



COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION (CHE)

**REPORT OF THE BASELINE SURVEY OF HIGHER
EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN LESOTHO [2010/2011]
(EXECUTIVE SUMMARY)**

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACCA (UK)	ASSOCIATION OF CERTIFIED CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS, UNITED KINGDOM
ADSE	ADVANCED DIPLOMA IN SPECIAL EDUCATION
BOTA	BOTSWANA TECHNICAL AUTHORITY
CAS	CENTRE FOR ACCOUNTING STUDIES
CHAL	CHRISTIAN HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF LESOTHO
CECE	CERTIFICATE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
CHE	COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION
CIPFA	CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC FINANCE AND ACCOUNTANCY
CUT	CURTIN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
DTEP	DISTANCE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME
HEA	HIGHER EDUCATION ACT, 2004
HEIs	HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS
IDM	INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT
LAC	LESOTHO AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE
LCE	LESOTHO COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
LIA	LESOTHO INSTITUTE OF ACCOUNTANTS
LIPAM	LESOTHO INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT
LP	LEROTHOLI POLYTECHNIC
LUCT	LIMKOKWING UNIVERSITY OF CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY
MQA	MALAYSIAN QUALIFICATION AUTHORITY

MSN	MALUTI SCHOOL OF NURSING
NHTC	NATIONAL HEALTH TRAINING COLLEGE
NTI	NURSE TRAINING INSTITUTES
NUL	NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LESOTHO
PSC	PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
PSN	PARAY SCHOOL OF NURSING
QMS	QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
QFL	QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR LESOTHO
RCN	ROMA COLLEGE OF NURSING
SPSS	STATISTICAL PACKAGE FOR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
SRC	STUDENTS REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL
SSN	SCOTT COLLEGE OF NURSING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) is a statutory corporate body established by the Higher Education Act of 2004. Its overall mandate is to regulate higher education and promote quality assurance across higher education institutions in Lesotho. In terms of the Qualifications Framework for Lesotho (QFL), CHE regulates and quality assures the activities of all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that offer programme leading to diplomas, degrees and doctorates (levels 6 through 10).

The CHE members were appointed in 2008 and the CHE Secretariat came into operation in 2010, following appointment of the Chief Executive. During its first year of operation, the CHE Secretariat focused on activities and processes needed for the establishment of the office. Amongst other things, they developed the policies that would facilitate implementation of the mandate of CHE, organizational structure of the Secretariat, terms and conditions of service for staff, human resources policies and finance policies.

To develop a basis for taking action on the priority areas identified in the Strategic Plan (CHE, 2010), a Baseline Survey of all HEIs was designed and carried out during the 2010/2011 academic year. In essence, the survey was designed to generate important baseline information as a basis for developing the profile of each HEI. It covered a wide range of issues including the legal status of each HEI, governance, student support structures, internal quality assurance strategies and compliance with the Higher Education, Act 2004 (HEA) (Government of Lesotho, 2004).

1.2 Objectives of the Baseline Survey

The baseline survey was the first comprehensive effort by Council on Higher Education to collect information about HEIs in Lesotho. The overall objective of the survey was to gather basic information about HEIs for documentation and dissemination to key stakeholders. The information would also provide guidance to CHE by identifying areas for action and those that called for development of new policies. Specifically, the survey was designed to:

- a) Document evidence of legal establishment of institutions and whether this was in line with the HEA;
- b) Establish the extent to which institutions comply with the requirements of the HEA;
- c) Develop a profile of each institution;

- d) Identify the programmes offered in each institution;
- e) Obtain statistics of the students employed in each HEI by gender, programs of study, nationality, etc;
- f) Get statistics on staffing by gender, qualifications, specialization areas, nationality, etc.;
- g) Document information about quality assurance processes in each institution;
- h) Obtain information about the institutional budgets and fees charged to students;
- i) Document any other information relevant to the mandate of the Council on Higher Education (CHE).

1.3 Research Questions

More specifically, the Survey was designed to address the following research questions:

1. What is the legal status of HEIs in Lesotho in terms of the HEA?
2. What is the composition of the teaching force, management and support staff within each HEI?
3. What are the attrition rates of various categories of staff within each HEI?
4. What are the enrolments rates within HEIs?
5. What are the pass rates within HEIs?
6. What is the summary of the fee structure within HEIs?
7. To what extent have the HEIs complied with the HEA with regard to governance structures and governing policies?
8. To what extent have the HEIs complied with the HEA in terms of establishment of student support services?
9. What policies do the HEIs use to admit students?
10. What is the nature of cooperation arrangements between each HEI with others?
11. What quality assurance strategies are used in each HEI?
12. Which academic programmes are offered in each HEI?

1.4 Justification

In documenting baseline information about the institutions of higher learning, this survey addresses the void in the local literature with respect to the current status of higher education institutions in Lesotho. When available such information can be used as a basis for developing short-term and long-term operational plans for improving the quality of provision of higher education in Lesotho.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Population

All 12HEIs that appear in the Foreword of the CHE Strategic Plan (CHE, 2010) and the Institute of Development Management (IDM) took part in the Survey. These were the 7 public institutions and 5 private institutions. This list excluded specialist institutions such as the seminaries which offer programmes in theology and philosophy. .

2.2 Data Collection

The 13 higher education institutions in Lesotho took part in the survey. The survey consisted of four methods of data collection: (a) document analysis that entailed, amongst other things, review of documents from institutions to assess the legal establishment of institutions, (b) the questionnaire that explored a range of issues, including existence of governing structures, programmes, statistical information, admission policies and quality assurance strategies, (c) interviews with key informants that were designed to pursue more closely, some pertinent issues, including those emerging from questionnaire data, and (d) analysis of institutional statistics.

2.3 Data Analysis

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to generate some descriptive outputs using the data from the questionnaire and institutional statistics. Qualitative methods of data analysis were employed to analyze the qualitative information drawn from the documents and the interviews. In particular, we employed a combination of pre-assigned codes and those that were not anticipated but were found to be interesting (Creswell, 2009).

2.4 Limitations of the Study

Three major limitations of this study relate to collection and analysis of statistical information. The first is that the HEIs were not used to collecting, analyzing and using their own statistical information at the time of collecting the data. Consequently, some institutions either submitted incomplete data or data that contained items that were not required. The second is that the institutions were so different in terms of student enrollment, academic programmes, staff qualifications and academic ranks that any attempt to do comparative analysis would not make sense. The third is that the academic years for some of these institutions were not consistent. Consequently, to claim that the data was collected in the 2010/2011 academic year may, for example, be suitable for the National University of Lesotho (NUL) and the Lerotholi Polytechnic (LP) but not for the Center for Accounting Studies (CAS). Finally, although follow-up interviews may have gone a long way towards probing some of the responses to the questionnaire, it would seem that some of the persons who initially responded to the questionnaires were not quite familiar with the operations of the HEIs. Despite these limitations we believe that this study still provides useful information for CHE, the institutions themselves and other stakeholders. It

constitutes a starting point to collecting, analyzing, interpreting and keeping statistical information on a regular basis.

3.0 RESULTS

Our analysis of the information gathered from the higher education institutions (HEIs) led us to the findings described here below. For ease of reference we have divided the findings into 7 categories: (a) Institutional Statistics, (b) Compliance with the HEA, (c) Appointment of Staff, (d) Admissions Policies (e) Student Support Structures, (f) Cooperation Arrangements, (g) Quality Assurance.

3.1 *Institutional Statistics*

- a) The 13 HEIs that took part in the Baseline Survey varied significantly in terms of number of students, qualifications and ranks of teaching and support staff and the type of programmes offered;
- b) As expected the number of people employed by the NUL was higher compared to those employed by other institutions. Furthermore, the proportion of teaching staff compared to support staff was generally smaller across the 13 HEIs;
- c) With the exception of CAS, the majority of people working in these institutions were employed on permanent and pensionable terms;
- d) With the exception of the LCE, more males seemed to have resigned from the HEIs in the last three or so years compared to females;
- e) The majority of the students currently enrolled in HEIs are females. The females were especially dominant at LCE, NHTC and the nursing institutions. The males were only dominant at LP;
- f) Within each institution, the males tended to be more dominant in either the Sciences or the technically oriented domains of knowledge whilst the females tended to dominate nursing, teaching and administrative fields of knowledge;
- g) There was a lot of variation in the fee structure, with the LUCT and the NUL having the highest fees per student;
- h) The majority of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) were not used to systematic data capturing and storage. This was evidenced by the fact that each of them seemed to struggle somewhat when requested to submit statistical information to CHE

3.2 *Compliance with the Higher Education Act, 2004 (HEA)*

- a) Except for the Ministry of Education Institutions that have attained autonomy (NUL, LCE and LP), there was little evidence of the efforts made to comply with the provisions of the HEA;

- b) The rest of the public institutions such as the CAS, IDM, LIPAM NHTC and LAC remain without founding statutes as required in the HEA;
- c) Given that Registration Guidelines are still being developed, all private higher education institutions remain unregistered;
- d) CAS and HEIs that already have founding statutes (NUL LCE and LP) had formal Governance structures such as Council, Senate, Rector and Registrar;
- e) The LUCT as the cross-border provider faced the challenge of localizing these structures given that they only existed in the parent institution in Malaysia;
- f) The CHAL-NTI institutions expressed the challenge they faced in complying with the HEA in terms of governance structures, given their size and proprietorship;
- g) It would seem that Council as a key governance structure only existed at NUL, LCE, LP, CAS, LAC and NHTC.

3.3 Appointment of Staff

- a) Only the NUL, LCE, LP, CAS and IDM seemed to appoint the Head of Institution following procedures that were consistent with the HEA as evidenced by the fact that they used either the Council or similar structure;
- b) At the LUCT the Head of Institution was appointed by President of the Company;
- c) At the LAC, NHTC and LIPAM, the Head of Institution was appointed by the Public Service Commission (PSC). This practice was inconsistent with the provisions of HEA;
- d) The nursing institutions seemed to appoint Head of Institution using either the Hospital Board or a similar structure;
- e) Whereas the rest of the HEIs were guided by a human resources policy document or a similar document to appoint staff, only the LAC, LIPAM and the NHTC used the Public Service Rules and Regulations to perform a similar exercise.

3.4 Admissions Policies

- a) We could not find a document articulating the admission policy for each institution;
- b) All the 13 institutions seemed to follow admission procedures many of which entailed the rank-ordering of candidates based on some criteria;
- c) The nursing institutions included interviews as one of the admission procedures;
- d) It was difficult to identify the efforts made by each institution to attract high caliber and best-qualifying candidates.

3.5 Student Support Structures

- a) The most commonly cited student support structure across the 13 HEIs that took part in the Baseline Survey was the Student Representative Council (SRC);

- b) Only at the IDM where the majority of students were part-time was there a challenge regarding electing and sustaining the SRC;
- c) Student advisement of personal tutorship only existed in the minority of cases and only applied to those students engaged in project work;
- d) In all cases, the students seemed to enjoy access to basic medical services either through public clinics or institutional clinics.

3.6 Cooperation Arrangements

- a) At the local level, the most common type of cooperation arrangement was the affiliation of several institutions to the NUL;
- b) Whereas the affiliation agreement was broader as it included cooperation when undertaking such tasks as programme development and review, in practice affiliated involved the NUL merely for presiding over the processing of results;
- c) The four nursing institutions have a working relationship based on program development and the processing of examinations;
- d) Other cooperation arrangements included academic links with institutions both at the local and international levels, covering areas such as moderation of examinations, research, staff exchange and student exchange programmes.

3.7 Quality Assurance

- a) Although the majority of HEIs claimed existence of a quality assurance unit, follow-up interviews revealed that such units did not as yet exist even though institutions such as CAS and IDM seemed to have some robust quality assurance mechanisms in place;
- b) There was also some confusion with the concept of a quality assurance unit as evidenced by the fact that the NUL Senate was on more than one occasion referred to as a quality assurance unit;
- c) In describing the mandate and strategy of a quality assurance unit, the phrases used seemed to be centered around examinations and externalization, suggesting limitations in the respondents' understanding of the concept of quality assurance;
- d) The interviews did reveal that the institutions were aware of the importance and meaning of programme review even though they did not actually do it regularly;
- e) Major threats to quality assurance were identified by the institutions as poor infrastructure, large student enrollments, low levels of funding, poor working conditions and high staff turnover;
- f) Other threats to quality assurance included lack of state-of-the-art equipment, poor bandwidth and the absence of legislation preventing students' hacking of computers and viewing classified materials such as planned tests.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

In developing our recommendations, we use the same categories used to present the findings. These are (a) institutional statistics, (b) compliance with the HEA, (c) appointment of staff, (d) student admissions, (e) student support structures, (f) cooperation arrangements, and (g) quality assurance.

4.1 *Institutional Statistics*

1. CHE should review and formalize the data collection form and request that HEIs compile and submit statistical information to CHE on a yearly basis at a specified period to enable planning by the Government of Lesotho;
2. The MOET should operationalise the Qualifications Framework of Lesotho (QFL) in order to facilitate harmonization of academic qualifications, ranks and programmes to enable meaningful comparative analysis;
3. CHE should develop appropriate policies to ensure that enrollment in the programmes offered our institution is gender-balanced

4.2 *Compliance with the HEA*

1. CHE has to set and enforce the timeframe for full compliance with the HEA, and to effectively communicate it to the HEIs;
2. Given that CAS, IDM, LIPAM, NHTC and LAC are departments of various government ministries, CHE and MOET should initiate discussion of the implications of the HEA at the highest level of Government in order to facilitate attainment of autonomy by these institutions;
3. CHE and MOET should facilitate speedy development and approval of the Registration Guidelines for Private HEIs;
4. To enable private institutions to develop the structures in line with the provisions of the HEA, it is important for CHE to encourage them to establish comparable governing structures;
5. CHE should encourage dialogue between the CHAL-NTI institutions to facilitate compliance with the HEA.

4.3 *Appointment of Staff*

1. To fully comply with the provisions the HEA, CHE should give all institutions a timeframe for aligning the appointment of Head of Institutions and other staff with the HEA;
2. CHE should set the time frame for the LUCT to localize its structures in order to align appointment of its Head and staff with the HEA;

3. CHE should set the time frame for LAC, NHTC and LIPAM to comply with the provisions of the HEA with regard to appointment of staff;
4. HEIs should rationalize the numbers of teaching staff and support staff so that working conditions and other benefits enable HEIs to attract the most able and qualified staff;
5. To attract the most able staff cadre and to curb on-going resignations, all HEIs should be encouraged to make a conscious effort to improve working conditions;
6. HEIs should conduct exit interviews for staff that are leaving the work place, and should take appropriate action.

4.4 Admissions Policies

1. CHE should develop appropriate policies to ensure that Institutions develop comprehensive admission policy documents;
2. Institutions should develop the strategies of ensuring that the candidates they admit into their programs are the best qualifying candidates.

4.5 Student Support Structures

1. HEIs should ensure that all students have access to student advisement or tutorship services irrespective of whether they are pursuing a project or dissertation.

4.6 Cooperation Arrangements

1. All HEIs should be encouraged to forge targeted working relationships with local and international organizations;
2. Whilst affiliation and other forms of institutional cooperation should be encouraged, CHE to hold each HEI individually accountable for the maintenance of the quality of its programmes.

4.7 Quality Assurance

1. CHE needs to conduct a survey on the status of quality assurance processes within each HEI in order to generate baseline data;
2. CHE should provide professional support to the HEIs in order to enable them to activate or strengthen their internal quality assurance mechanisms;

3. CHE should develop a national quality assurance policy which will, amongst other things, outline the review schedule for all programmes offered in the HEIs;
4. MOET should address the problem of overcrowding in the HEIs, it is important to create alternative forms of attaining recognized qualifications by operationalising the Qualifications Framework;
5. MOET and the private sector should support the HEIs in their efforts to improve the infrastructure and to acquire essential equipment;
6. MOET and CHE should facilitate speedy development and implementation of Registration Guidelines and Accreditation Standards to improve the quality of provision of higher education in Lesotho.