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A Phenomenological Study of Tutors' Insights on the Meaning of Quality of Education in Selected Primary Teacher Training Colleges (PTTCs) in Uganda

Edward Kigozi¹

¹College of Education, Central China Normal University, Wuhan 430079, Hubei, P.R. China

Abstract

Due to the pressure exerted by competition among educational institutions to achieve funding and legitimacy in public, achieving quality of education has become a major concern for all the stakeholders not only in higher educational institutions but to the PTTCs as well. So, to achieve this, an understanding of what quality is in teacher training colleges such as PTTCs is highly paramount. The major aim of this study was to explore the insights of tutors in PTTCs on the meaning of quality of education. To achieve this, the study employed a phenomenological research design to attain a deep understanding of the concept of quality of education as perceived by the tutors in PTTCs. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed through thematic and content analysis. The study unveiled that PTTC tutors perceive the quality of education in the following ways: meeting students' needs and government quality assurance (QA) standards, students performing well in examinations, work culture involving everyone to achieve the needs of the students, compliance with quality standards, and corresponding to the learners' expectations, meeting criteria in learner support services and the ability to deliver the subject matter to the students. Finally, several recommendations and conclusions were drawn from the study.

Keywords: Tutors, Insights, Quality of Education, Primary Teacher Training Colleges (PTTCs)

1. Introduction

As the world is currently becoming more economically, politically, environmentally, and technologically interconnected than before, there is a need for teacher training colleges to provide better quality teacher education to teacher trainees to meet such initiatives (Stewart et al., 2013; Hilton, 2016). By doing this, better teachers are trained that will, in turn, educate the students to prepare them for global challenges, innovativeness, and global jobs. While striving to achieve the plans, higher education institutions, as well as teacher training colleges, have applied various processes such as quality audit, accreditation, continuous assessment, self-evaluation, external examinations to ensure the quality of teacher education and to ensure that students not only achieve local standards but also global competence (Jung & Latchem, 2012). Although these processes may seem to have worked in some of the teacher training colleges, their successful implementation may not be achieved without establishing and developing the tutors' perception of quality of education. This view is

underscored by the fact that tutors are the main implementers of the curriculum and most of these realities need their understanding of the quality of education to be achieved fully.

The views mentioned by the previous scholars seem to fit into the context of PTTCs in Uganda too. Like any other developing country, Uganda is on a path to major advancement in political, economic, and social transformation amidst the current era of knowledge and technology. Together with other key areas such as access, equity, quality of teacher education has become the most pressing issue needed for the development of the education system in general. Furthermore, the quality of its activities and outcomes has put a significant impact on Uganda's economy and on other sectors, such as health, agriculture, science and technology, public administration, and democratic governance. In addition, the quality of primary teacher education graduates particularly from the PTTCs has also influenced Uganda's capacity for strengthening its regional cooperation within East Africa, Africa, and international cooperation generally through contributing to Universal primary education as one of the strategies for poverty eradication. For these reasons, the quality of primary teacher education delivered in PTTCs has become a priority area for both higher education institutions and the policymakers in Uganda.

In the 45 public and 7 private PTTCs in Uganda, several strategies have been applied to improve the quality of education provided to the student teachers. Some of these include admitting highly performing students from secondary schools, professional development of tutors through various non-formal and formal training programs, applying quality assurance approaches and processes such as quality audits, accreditation, continuous assessments, external examination, student evaluation of teaching, and inspection.

Regardless of applying these approaches and processes, the performance of pre-service teachers in national examinations has been perceived as being unsatisfying hence leading to a concern from various stakeholders of education regarding the quality of the teachers produced and quality of primary teacher education in general. The blame for this unyielding academic performance has been shifted to the crowded curriculum of the PTTCs and to the tutors for devoting less attention to their teaching, teaching students basing on theoretical rather than practical knowledge, which further emphasizes memorization of facts rather than the thoughtful and critical meaning of the subject content to be taught after qualifying as primary teachers (Kagoda & Ezati, 2013).

Although the aforementioned assertions may hold some degree of truth, the researcher believes that improving the academic performance of pre-service teachers in PTTCs and the quality of primary teacher education requires an understanding of how the tutors perceive the quality of education in PTTCs. Therefore, the major aim of the study was to examine the understanding of quality education among tutors in PTTCs in Uganda.

Research question: The study was guided by the following research question.
How do tutors in PTTCs perceive the concept of quality of education?

2. Review of related literature

While drawing from the existing literature, the main purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the key concepts of quality in higher education and its understanding based on the views held by various scholars.

2.1 Concept of quality

To date, a comprehensive review of literature on quality of education by several scholars such as Kahsay (2012), Amaral & Rosa (2010), Prisacariu & Shah (2016) and Chivasa et al. (2021) documents that there is a lack of clarity and understanding of the concept of quality in higher education. In support of this, Matei & Iwinska (2016) point out that quality is a complex and multi-faceted concept with no universally accepted definition. Thus, in this literature review, the various views on quality in higher education from both a global and local perspective are presented.

2.2 Meaning of Quality in higher education

The most fundamental question raised by most stakeholders and researchers in education is “What is Quality in Higher Education?” Similarly, like other scholars, the researcher views this as it is important to raise this question at the beginning while seeking the various views of tutors on what quality might be in PTTCs in Uganda’s context. In their book, titled “Quality Assurance in Higher Education: A Practical Handbook” Matei and Iwinska (2016) quoted several scholars who expressed overwhelmingly their views of the concept of quality as being perplexing. Fascinatingly, according to them instead of the scholars defining quality instantly they described it with various connotations as being: “notoriously elusive”(Neave,1994),Scott “slippery” (Pfeffer &Coote, 1991); “relative” (Harvey & Green, 1993); “dynamic” (Boyle & Bowden, 1997); “multidimensional(Campbell &Rozsnyai, 2002); “a philosophical concept that lacks a general theory in the literature”(Green, 1994;Westerheijden,1999). Following the aforesaid views, various scholars have come up with various schools of thoughts on how they understand quality in higher education in their own context.

2.3 Approaches to understanding quality in higher education

As the scholars from the previous section wonder what a hell quality is, several scholars (Harvey & Green, 1993; Cheng & Tam 1997; Adams 1993; Garvin 1987; &Gibbs, 2010) have attempted to provide various approaches to the understanding of quality in education. These approaches are presented in the following table 1.

Table 1: approaches to understanding quality in higher education

Harvey and Green (1994)	Cheng and Tam (1997)	Adams (1993)	Garvin (1987)	Gibbs (2010)
5 Conceptions of quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality as perfection • Quality as fitness for purpose • Quality as value for money • Quality as exceptional • Quality as transformation 	7 Models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal and specification • Resource-input • Process • Satisfaction • Legitimacy • Absence of problems • Organizational learning 	6 Common Views <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputation • Resources and other inputs • Process • Content • Outputs or outcomes • Value-added 	8 Competing Dimensions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance • Features • Reliability • Conformance • Durability • Serviceability • Aesthetics • Perceived quality 	3 Dimensions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presage variables • Process variables • Product variables

Source:Abebe (2014), Matei and Iwinska (2016) and organized by the researcher

From table 1, Harvey and Green (1993) provided five conceptions of quality in higher education which are: *quality as perfection* which emphasizes implementing the process of teaching and learning with no faults rather than the outcomes of the process. Looking at *quality as perfection* focuses on the process of teaching and learning as being flawless or with no defects rather than its inputs or outputs. Furthermore, Harvey and Green in their assertion, they meant that achieving quality of education requires an effective and efficient process; which should occur when the people in institutions perform their duties right first time. While connecting this to the PTTCs, every staff can achieve perfect outputs by delivering their lessons according to the required input standards while collaborating well with other staff members and students. Then looking at *quality as exceptional*, this approach describes quality as something being exceedingly of very high standards. According to this view, being of excellence signifies exclusiveness in the process, inputs and to achieve extra-ordinally outputs of which few institutions can be able obtain. While aligning this approach to the PTTCs, such a perspective of quality remains a dream as the students admitted, educational resources in terms of availability, quality and utilization may not meet the standards to achieve exceptional excellence in performance and graduates as it may be required. Subsequently, this approach of *quality as fitness for purpose* focuses on the purpose a service or product offered to the stakeholders. For instance, in the PTTCs, such a view can be seen in

terms of what purpose primary teacher education and its graduates serve the community or the nation as social service. In conclusion therefore, the assumption behind this view spins around the idea that quality is best understood when a product or service is examined against the purposes it offers rather than set of absolute standards of achieving it. On the other hand, the view of *quality as value for money*, rests on the assumption that quality should portray the cost and economic price of a product or service which meets the high standards but affordable to the customers in terms of cost. Regarding this, PTTCs, should be accountable to the parents, students, employers and the state or sponsors who invest in their money. *Quality as transformation* views quality in terms of a change in students as a result of the teaching and learning process in the education institutions. According to Harvey and Green (1994), the teaching and learning process enhances students' knowledge, skills, and cognitive capabilities thereby effecting significant value added. In addition, the other aspect of transformative education lies on its capacity to empower participants so that they can take ownership of their own learning process, for instance, by actively participating in shaping the model of delivery of teaching, learning and the decision-making process it involves. In the case of PTTCs, this view of quality seems to be comprehensive as it takes account of other approaches of quality ranging from setting standards, meeting definite purposes, value for money while examining the extent of added value to learners by the learning process.

Looking at Cheng and Tam (1997)'s approach to understanding quality using the seven models, they used the following seven related models to explain what the concept of quality means. The *goal and specific model* views quality in higher education in terms of attaining objectives, mission statements and goals set by the education institutions. So, for PTTCs to achieve their desired quality of education, they should set clear goals, objectives, and mission statements and put up strategies to attain them in their programs. The *resource-input model this approach of puts emphasis on the quality of educational resources and infrastructure as in educational institutions to ensure the quality of education.* In the context of PTTCs, this belief stresses that if they are to attain better educational quality they should secure quality, access, and utilization of resources such as admitting high competent students, qualified tutors and top management, better infrastructure, and facilities such as a well-stocked library, laboratory, funding, and financial assistance. The *process model* views educational quality in terms of how effective the teaching and learning process is carried out in the institution. In the situation of PTTCs, achieving a better quality of education needs more than having quality education resources and infrastructure; there is a need for proper leadership, communication channels, participation-ordination, adaptability, planning, decision making, social interactions, social climate, teaching methods, classroom management, learning strategies, and learning experiences as also pointed out by Cheng and Tam (1997). The *satisfaction model* views the quality of education in the extent to which the process of teaching and learning satisfies the learners and other stakeholders in terms of performance. So, according to this model, for the education in PTTCs to be considered as being of quality, they should have an instructional quality that ensures the satisfaction of their learners and other stakeholders through better performance. The *legitimacy model* views the quality of education in terms of achieving legitimacy to survive amidst the prevalent competition for resources, pressures from the market economy, and technology. So, for PTTCs to achieve better quality of primary teacher education they should ensure accountability to their students and other stakeholders, respect value for their money, and succeed in achieving acceptance and respect from the public in general. The *absence of problems model* sees quality in the level of effectiveness and efficiency of the process as having no defects. The approach assumes that the absence of flaws and defects are signs of a healthy functioning education program in institutions such as PTTCs. The *organizational learning model* perceives educational quality in terms of improvement and continuous development that a learning process brings to participants, methods and practices, and outcomes. For instance, in PTTCs, continuous improvement in educational processes impacts the students through providing them an opportunity to take part in activities at the colleges which is a significant learning experience they attain from studying in the institution.

Adams (1993) provides six common views about the quality of education. In his view, he suggested what quality is in the following conceptions: *reputation* which views quality in terms of how stakeholders such as students believe about the education program delivered by the educational institution. In this case, PTTCs work hard to achieve legitimacy through delivering quality education; *quality as resources and other inputs* sights quality is seen to the extent to which an education institution/its programs excels in standards of its inputs and resources such as students, faculty, financial resources, and facilities. For *quality as a process*, educational quality is

depicted in relation to the well-being of the teaching and learning process. In the context of PTTCs, this perspective is seen when students and other stakeholders show eagerness of whether the learning process has achieved quality. Then quality *as content* views the quality of education in relationship with institutions (such as PTTCs) ability to deliver relevant and high standard knowledge, skill, and information to its students. Consequently, *quality as outputs or outcomes* is seen in terms of achievement in cognitive skills, promotion of students to the next levels of education, graduation rates, retention of students in the program, and occupational status. For instance, in PTTCs such an approach of quality can be achieved when an educational program equips pre-service teachers with skills and attitudes which are important and crucial to the economy and development of the society and the nation. *Quality as value-added* views educational quality in terms of the extent to which an educational program in the educational institution such as in PTTCs impacts students' (pre-service teachers') potentials that adds value to the quality of their learning.

Garvin (1987) suggested eight conceptions of quality consisting of eight dimensions namely: *performance*; when conceptualizing quality as performance, it directly relates to the fundamental operating characteristics of an outcome of service. For instance, in PTTCs viewing quality in terms of performance indicates the outcome of the teaching and learning process or education. So, in this case, the high the performance, the better the quality of the education process; on the other hand, features, views quality in terms of basic functioning of a service offers to the stakeholders. For example, the features indicate the function of education to its various stakeholders such as the students, teachers, employers, and the state; consequently *reliability*; enlightens quality as the possibility that service encounters malfunctioning, often within some specified period. Although this view is more industrial or business-focused, it can fit into PTTCs in Uganda too. For instance, it can be used to assess the quality of the PTTCs graduates in their role of teaching students in primary schools; *conformance* sees quality as the extent to which the function of a product or service perfectly meets specifications that conform to standards. For example, in Uganda, PTTCs are mandated to conform to prescribed quality standards set by the National Council for Higher Education in the quest for ensuring the quality of education; *durability* sights quality as the level of use or enjoyment of a product or service by the customer before it encounters break downs. For instance, in PTTCs to ensure that the quality of primary teacher education serves the pre-service teachers to their expectations, curriculum reviews are made after a period of five years to make repairs in their delivery of the program; *serviceability* views quality in terms of the conditions related to handling customer complaints and the degree to which a firm or institution demonstrates standards of its professional behavior. Regarding PTTCs in Uganda, this view fits in fact that quality of education is also achieved when the students are given focus to understand and respond to their complaints so that they improve on the services offered to them; *aesthetics highlights* quality on how a product looks, feels, sounds, tastes, or smells as judged by the customers. In the context of educational institutions like PTTCs in Uganda, this facet of quality may include issues such as well-orderliness of campus, the weight of academic certificates/diplomas awarded; *perceived quality* this approach views quality in the perspective of reputation. In the case of PTTCs, such a view is also perceived as a major indicator of primary teacher education which rests on the pre-service' mindset towards studying in the education institution.

Gibb's (2010) three dimensions provide an understanding of quality in three dimensions namely, presage addresses quality in circumstances of the educational institution such as PTTCs covering the time frame before students start the actual process of learning. It includes aspects related to education resources, admission of students, quality and qualification of tutors, quality of pre-service teachers as well as the general condition of an educational institution; the process depicts quality on what is going on during the teaching and learning process. Similarly, in PTTCs, such a view explains the nature of quality and quantity of students' engagement in the teaching and learning process and *product variables* see the quality in relation to the student's cognitive capacity and the final outcomes of an educational process. Like in other educational institutions, in PTTCs also student performance and educational gain are key to capturing both the tangible and intangible impacts of a learning process.

From the afore-discussion, it can be shown that understanding of quality seems to be reflective on individual elucidations, set of principles while being compared to other disciplinary backgrounds, context, personality, academic qualification, and experience. Similarly, it is also clear that the connotations of the concept of quality

have an absolute basis in key social settings such as tradition, value, expectation, and culture. The common facet all the perceptions of quality presented put student as a customer at the center of activities in the institutions. In addition, the views stemming from the afore-mentioned literature is that quality in higher education and student satisfaction are closely related concepts. This is also shown by approaches to quality such as reputation as an aspect of perceived quality, the legitimacy model which emphasizes value for money, and success in achieving public image all of which led to satisfaction of the students. Another approach is the satisfaction model in which educational quality in terms of meeting the expectations and needs of students as the customer of educational institutions (Cheng & Tam, 1997). Another factor that puts the satisfaction of students at the forefront is performance in which quality looks at the extent to which the service offered meets the purposeful requirements of the students (Garvin, 1987). Furthermore, a reputation that also satisfies the students through the way their certificates and diplomas conferred are perceived in the mind of the students and other stakeholders (Adams, 1993).

Conclusively, therefore, there is no single comprehensive and all-inclusive definition of quality that has been provided from the currently existing literature. This means that quality of education is a multi-dimensional concept and cannot be easily be assessed by only one indicator as pointed out by Cheng & Tam (1997). Similarly, Gibbs (2010), Harvey and Green (1994) stress the importance of using a variety of views to understand a range of perspectives on quality of education concurrently. Since defining quality of education is contextual and evolving, the researcher believes that understanding it should take a pragmatic approach accounting for both of its quantitative and qualitative aspects so that the various expectations, interests, views, and contexts of all stakeholders in education are accounted for.

3. Methodology

This section presents the research approach and design, sampling, data analysis, validity, and reliability of the study.

3.1 Research approach and design

A qualitative research approach with a phenomenological design was used to explore tutors' insight on the concept of quality of education in the PTTC context. The choice of employing a phenomenological design in this study is underscored as it analyzes deeply the perceptions of respondents in this case the PTTC tutors on a current phenomenon in this case quality of education (Padilla-Díaz, 2015; Flynn & Korcuska, 2018). Furthermore, the study design enabled the researcher to explore how tutors perceive the quality of education in PTTCs in Uganda which requires understanding their views through asking broad and general interview questions, collecting data consisting of mainly verbal explanation, describing, and analyzing these words into themes, and conducting further inquiry in their natural settings.

In addition, the phenomenological design provides a suitable method when intending to generate adequate in-depth information on tutors' perceptions and understanding of the meaning of quality of education in the PTTCs perspective. This is in line with van Groenewald (2004), Hesdorffer et al. (2012), Conroy (2003), Thani (2011) who also point out that the appropriateness of such a research design is important in dealing with studies that need to create a deeper understanding of the participants' views of a given phenomenon in their natural settings primarily with the processes.

3.2 Sampling

The study was carried out in four PTTCs (two public and two private PTTCs) with a total of eight tutors that were purposively selected from central Uganda. This was done to obtain needed from participants who were thought to be knowledgeable on the topic and to maintain decent manageability of the scope of the study. Also, the shortage of time and other resources justify the need for studying a smaller research population. While conducting the study, the real names of the PTTCs and participants were made anonymous using pseudonyms. The researcher believes that the significance of concealing institutional identity is crucial in enhancing the

possibility of cooperation and obtaining the willingness of respondents for interviews. With this regard, the procedure could considerably maintain the comfort and confidence of tutors while disclosing sensitive information about how they perceive quality and the challenges they face while ensuring it in their PTTCs. As well, the anonymity of the PTTCs helped in actualizing the findings of the study without prejudice to the identity of the institution.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

The study applied semi-structured interviews to collect data from the purposively selected eight tutors from four PTTCs. The collected data from semi-structured interviews were analyzed qualitatively through transcribing the verbatim, thematic, and content analysis to create emerging themes related to the research questions. Generally, the following steps were followed; coding of the data, initial reading of text data; identify specific text segments related to research objectives; label the segments of text to create coding categories; reduce overlap and redundancy among the categories as stated by Chan et al. (2013), Moser & Korstjens (2018).

3.4 Validity and reliability

In the perspective of qualitative study research, validity emphasizes capturing the authenticity of the findings (Beck et al., 1994; Pereira, 2012). The researcher achieved this through giving a detailed account of how tutors feel about; understand the concept of quality and what challenges they face while ensuring the quality of education in their colleges (PTCS). On the other hand, reliability involves scrutinizing the inquiries' various endeavors to maintain, establish consistency and dependability of the study findings (Marques & McCall, 2005). The validity and reliability of the study were established through ways as suggested by Oluwatayo (2012), Lakshmi & Mohideen (2013): member checks in which the researcher took the data back to the respondents in this case the PTTC tutors from whom they were derived to ascertain the plausibility of the findings of the study; prevention of bias where the researcher exercised extensive reflection and reflexivity as he proceeded through the interviews with the tutors. Therefore, validity and reliability of the study is important as it creates credibility and robustness of the study findings. In support of this, Pereira (2012), and Neuman (2014), concur that qualitative researchers strive to show an honest and accountability of respondents' views about phenomena under investigation. The next section presents the findings and discussion of the study.

4. Findings of the study

This section presents the findings and discussion of the study as guided by the research questions and objectives.

4.1 Tutors' insights on the quality of education

Based on the thematic analysis of the semi-structured interview data, in the form of transcribed interview records while major themes from the categorization and combination of emergent themes related to how tutors perceive quality are presented.

Themes related to the perception of quality by the tutors

Research questions	Themes about quality of Education
How do tutors at PTTCs conceive of quality of education?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quality refers to meeting students' needs and government QA standards. 2. Quality refers to students performing well in examinations. 3. Quality refers to the work culture involving everyone to achieve the needs of the students. 4. Quality refers to compliance with quality standards and corresponding to the learners' expectations. 5. Quality is meeting criteria in learner support services. 6. Quality is the ability to deliver the subject matter to the students.

Theme 1: Quality refers to meeting students' needs and government QA standards.

When the tutors were asked how they perceive quality in their colleges, some of the tutors mentioned that:

We think that quality is meeting the students' needs who are our customers and the procedure that are set by the government to ensure high standards of education (KIB-03; NAM-01).

Other tutors had this to say:

Since quality is meant to meet the needs of the students, the curriculum should be designed in such a way as to meet the requirements prescribed under the NCHE QA Framework" (KIB-06; BLB-01; KAB-03).

Similarly, another tutor argued that:

I view quality in terms of meeting students 'academic needs and as it agrees with the Nation Council for Higher education quality assurance framework (NAM-04).

Theme 2: Quality means a work culture involving everyone within the schools to achieve the students' expectations.

Views from the different tutors interviewed revealed that the general perspectives on quality have been identified as referring to the culture of involving everyone in the schools to achieve the requirements of the students. One of the tutors clarified that:

I regard quality as a culture in which we must do our best to satisfy the needs of the students as our main customers. We need to find out the students' requirements so that we can deliver to their expectations (NAM-02).

Another tutor made further clarification on what he thinks quality is, he mentions that:

So, to me I tell you that quality is a culture ... quality may not be head of the department only to work. It involves and is owned by all the staff and tutors. To achieve quality everybody must contribute, and everybody must take responsibility for achieving quality (BLB-04).

Other tutors referred to their perspective of quality according to the quality assurance framework for the national council for tertiary and higher education. For instance, these tutors unanimously acknowledged that:

To address in terms of meeting and satisfying the needs of the students, we should follow the QA framework for the NCHE manual in which we the tutors should adopt common values in performing our errands so that students' requirements are satisfactorily met (BLB-01; NAM-03; KAB-05).

While basing on the perspective of honesty, this tutor commends that:

The common values and work culture aimed at meeting and satisfying the needs of the students, there is a need to look at quality in terms of integrity, professionalism, caring, innovation, and teamwork while serving the students in our colleges (KAB-04).

Theme 3: Quality means a standard criterion for supporting students' learning

In a more precise perspective, these tutors (NAM-01; NAM-06; KAB-03; KIB-02) view quality in terms of support given to learners in their learning. They asserted that QA refers to the conformity with the college's aim of providing quality teaching services to our students who are indeed our customers. In support of the previous tutors' view, another tutor mentioned that:

To me, quality involves ... keeping up with the standards of teaching that we are supposed to use while delivering support content to the students... The class should be very conducive, comfortable, and then convenient to the students in terms of space and sitting, capacity should be convenient for learning (KAB-05).

While emphasizing more on providing space to students, other tutors mentioned that:

If the students need enough space for discussion, we must provide space for them for discussion. If the students need space for exploring additional reading, we must have the library.... We should have enough space for students to have a break in between classes so that the students have space for sitting down and discussing, we must also have a discussion room.... We should have our place very informative meaning that we must have a prayer room, coffee table, and such things like that. (NAM-06; BLB-01).

Theme 4: Quality means compliance with quality audit standards corresponding to the students' expectation

Quality standards in PTTCs have been evolved and revised to meet the requirements of internal quality criteria and external QA standards set by the National Council for Higher Education. This review of the quality standards in the PTTCs aligns quality with external quality standards aimed at meeting students' expectations. One of the tutors explained that:

To me, quality must be aligned to what the auditors say about the standards set especially in terms of students. Therefore, quality should refer to students' satisfaction and compliance to the external quality auditors' standards as it is written in the quality assurance framework for tertiary and higher education prepared by the national council for higher education (NCHE) (BLB-03; KAB-04).

Another tutor mentioned that:

To me, quality means putting up strategies that aim at providing services that fit the students' expectations (KIB-01)

Theme 5: Quality refers to learners performing well in examinations.

Some of the tutors consider students' performance in final examinations as being an aspect of quality of education. The tutors believe that when the students pass their examinations, they can go from one level to another and join the employment world successfully. Regarding this, one of the tutors said that:

To me, I view quality as making my students pass highly in the final examinations. What parents and employers understand is seeing good grades after students sit for the examinations. So....me I don't understand any other issue stated on quality of education other than student performance (NAM-04).

Similarly, these tutors mentioned that:

Our students mind of passing rather than how we teach them... they don't care about getting teaching skills and content. One day in a meeting one of our students reasoned that "what is the use of knowing good content to teach yet you have poor grades?" so we think that any plan that is meant to ensure quality, should consider student performance in examinations (BLB-02; KIB-04; NAM-05).

Furthermore, another tutor commented that:

The quality of education in PTTCs is ranked according to student performance ...those with a higher percentage of students' performance are ranked higher in terms of quality. Even in my college when students fail and retake a subject...the head of the department comments that my teaching is of poor quality...this makes me feel that I should consider my student passing with better grades as having a good quality of education than getting good content and teaching skills (KAB-03).

Theme 6 quality as the ability to deliver the subject matter to the students

Regarding this, this tutor pointed out that:

According to my own view quality of education is seen in the way subject matter is given to the students. If students are taught well, they perform better and they will be able to teach as they were taught by their tutors (NAM-06).

5. Discussion of the findings of the study

This section presents the discussion of the findings obtained from the respondents during the study. The first aim of the study was to explore the insights of tutors on the meaning of quality of education.

5.1 Tutors' insights on the meaning of quality of education:

These included the following:

5.1.1 Quality refers to meeting students' needs and government QA standards

Some tutors perceived quality as meeting students' needs and government QA standards. In this view, the tutors see their responsibility as teaching diligently towards meeting the student's needs of becoming better primary school teachers. However, the process of teaching must be in line with the government and QA guidelines set by the National Council for higher education and the ministry of education and sports of Uganda. This view is in line with Cheng and Tam (1997)'s satisfaction model which views the quality of education in the extent to which the process of teaching and learning satisfies the learners and other stakeholders in terms of performance. Furthermore, the fact that tutors also view quality as meeting the QA standards set by the government, this view by the tutors also fits in Garvin (1987) school of thought in which quality of education is also seen as the extent to which the service, in this case, the teaching as conforming to the set standards.

5.1.2 Quality means a work culture involving everyone within the schools to achieve the students' expectations

PTTC tutors also view quality in terms of collective responsibility of all the staff and tutors in providing services that are aimed at seeing students achieving their expectations. Additionally, the tutors believe that quality of education must be of and for all the stakeholders in the PTTCs. This view is also in agreement with Cheng and Tam (1997) who asserts in his process model that perceives the quality of education in terms of how effective the teaching and learning process is carried out in the institution which goes beyond having proper infrastructure but also there is need for proper leadership, communication channels, participation, coordination, adaptability, planning, decision making, social interactions, social climate, teaching methods, classroom management, learning strategies, and learning experiences all of which need inclusion of all the stakeholders in the educational institution.

5.1.3 Quality means a standard criterion for supporting students' learning

Regarding this, tutors believe that quality of education is in conformity with the colleges'(PTTCs) aim of providing quality teaching services to the students which also includes having in place a learning environment that is conducive, comfortable, and convenient to the students. A conducive environment should include a space for reading (well-stocked library), a well-equipped laboratory, having breaks in between lessons, and students' space for personal reading, discussion, and recreational activities.

5.1.4 Quality means compliance with quality audit standards corresponding to the students' expectation

Tutors in PTTCs perceive the quality of education as conformity to the standards which correspond to students' expectations as set by the National Council for higher education and the Ministry of education of Uganda. These requirements are set and revised to meet the requirements of internal quality criteria and external QA standards

set by the National Council for Higher Education (Kasozi, 2006). In this perspective, quality is aligned to students' satisfaction and compliance to the quality assurance framework for tertiary and higher education written and enforced by the national council for higher education (NCHE). This agrees with Garvin (1987) who also asserts that quality as conformance views quality as the extent to which the function of a product or service perfectly meets specifications that conform to the set standards.

5.1.5 Quality refers to learners performing well in examinations

From the study, some of the tutors see the quality in terms of outcomes of the assessment of the education process. They believe that when the learners perform well, they get promoted to another level, or graduate and to them that is quality. Consider students' performance in final examinations as being an aspect of quality of education. Although this is perceived by the tutors, a similar view is also considered by the policymakers, parents, and employers who view a good teacher first from the grades he or she attains from the National examinations taken at the PTTC. This also agrees with Adams (1993) who also perceives quality in terms of outputs or outcomes which reflects the achievement in cognitive skills, promotion of students to the next levels of education, graduation rates, retention of students in the program, and occupational status.

5.1.6 Quality refers to the ability to deliver the subject matter to the students

In this point of view, tutors also believe quality in how best the process of teaching is conducted in the classroom while teaching the students. To them when the teacher delivers the subject content well, the learners are learning and developing various skills that they will apply in the future when they go to teach. So, this also points to the fact that when student teachers are taught well, they perform better, and they will be able to teach as they were taught by their trainers. This is also consistent with Adams (1993) who views quality in terms of the process. He further mentions that educational quality is depicted in relation to the well-being of the teaching and learning process.

6. Conclusion

From the study, the researcher found out that tutors in PTTCs perceive quality along with the following insights: Quality as meeting students' needs and government QA standards, students performing well in examinations, work culture involving everyone to achieve the needs of the students, compliance with quality standards and corresponding to the learners' expectations, meeting criteria in learner support services, and the ability to deliver the subject matter to the students. Since the quality of education is regarded by many scholars as an elusive concept, and so are its definitions. Due to this, the results of this study indicated that the perception of quality of education varies from individual-to-individual tutor among the various PTTCs in Uganda.

7. Recommendation

For further studies, the researcher recommends the investigation of the perception of the quality of education from policymakers, students, parents, and employers' perspectives.

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