officer who works with a defined committee. (Interviewee AOO)*

When probed for where the idea for establishing QA Unit came from, the respondent said,

*The establishment of quality assurance unit is a primary and mandatory requirement for all tertiary institution therefore, as part of our agenda, we have been able to set up a quality assurance unit we have assign roles to them to bring out the best. (Interviewee AOK).*

Respondents AOM,PM,VPM,QAM,VPK,PK,QAK,QAQ,PO,VPO made similar claim.

A review of NAB policy (NAB, 2018) shows that setting up an Internal Quality Assurance Unit (IQAU) is a requirement for every tertiary education institution in Ghana. To that effect, NAB has developed guidelines for this purpose and Colleges are required to adopt the guidelines as a necessity. The mandatory nature of this policy makes it coercive from an institutional theory point of view but it is essential for every tertiary institution. As it has been argued, achieving quality in higher education is the primary responsibility of higher education institutions and their staff and setting up a quality assurance unit in higher education institutions has become a ubiquitous quality assurance strategy in higher education systems globally (Anane & Addaney, 2016). Almost every higher education institution has a quality assurance unit. Then it is plausible to argue that the participant Colleges would have established QA units on their own even if it was not regulatory requirement.

###### 4.1.2 QA strategy for the recruitment of qualified staff

It emerged from the study that all Colleges use the same QA strategy to recruit qualified staff. They indicated that recruitment of staff is based on a requirement provided by the government and the colleges are expected to comply failure to do so may render them illegitimate for their tertiary status. One participant had this to say;

*We are informed and required that all teaching staff must hold a minimum of research Master's degree and their Bachelor's and Master's degrees must all be in the same subject area. Besides, all*

*qualifications are vetted and verified from issuing bodies and foreign ones are sent to NAB for evaluation before appointment letters are issued to qualified staff. In addition, all applicants for teaching appointment must also appear before either the Academic Board or the Governing Council depending on the position being sought for face-face interview to establish the suitability of the applicant. All these processes are mandatory for all Colleges of Education. (Interviewee PK)*

All the participants indicated that the same QA strategy to hire qualified and competent teaching staff. However, some participants were not enthused about the rigid nature of the strategy, particularly, the insistence on Bachelor's and Master's degrees being in the same subject area. A respondent put it this way,

*The processes involved in the recruitment strategy is quite rigid and cumbersome but we can't do anything about it. I must say we are trying our best to meet standards required of us, but the rule on 'skirt and blouse' makes things difficult for us (Interviewee PM).*

The situation shows coercive pressure brought to bear on the Colleges. Nonetheless, the issue of staff quality is inextricably linked to recruitment processes, and rigour in the processes is essential. For in recruiting teachers, for example, institutions aim to attract individuals who are well prepared, effective and who will remain in the teaching profession long enough to make a difference. Quality teaching and learning in tertiary education institutions largely depends on the availability of highly qualified faculty members. Mullins (2010) highlighted that effective recruitment practices and policies enable an organization to get the required labor force to work with. However, some participants' argument against the insistence on vertical alignment of degrees (non-acceptance of 'skirt and blouse' degrees) deserve consideration because there is dearth of empirical evidence to argue that teachers with vertical alignment of degrees perform better than those without even though it appears logical.

#### 4.1.3 QA strategy for recruitment of qualified students

Just like QA strategy on staff recruitment, it emerged that all the participant Colleges use the same QA strategy for the recruitment of qualified students because it is imposed by the NAB. From the responses given, participants indicated that in recruiting students, they go by the standard given to them by NAB. The following quotes illustrate this claim:

*For our admission process we don't do it on our own, however, we play an active role in the admission process. NAB sets the admission requirements and we must follow strictly because non-compliance will lead to severe consequences. NAB requires us to admit applicants who possessed credit in English language, Mathematics, Integrated Science/Social Studies and three relevant electives in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) or West Africa Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) (Interviewee VPM).*

*We follow the admission requirements and processes given to us by NAB strictly so that we don't fall foul of the rule. NAB requires us to admit applicants who possessed credit in English language, Mathematics, Integrated Science/Social Studies and three relevant electives in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) or West Africa Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). We are also made to conduct oral examinations in addition to verification of SSSCE or WASSCE results before we offer admission. Sometimes we want to ignore the oral examinations but it's mandatory for us so we are incapacitated (Interviewee VPO).*

*With student's admissions it is mandatory for us to follow standards from the NAB. Sometimes, being strict on the minimum requirement of credit pass does guarantee quality students but we can't do anything about it (Interviewee VPK).*

The above quotes demonstrate that a coercive QA strategy for student recruitment is at play in the participant Colleges. Even though this QA strategy imposed by NAB appears useful for safeguarding standards in the Colleges, the participants feel some level of autonomy given to the Colleges to ensure a certain level of flexibility is necessary. In this regard, Colleges of Education will be able to employ innovative ways to admit students and still maintain standards or even enhance quality.

#### 4.1.5 Monitoring and supervision as a QA strategy

The case colleges OC, KC and MC indicated that monitoring and supervision is used as quality assurance strategy in teaching, and learning activities. Respondents stated specifically that heads of department, quality assurance officers, vice principals go round to monitor the lesson delivery of teachers, attendance of teachers and staff to make the necessary changes in teaching and learning approaches. It emerged that the approach used was imposed by their mentor institutions.

Respondents in female college indicated that;

*Our mandate given us by the government is to train professionals and so to belong to a professional environment we expect to comply to rules given us, as a result NAB requires and expect us to make sure we monitor activities of staff. However, the current monitoring and supervision framework we use is given to us by our mentor institutions and we are obliged to comply (interviewee QAO)*

Respondents in male College also stated that;

*NAB as an external body comes round to monitor the quality assurance issues in the college. We also give our best. The vice principal with his team always make sure from time to time they monitor activities and attendance and lessons of tutors to ensure they are actually doing the right thing, if a tutor is consistently not performing, they are being queried (interview QAM).*

Respondents in mixed college made similar claims

When considering the quality of teaching in higher education, one needs to resist the temptation of seeking simplistic and single dimensional classification. It is best for teachers to be monitored to help them get abreast with current happening so they could change their mode of delivery continuously to meet current trends.

The finding above affirms the claim by Arthur (2011) that effective supervision plays a very crucial role in ensuring quality education by improving students' academic performance.

Linking with the institutional theory to this finding, the coercive pressures compels the colleges of education to conduct supervision in their schools in order to reach the standard expected of them. This supervision is done by the principals, vice principals, quality assurance officers, heads of departments and external supervisors from Institute of Education, University of Cape Coast (UCC).

#### 4.2.0 Normative quality assurance

Themes that emerged under the normative QA strategies are QA strategies for facilities, staff appraisal, professional development and induction and orientation.

##### 4.2.1 QA strategies for facilities

Most of the case colleges in the study indicated that they try as much as possible to maintain their facilities as a way to enhance quality in the institutions through their own internally developed QA strategy. These include appointing an officer in charge of all the facilities in the colleges and making sure that he report to the principal so as to know what step they can take considering the little resources available.

Respondents from mixed college and female college had this to say

*We are actually trying our best to crawl into our tertiary status, to resemble our dear tertiary institutions our facilities undergoe regular maintenance, we find it difficult with the limited resources but we are trying .we have assigned maintenance officer, the quality assurance officer usually goes round to observe all the facilities, makes their report, if there should be improvement, it is discussed with the principal and the necessary action taken by the technocrats. We make sure our vehicles are actually in good shape so randomly and occasionally we service them. This is something we cannot do without because there is a standard set for all tertiary institutions and so to meet such standard requires that we catch up with the tertiary status given us. (Interviewee QAO).*

*As required by all CETAG members, we expected to meet certain criteria when it comes to our facilities hence we make sure our resources or facilities are maintained properly to meet standards, we try to improve on them from time to time. (Interviewee AOK)*

Their findings corroborate with Leung, Chan and Wang (2006) which state that, facilities in the institutions are the buildings, water, sanitation, and electricity and waste management logistics. Poorly maintained institutional facilities have an adverse effect on staff and student- teachers. The quality of school facilities and materials has the potential to affect greatly the quality of education provided to students. This is done where an expert in charge of all facilities go round to check the various buildings which is deteriorating or below standards and find necessary measures to address it.

#### 4.2.2 The formal appraisal system strategy

The case colleges of education OC, KC and MC indicated that as part of their professional norm they make sure they conduct formal appraisals for academic staff as strategy for quality assurance. Though their commitment to this exercise seems to differ according to how well resourced a college is, they all indicated by way of assuring quality, they administer questionnaires through departmental heads and students to evaluate staff job knowledge and personal behaviours against established standards. The colleges indicated that through adoption from workshop from institute of education, what they do is to set performance standard, then communicate it by way of implementing it, then they measure it after every process and make necessary corrections and input after the result are being discussed. This strategy is considered as a normative pressure

Participants in college KC and MC gave these illustrations.

*In our college, formal appraisal system is a key strategy, we don't joke with it all.*

*Producing quality and competent teachers requires that we constantly appraise our staff hence we adopt techniques from T-tel workshops and other conferences we attend. We also mimic our mentoring institutions to help us reach their standard. (Interviewee AOM)*

*We do appraisal of tutors performance we check the strategies they use to deliver their lesson, the resources and the attendance and it is analysed so that we get the performance of each tutor after the analysis we make sure we adopt the culture from our mentoring institutions this is something we have copied from University of Cape coast mainly institute of education due to the constant workshops they organise for us.. (Interviewee QAK).*

*Formal appraisal is part of our everyday teaching and learning in so doing we make sure we learn from other well to do institutions apart what is given us by the institute of education, if we keep on teaching without appraisal then what is the benefit do we gain, we actually make sure we follow due procedure given us by our mentoring institutions. We are now tertiary so we press on to meet set standards (A00).*

The emphasis on accountability has become an important mechanism for policymakers' efforts to exercise control over productivity in higher education. An effective performance appraisal system is one of many methods that are useful for assessing and improving productivity (Mani, 2002)

Appraisal is a requirement for all institutions. As a result the colleges in an attempt to meet standards a tertiary adopt other cultures that is deemed fit to help them achieve their it is compulsory for all tertiary institutions to have an appraisal system to evaluate their performance and identify teachers who fell short of their standards and provided them with additional training. Linking the institutional theory to the finding, it is evident that the coercive pressures compel the colleges to put up their best to achieve the quality expected from them. All colleges are required to have a good appraisal system to find out how effective they are and what can be done to improve upon their services.

#### 4.3.3 QA strategy for professional development

The case colleges indicated that developing themselves professionally has become a basic requirement for them because of their status as tertiary. As result of changes in government and urgent change to tertiary system, all the tutors are required to undergo professional development as soon as possible so as to fit in the tertiary environment.

A Respond in KC had this to say

*Staff development is a basic requirement for all of us in the tertiary environment as a result, our staff undergoe professional training from time to time and sometimes we organise workshops and conferences for them since it is mandatory for all tertiary institutions. Failure to provide professional training for our staff renders our tertiary status illegitimate. (QAK)*

Another respondent from OC made similar claims

*Professional development is a key tool in quality assurance we do not joke with, it is also required by law which means failure to do so might render the institution illegitimate. For this reason we make sure that our staff are given needed training after careful examination. Some staff who do not meet requirement are encouraged and sponsored to upgrade themselves others too*

This finding is a basic requirements expected of all the colleges. Staff cannot be in the system for such a long time without having any form of professional development. Although it is mandatory for all the colleges which falls under the Coercive Isomorphism, it can also be deduced from the finding that it is a professional norm for all the colleges.

The findings is however in line with the NAB(2007) policy which states ,the quality of academic staff of tertiary education institutions is closely linked with the staff development plans of the institutions. The National Accreditation Board (NAB) does not grant institutional accreditation or programme accreditation without evidence of staff development plans of the applicant institution. Further, NAB will not process any application from a public tertiary education institution for programme accreditation, for instance, if approval has not first been obtained from the NCTE which assesses the programme based on relevance, alignment with mission of the institution, target market, staffing, and proof of funding.

Ramsden (2003) also reiterate that the emerging trend is that teaching academics are challenged to expand their range of skills and strategies) which will enable their institutions to meet national and international competitiveness as well as increasing student satisfaction with learning experiences. So professional development drives change for quality in children's learning experiences. In emphasising the need to optimize the cultural capital of all students

#### **4.3.4 QA strategies for induction and orientation of staff**

Almost all of the case colleges involved in this study indicated that through their registry they make sure induction and orientation of staff and students is done accordingly, they indicated further that their status as tertiary demands them to make the way clear for both students and staff to understand the environment they find themselves .Respondents in female college and male college gave these illustrations.

*To belong to the tertiary environment as part of its professional norm, new staff members in our college are given orientation to equip them since they find themselves in a new environment. We make sure we show them the statute of the school and what is required of them. Each staff both old and new are given their set target to achieve. (Interviewee PM)*

*Orientation is something we do for our newly admitted students, to belong to a tertiary environment certain strategies such as the orientation processes should be taken to heart, hence we organise orientation for our students (Interviewee VPO).*

These responses were crosschecked with the quality assurance policy of the colleges, example MC, but it appears orientation of newly qualified teachers was not captured but was practically done. This indicated respondent seem to be knowledgeable about this strategy even though it was not captured in the policy document.

The findings above affirm the claims of Caravella (2011) that, It is expected that organisations with a high number of memberships and with high level of evidence of genuine participation. To belong to a professional association you would have to exhibit values that resembles those of leading professionals. The normative pressures of the institutional theory supports the finding that staff members need to be oriented before they begin their duties in their new environment. This to enable the colleges to promote professionalism in the organisation.

## 5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN QUALITY

The emerging issues clearly demonstrates a highly dominants coercive isomorphic QA strategies in the participant Colleges. The discussions indicate that in some situations, these QA strategies are useful for the Colleges because they are relatively new in the higher education sector with little experience in higher education QA practices. The coercive and mimetic QA strategies compel them to maintain at least minimum standards in the practices as tertiary institutions. Nonetheless, the non-flexibility nature of coercive QA strategies could lead to a culture of compliance which though not necessary negative so far as what they are copying and complying to is robust enough. Notwithstanding, internal QA systems of HEIs are supposed to be rather resilient in addition to robustness because resilient systems pick up quickly when they breakdown due to flexibility but robust systems are not flexible and it takes longer time to recover when they breakdown. Given that all QA systems are susceptible to breakdowns, continuous improvement culture is preferred to compliance culture for internal QA culture in HEIs. The continuous improvement culture drives internal capacity building to recover and innovate internal QA systems breakdown in HEIs.

## 6.0 CONCLUSIONS

Institutional theory describes how both deliberate and accidental choices lead institutions to mirror the norms, values, and ideologies of the organisational environment. In this study, participants expressed that their quality assurance strategies mirror those of their mentor institutions through choices that are considered deliberate but mostly coercive. Majority of the quality assurance strategies employed by the participant College were regarded as mandatory regulatory requirements, which must be complied with. Some of them were also deliberately copied from mentor institutions for reputational purposes with few of them developed based on professional norms. The study concludes that, QA strategies of the participants Colleges of Education appear to about obsession with compliance with little desire to promote internal culture of continuous improvement because everything is based on meeting regulatory requirements and copying for recognition. Based on the conclusion drawn, we recommend that the Colleges pay more attention to the normative isomorphism to balance the coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphism in order to promote the culture of continuous improvement, which is critical for teacher education delivery.

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