

Exploring How Quality Assurance Manages Prison students ' Access to Distance E-Learning Education

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© 2025 جامعة العلوم والتكنولوجيا، المركز الرئيس عدن، اليمن. يمكن إعادة استخدام المادة المنشورة حسب رخصة مؤسسة المشاع الإبداعي شريطة الاستشهاد بالمؤلف والمجلة.

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Abstract:

This study explores the role of quality assurance in managing access to distance e-learning education for prison students. Amidst the rapid expansion of online educational opportunities, ensuring equitable access and high-quality learning environments for prison learners presents unique challenges. Quality assurance mechanisms are crucial in maintaining educational standards and fostering an inclusive, supportive learning atmosphere. The research employs a qualitative methodology, analyzing data from literature and interviewees with prison students that study through distance e-learning programs. Findings indicate that robust quality assurance frameworks enhance the educational experiences and outcomes for prison students by ensuring that course content, instructional methods, and resource allocation are tailored to meet their advanced learning needs. The study highlights the importance of continuous improvement processes, including regular feedback loops and adaptive learning strategies, to accommodate the diverse abilities of prison students. Additionally, the quality assurance in mitigating the risk of educational neglect in remote prison learning setting is emphasised. Effective management through quality assurance not only supports prison students in realizing their potential but also sets a standard for their academic excellence in distance education.

Keywords: *Quality Assurance, Prison Students, Distance E-Learning.*

استكشاف كيفية إدارة ضمان الجودة لوصول طلاب السجون إلى التعليم الإلكتروني عن بعد

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الملخص:

تستكشف هذه الدراسة دور ضمان الجودة في إدارة الوصول إلى التعليم الإلكتروني عن بعد لطلاب السجون. وسط التوسع السريع في الفرص التعليمية عبر الإنترنت، فإن ضمان الوصول العادل وبيئات التعلم عالية الجودة للمتعلمين في السجون يمثل تحديات فريدة من نوعها. تعتبر آليات ضمان الجودة حاسمة في الحفاظ على المعايير التعليمية وتعزيز جو التعلم الشامل والداعم. يستخدم البحث منهجية نوعية، حيث يقوم بتحليل البيانات من الأدبيات والمقابلات مع طلاب السجون الذين يدرسون من خلال برامج التعلم الإلكتروني عن بعد. تشير النتائج إلى أن أطر ضمان الجودة القوية تعزز الخبرات والنتائج التعليمية لطلاب السجون من خلال ضمان محتوى الدورة التدريبية وطرق التدريس وتخصيص الموارد لتلبية احتياجاتهم التعليمية المتقدمة. تسلط الدراسة الضوء على أهمية عمليات التحسين المستمر، بما في ذلك حلقات التغذية الراجعة المنتظمة واستراتيجيات التعلم التكوينية، لاستيعاب القدرات المتنوعة لطلاب السجون. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تم التركيز على ضمان الجودة في التخفيف من مخاطر الإهمال التعليمي في بيئة التعلم في السجون عن بعد. إن الإدارة الفعالة من خلال ضمان الجودة لا تدعم طلاب السجون في تحقيق إمكاناتهم فحسب، بل تضع أيضاً معياراً لتميزهم الأكاديمي في التعليم عن بعد.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ضمان الجودة، طلاب السجون، التعلم الإلكتروني عن بعد.

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Introduction

The evolution of distance e-learning has significantly reshaped the educational landscape, creating pathways for learning that transcend conventional classroom boundaries. This transformation is particularly impactful for prison students, who face distinct educational challenges that require specialized resources and attention. These students are often in pursuit of opportunities to challenge themselves and expedite their learning, underscoring the importance of quality assurance in ensuring their access to and the high standards of distance e-learning opportunities. Quality assurance within this context encompasses diverse practices and policies aimed at maintaining and elevating educational quality. For prison students, it involves ensuring that curricula are sufficiently challenging, delivery methods are suitable, and educational outcomes are on par with or surpass those in traditional settings. This paper seeks to explore how these quality assurance mechanisms operate and interact within the realm of distance education for incarcerated learners. By examining how educational institutions implement and manage quality assurance processes, the study provides insights into the effectiveness of these measures in fostering the educational growth of prison students. The discourse will address various facets of quality assurance, including student support services, which collectively contribute to a comprehensive approach to managing access to quality distance e-learning for prison students.

Recent studies have highlighted the significance of quality assurance in education for incarcerated students. For instance, Tortop (2022) discusses the resilience of students in the face of educational system challenges and societal perceptions, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has broadly impacted educational access. The research suggests a shift toward recognizing and nurturing potential beyond traditional metrics like test scores, advocating for a holistic view of student profiles, especially for prison students whose educational backgrounds may vary widely (Berry et al., 2022). Further, the literature suggests that quality assurance in open and distance learning (ODEL) is crucial. Historically, concepts of quality in ODEL trace back to industrial and business sectors where quality inspection and assurance were pivotal (Buenestado et al., 2019). Influential quality pioneers such as Phillip Crosby, Joseph Juran, and Edward Deming notably shaped the higher education landscape, particularly in the context of ODEL, emphasizing the necessity of robust quality assurance systems.

Moreover, the application of agency theory, as discussed by Jensen and Meckling (1976), is pertinent in this context. An agency relationship, where stakeholders and agents work together to serve the principal's best interests, necessitates reliable information assurance. This is crucial in education for prison students, where the integrity of information and the role of external quality assurers are fundamental to enabling access and reducing agency conflicts (Caramanis and Lennox, 2008). In conclusion, enhancing the quality assurance processes in distance e-learning for prison students not only supports their educational pursuits but also aligns with broader objectives of rehabilitation

and societal reintegration. By increasing audit efforts and adapting quality management practices to better fit the unique needs of incarcerated learners, educational institutions can significantly improve the efficacy and accessibility of their programs. This integration of rigorous quality assurance with an understanding of the unique challenges faced by prison students is essential for advancing equitable educational opportunities within the correctional education system. Avcu and Yaman (2022) suggest that prison students have the potential to generate new knowledge and transmit humanity's wisdom to future generations. The problem formulation for the study, "Exploring How Quality Assurance Manages Prison Students' Access to Distance E-Learning Education," centers on identifying and addressing the challenges that impede the effective delivery of distance e-learning to incarcerated individuals.

Method

Data Collection

The study commenced in July 2023 and continues to this day. Ethics Approval from 2022/11/09 to 2025/11/09. Ref: 2022/11/09/90284259/04/AM. The paper emanated from a bigger study titled The supervision of postgraduate students studying at a distance through e-learning while in custWe collected this information from a Namibian correctional facility using a combination of interviews and the interpretative paradigm to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of quality assurance in open distance learning within the context of a prison environment. ent. We also conducted a comprehensive literature review to provide additional context and insights into the subject matter. We specifically conducted the research at a Namibian prison, focusing on 12 inmates actively pursuing degrees through distance education programs. These participants were deliberately selected using purposive sampling, a technique that ensured the inclusion of individuals currently enrolled in accredited educational programs and who could provide firsthand insight into the experience of remote learning in a correctional setting.

We conducted semi-structured interviews to explore the participants' experiences, motivations, and challenges with distance learning. This format allowed for flexibility in conversation, enabling the participants to share their perspectives in more detail. We used a tape recorder to record the interviews, capturing every nuance of the discussions for accurate analysis. Afterward, the recordiWe transcribed the recordings verbatim and carefully analysed the resulting transcripts to identify recurring themes and patterns related to distance learning. he researcher to gain a comprehensive and authentic understanding of the inmates' experiences with open distance learning and to highlight the critical factors that affect its implementation and quality assurance in a prison setting.

The main question guiding this research was: "How does quality assurance manage prison students' access to distance e-learning education?"

Data Analysis

The data analysis began with the meticulous transcription of audio-recorded interviews, ensuring the precise documentation of every word, pause, and expression. An adept

transcriber, proficient in English, executed this duty, maintaining the subtleties and significance of the participants' remarks. Through verbatim transcription, the transcriber preserved the authenticity of the participants' voices, accurately reflecting their genuine sentiments, emotions, and experiences. The author received the completed transcriptions for interpretive examination. This strategy entailed a meticulous analysis of the transcriptions to discern principal themes, patterns, and insights pertaining to the experiences of jailed students participating in online learning. The interpretive technique was optimal for this study, enabling the author to explore the personal and subjective meanings participants attributed to their educational experiences, revealing the significant relevance of their responses.

To improve the analysis's credibility, the author employed triangulation by contrasting the interview findings with established research and academic literature. This process aimed to achieve several objectives: to validate the findings by assessing their consistency with established knowledge, to provide a broader context for understanding the participants' experiences, and to highlight the quality assurance management of prison students' access to distance e-learning education. Through the integration of several information sources, the author acquired a thorough grasp of how incarcerated students manage the difficulties of their educational setting. The incorporation of existing literature in triangulation not only substantiated the study's findings but also enhanced the understanding of their educational experiences. The quality of students' access to distance e-learning education, as demonstrated by these individuals, warrants a more thorough and exhaustive investigation. This methodology allowed the author to deliver an extensive analysis that integrated the participants' real-life experiences within the broader framework of quality assurance in incarcerated students' distance education.

Results

We captured the findings verbatim as the participants responded. The number in brackets indicates the number of participants.

The participant(s) expressed their belief that the tertiary institution should provide us with additional time and sufficient data to compensate for our slow internet (2 out of 12 = 16.6%). Luckily, by means of Fortunately, our families have provided us with Wi-Fi, and we also have access to government internet. However, the internet speed is so slow that, in my case, I occasionally lose my two modules due to internet issues (1 out of 12 = 8.3%). on could assist us with things like other institutions, they are being assisted with the data; it will be very nice for me. Factors that can improve the supervision of students in prison are this one: I think it now depends on the correctional services, especially officers (4 out of 12 = 33.3%). Yes, because one thiIndeed, they should increase the number of officers in the education department to enhance flexibility in supervision. This is particularly crucial for us, as we require constant supervision when using the internet. However, with only one officer available at a time, the supervision may not be sufficient to further your studies (2 out of 12 = 16.6%). st, or I think one of the factors that can improve supervision is if the institutions understand the circumstances in which we operate

or in which we study (1 out of 12 = 8.3%). If they better understand the challenges that we face and the difficulties that we have to face on a daily basis, especially when it comes to non-understanding or when we have difficulty in understanding or disruption, concepts in our modules whereby the lecturer or whereby we have to get the platform through which we have to get assistance to be able to understand or better understand the modules. The involvement of your lecturer or supervisor in assisting learners is paramount since we have some issues of communication and time and resources. The lecturers should go the extra mile in trying to assist the student whenever possible (6 out of 12 = 50%). I think if they could allow students who are studying to have their own cell where they have a computer, where they have their study material, where they have access to light, 24 hours (1 out of 12 = 8.3%). If they can ensure that there is no interference, it would benefit all prisoners and those who are interested in studying. Good communication with your supervisors is important; if the students are given proper communication, the time, and the equipment to communicate with the supervisor, then at least improve the supervision whilst in prison (6 out of 12 = 50%). Okay, as I said, the universities or institutions are providing services to us; they must at least give us, for once per week, classes, face-to-face classes, because some of us, when we are taught, that is the time that we can have something, you know, when your own life, when you are online, you do not even have an appetite to read (1 out of 12 = 8.3%). So, it will be better to give classes to inmates, also once per week or during the weekends. What we need from the institution is prompt response; for example, if I have a task to complete or am busy with my research, we should expect the supervisor to respond promptly. Additionally, we need to receive our assessments on time, as our computer time is limited (5 out of 12 = 41.6%). Therefore, the more time we have at our disposal, the better. The institution also needs to be involved; also, the correctional officer must also be involved, especially the time for writing or maybe writing... unclear... who cannot be able to, from there at the beginning of the semester, just to give them what they need, regardless of what they should expect and how the system operates so that they are aware that once they produce one, what do they require and what should you do when approaching the questions, because I myself, I would say you find it difficult; you are moving from the level you are going to the tertiary level. You will find that the way I find also is but because you are used to that level, when you go there you will find ... unclear ... you are not aware of the way things are working (1 out of 12 = 8.3%). Also, I find that when you go to the exam, you don't know how you are going to find these questions; how do you answer the key is to be able to explain what they should do when the exam comes. do. What they should do. So that they should be aware. The factors that will improve to have more members assigned, because of a good example, are if you get in the correctional facility, one of the biggest facilities in Namibia, which consists of 1000-plus offenders, and having all these offenders, it is for me, it is we are far away; I mean, to achieve the goal of being a fellow prisoner, because through education one can, it is a means of rehabilitation as the late Madiba has alluded to (1 out of 12 = 8.3%). It is powerful to be a better person in the future. Our constitution is very clear the education policy in prison stipulates that the percentage of tertiary students is limited to 10%. 0%. My advice to NCS is to revise the policy and to make it accessible for

all of us and then to the supervisor, to be more lenient and to get lecturers in to guide us so that this place where we are studying is too small, get us extra classes so that we are less than I think 45 students at the present moment, but if we encourage the others to come and study, the place will be too small" (1 out of 12 = 8.3%).

Discussion

The voices of incarcerated students reveal the multifaceted challenges they encounter while pursuing distance e-learning in prison settings. Quality assurance measures are crucial in addressing these challenges effectively to ensure educational equity and access. According to participant testimonies, key factors that could significantly improve their learning experiences include enhanced internet access, better supervision, and more proactive involvement from educational institutions. Firstly, improved internet access is fundamental. Many participants expressed frustration with inadequate internet services, which hinder their ability to complete courses successfully. Institutions must provide reliable digital resources to mitigate this barrier, as suggested by one participant's experience of losing modules due to poor internet connectivity. Secondly, the need for increased supervision and support within the correctional facilities is evident. Participants indicated that a higher number of dedicated officers and educational staff would enhance the learning environment, facilitating better supervision and support during their studies. Lastly, greater institutional support was emphasized. This includes more regular face-to-face interactions, prompt responses from supervisors, and timely assessments to accommodate the restricted access to computers and other resources within the prison. Institutions should also consider the unique environmental challenges of correctional facilities, such as limited space and restricted access to study materials. These insights underscore the significance of robust quality assurance systems that can adjust to the distinct circumstances of incarcerated learners, guaranteeing comprehensive support for their educational journeys.

According to Parvin (2019), the conceptual, technical, interpersonal, and political competencies of quality assurers play a crucial role in ensuring that prison students have access to high-quality higher education at ODeL. The ability of quality guarantee managers in ODeL to drive institutions ahead is critical. Data quality, according to Azeroual and Schöpfel (2019), should contain properties including accuracy, timeliness, precision, dependability, completeness, relevancy, accessibility, and interpretability. It's important to consider stakeholders' perspectives and make data available, interpretable, and relevant. Service quality, according to Paposá and Paposá (2022), can assist institutions in differentiating their programs and services from their competitors. The ability of ODeL institutions to meet the needs of the academic community must be the criterion for quality. The emphasis must be on achieving transformation and its stated goals (Cardoso et al., 2019). According to Manghani (2011), the importance of quality assurance lies in ensuring student satisfaction with ODeL institutions' programs, which in turn encourages them to reapply and register on time. It also aims to improve operational outcomes and provide more opportunities for students, align ODeL processes with student achievement of better

results, and ensure that staff members and students are aware of and motivated by the institutions' quality policy and teaching methods. To continue to be viable in a rapidly evolving and cutthroat environment, ODeL institutions should choose an activity that is based on innovation.

Atanda and Olaifa (2022) define quality as the complete functionality of a process, a product, or a service. The International Network for Quality Guarantee Agencies in Higher Education, regional organizations, and professional associations all played a significant role in the introduction and growth of formal quality guarantees in higher education around the world (MoODEley, 2019). These organizations included the World Bank, UNESCO, OECD, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). According to neoliberal politics, the mindset of ODeL institutions has a commercial orientation. Higher education institutions, for example, have evolved into an educational and social undertaking that meets people's economic requirements and interests. According to the principles of profitability and labor market demands, this neoliberal higher education approach necessitates an elitist view of knowledge (MoODEley, 2019).

Higher education institutions (HEIs) universally accept the need for quality assurance to become more effective, efficient, and need-focused. The growing public and political demand to hold higher education institutions (HEIs) responsible for their expected contributions to the creation of programs that will support prison students has exacerbated this situation. Quality guarantee procedures give some people authority while taking it away from others. These techniques help quality assurers establish more distinct lines of accountability (using a top-down logic) by establishing minimal quality standards, monitoring them, and centralising the information that results. As a result, to manage the ODeL quality guarantee processes, the deployment of quality guarantee regimes calls for the development of new management competencies and expertise. Only academics have historically viewed quality assurance systems as a collection of tasks that "distract from the primary activity of teaching and research," so by leaving them in their sole care, there is a risk that they will be viewed as merely administrative responsibilities (Agasisti, Barbato, Dal Molin & Turri, 2019).

According to Yulia Ningsih et al. (2023), accountability is a way for public activity organisers to be held responsible for the outcomes of their performance as well as for all questions pertaining to the steps of all decisions and processes that were carried out. The quality of ODeL university education has attracted a lot of attention during the past few years. Despite the frequent challenges and problems associated with defining, assuring, and enhancing quality, the topic has garnered significant interest due to a variety of factors. Therefore, to benchmark and promote their performance, ODeL institutions need top-notch data (Coates, 2005). Because of this, quality in higher education does not seem to be a singular, absolute idea. This has led to the creation of various definitions of quality and the development of quality guarantee programs over time. Although the concept of quality is a relative one, it will be used interchangeably with quality guarantee by different stakeholders (Cardoso et al., 2019).

According to Niknafs et al. (2022), universities must consider two categories of demands: fundamental and basic needs and non-basic and secondary needs, on the way

to the development and flourishing of prison students. The basic and core wants include the physiological (natural) requirements, safety needs, the need for love and affection, the need for respect, and the desire for self-fulfillment. Additionally, to provide prison students with access to education for self-fulfillment, this article argues that their needs must be taken into consideration at universities. According to Manghani (2011), the quality guarantee department should be responsible for ensuring quality. The goal of a quality assurance department is to provide operational units with a quality assurance system that supports giftedness. The quality guarantee department requires a sufficient number of motivated, qualified, and trained workers who possess a high level of interpersonal ability. Quality guarantee: people will have persuasive, diplomatic, tactful, and resilient interpersonal abilities because of their well-developed interpersonal skills. To ensure operational units adhere to institutional quality standards and best practices, the quality guarantee department should be distinct from the operational units and perform quality assessments on a regular basis.

ODeL institutions are facing increasing pressure to support their online learning initiatives with trustworthy quality assurance procedures. Quality assessment, a technique for evaluating the quality of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), involves contrasting their actual performance against a set of benchmarks or criteria created either from their mission statements or from global standards (Tsiligiris & Hill, 2019). Internal or external bodies may carry out this procedure. Quality enhancement is all about enhancing quality (Tsiligiris & Hill, 2019).

Furthermore, the primary yardstick for evaluating quality should be the ODeL institution's capacity to satisfy the demands of the academic community. To comprehend the concept of quality assurance in ODeL environments, it is crucial to comprehend the distinction between effective leadership and efficient management. This understanding serves as an abstract framework, with effective leadership and efficient management practices serving as fundamental requirements for ensuring quality in ODeL settings. This means that management in ODeL should serve as both a social position that signifies the authority of those in charge and a function that is commonly referred to as leadership. Academic staff in leadership roles, responsible for quality improvement in ODeL environments, bear a dual responsibility: (a) They must successfully select appropriate teaching and research quality improvement objectives as leaders, and (b) they must be efficient managers who use available resources to achieve predetermined objectives. Because ODeL contexts might have different features (such as being public, private, for-profit, or non-profit), managerial leadership skills and strategies need to be situation specific.

Managing quality assurance in ODeL environments should concentrate on context-responsive approaches and associated understandings, traits, and skills of prison students in prisons. External stakeholders, primarily quality assurance organisations like the Council of Higher Education (CHE) in South Africa and the Quality Guarantee Agency (quality guarantee agency) in the United Kingdom, have primarily pursued this to ensure minimum required standards rather than quality enhancement (Tsiligiris & Hill, 2019). To guarantee the achievement of the strategic goals derived from HEI mission statements in teaching

and learning, a quality audit is essential. Quality audits must be carried out by outside organisations (Tsiligiris & Hill, 2019). We can safely anticipate that the requirements for the quality guarantee can range from meeting the most fundamental standards to exceeding those of both internal and external quality assessors, based on the discussion so far.

Organisational context components that will guarantee that talented students are cared for must have an impact on the quality culture of ODeL institutions (Parvin, 2019). Hierarchical organisation and structural division, a lack of procedures, protocols, and roles, a lack of staff and student involvement in organisational decision-making, and a lack of funding are all impediments. Additionally, there are leadership traits that can be categorised as motivating factors, such as (1) commitment to and proficiency in leadership, (2) capacity for multitasking, (3) ability to foster an atmosphere of trust and understanding, (4) resource allocation, (5) setting and communicating policies, and (6) forming alliances and managing people. Managers' emphasis on inspection and control as communication gatekeepers may hinder quality assurance in the ODeL environment (Parvin, 2019).

Leadership in ODeL should be a dynamic process that regularly results in moral and successful communication and involves a complex blend of human abilities, traits, values, and behaviours that will include giftedness. Quality guarantee should take into account the ever-evolving nature of ODeL, which encompasses actions, abilities, traits, and beliefs. The most obvious conclusion drawn from this section is that the quality guarantee approach should prioritise strengthening gifted student access to education by accommodating their capabilities (Ewing et al., 2019). If the ODeL environment adopts the degree of specialisation that corresponds to that size, for instance, it will create more performance than if it adopts the level of quality assurance that corresponds to the knowledge level of prison students. This is because an increase in size, for instance, means there are more employees in the ODeL environment to produce output. Performance is enhanced by specialisation, but performance is also enhanced by growth in size. This may provide an explanation for why the sizes of ODeL institutions vary so widely (Donaldson, 2015). According to Woodhouse (1999), it is crucial to explicitly state the factors for quality assurance in advance, along with the standards used to evaluate the pointers and potential performance standards for these standards. Every institution has a different policy on the use of performance pointers. ODeL universities are required to outline performance pointers, including their purpose and methodology.

On the other side, Lopez et al. (2016) suggest that ODeL institutions concentrate on the following quality guarantee pointers: Budgeting and financial advice serve as indicators for the institution's continuous improvement-focused strategic planning cycles, as well as the financial resources that support giftedness in students and the associated planning and administrative procedures. Professors' advice refers to the qualifications of the professors who assist the school's academic programs, with an emphasis on teaching and research. Some advice for students: a set of high-quality metrics for the accessibility and responsiveness of student support services, such as how well complaints from students are handled; metrics for the demographics and characteristics of the student body, from

potential enrollees to alumni. Academic cues/indicators for instruction include indicators related to the institution's academic offerings, such as its academic programs and degrees, their structure, review, and evaluation; the expertise of the instructors, such as courses and programs designed to prepare students for the workforce; and indicators related to the institution's academic offerings, such as its academic programs and degrees, their structure, review, and evaluation.

Quality assurance is crucial in the open and distance learning (ODeL) strategy. According to Williams et al. (2013) and Greatbatch & Holland (2016), many governments in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have considered establishing quality assurance audits of higher education activities, including open distance learning. The requirement for governments to show that their higher education institutions are successful in providing educational opportunities and creating a skilled workforce for the knowledge economy has been acknowledged (Harrison et al., 2022). Manghani (2011) found that it is impossible to overestimate the significance of well-set-up and managed quality assurance systems, complete with well-written procedures and other quality documents, for the accomplishment of institutional goals. They act as a key to success, helping the institution achieve high-quality processes, procedures, systems, and people. This, in turn, leads to high-quality performance and services, and the enhancement of the following:

ODeL universities have historically used internal methods, peer evaluation by representatives from other schools, and external accreditation through professional organizations to ensure quality (Anderson, 2006). Higher education in ODeL now needs to reform to produce graduates, conduct research, and transmit technologies to the community. Higher education at ODeL must rely on high-level knowledge and quality assurance to stay competitive, and every supporting activity there must be submitted to quality control. To ensure quality, ODeL study program lecturers must work with all involved in students' education. However, typically, lecturers are responsible for ensuring the quality of a course (Stensaker et al., 2018). Other important stakeholders include the head of department, course coordinator, and teaching staff; course administration; and program board.

In order to attract and retain students, the higher education sector must undoubtedly comprehend the perception of brilliant students (Marimon et al., 2019). Berry et al. (2022) perceives teachers as the guardians of gifted services. They also stressed that intentional and accidental biases among educators lead to different levels of access to education. For this reason, quality assurance is required. In open distance learning mode, we must deliberately tackle deficient attitudes and resist pressures to accept the status quo in order to solve concerns of underrepresentation. The process of ensuring quality should be ongoing and dynamic, allowing ODeL institutions the chance to continuously enhance services for the same clients (prison students), while also giving service providers enough time to raise the standard of the services they offer. For the benefit of their students, ODeL institutions have the chance to grow from their mistakes and go above and beyond (Latif et al., 2019). Data quality in quality assurance should, according to Azeroual and Schöpfel (2019), contain attributes including accuracy, timeliness, precision, reliability,

currency, completeness, relevancy, accessibility, and interpretability. The consumer's (talented students') perspective should take precedence, and students should have access to, understand, and benefit from the data.

Paposa and Paposa (2022) discovered that because educational institutions are considered service industries, service quality becomes a critical aspect for all stakeholders. Service quality can help an institution stand out from the competition by ensuring program and service differences. To gain a competitive advantage, it is critical to understand the institution's service quality.

Woodhouse (1999) asserts that each ODeL institution is accountable to the public for ensuring quality. The following enquiries need to be answered when conducting quality reviews:

- The goal is to be able to answer the question, "Where are you right now?" [Assessment].
- How can you ascertain your travel options? [Improvement].
- Is it possible to assess how you utilized the resources at your disposal? [Accountability].
- Can you evaluate the potential of your graduates? [Accreditation].
- How can we pinpoint the problem accurately? [Determining the problem].
- To understand what can be done about anything that isn't working, [Resolving a dilemma]
 - Determine how much money you'll require.

Donabedian procedures can be essential in assuring quality in specific circumstances. Structure in the Donabedian approach refers to elements that impact the environment, such as financial resources, educational programs, and human resources in an ODeL environment (Botma & Labuschagne, 2019). On the other hand, the term "process" refers to the execution of ODeL education programs. If all the underlying theories can be realised as a result of the teaching and learning activities, that should be our criterion (Botma & Labuschagne, 2019). Similarly, the outcome of the implementation of quality guarantee processes should be the anticipated desired or undesirable change (Ibid., 2019, p. 368). In order to assess whether students have achieved the program's goals in ODeL, quality assurers must participate in scheduled teaching and learning activities, gather data that meets the desired outcomes, and make informed decisions. To ensure quality through Donabedian phases, we must first understand the structure, process, and intended outcomes. For instance, "To understand how we fund ODeL's quality guarantee programs?" Assurers must comprehend the relevance of structure. What principles guide the creation of quality guarantee programs, and how should we manage stakeholders?

Conclusion

In conclusion, the investigation into how quality assurance manages prison students' access to distance e-learning education underscores the pivotal role that these systems play in bridging the gap between educational opportunities and incarcerated learners. Research demonstrates that effective quality assurance practices play a crucial role in

facilitating the educational progress of prison students, providing them with essential skills and knowledge that can aid in their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Through regular assessments, curriculum adjustments, and continuous feedback mechanisms, educational institutions can refine e-learning programs to better meet the specific needs of incarcerated individuals. This study highlights the need for robust quality assurance frameworks that are responsive to the unique challenges faced by prison students. By ensuring high-quality education through systematic quality checks and balances, these frameworks support the delivery of programs that are both equitable and effective. Moving forward, the commitment to maintaining rigorous quality assurance standards will be crucial in enhancing the educational outcomes for prison students and providing them with real opportunities for personal and professional growth beyond their incarceration.

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