

**11.2.2026****Author**

KADHILA, Ngepathimo (IIPUMBU, Nangula)

**Title**

Strengthening internal quality assurance as a lever for enhancing student learning experiences and academic success : lessons from Namibia / Ngepathimo Kadhila and Nangula Iipumbu

**Publication year**

2019

**Source/Footnote**

In: Quality in higher education. - 25 (2019) 1, S. 4 - 20

**Inventory number**

48282

**Keywords**

Ausland : Namibia : einzelne Hochschulen ; Qualitätssicherung ; Ausland : Namibia : Studenten, Studium, Lehre

**Abstract**

Higher education plays an important role in the social, economic and political development of any given nation. In the Namibian context, quality assurance systems have been put in place at both national and institutional levels through the establishment of national quality assurance agencies and units responsible for quality in institutions. A critical literature analysis of quality assurance systems in higher education shows that although they claim to strike a balance between improvement and accountability, external quality assurance mechanisms tend to have an accountability and compliance focus and to promote managerialisation and bureaucratisation of academia. This article argues that internal quality assurance systems, built on a strong quality culture, tend to be more effective in enhancing the quality of student learning experience and academic success than externally driven quality assurance. Thus, to promote genuine quality, more energy must be invested in external quality assurance capacitating and strengthening internal quality assurance systems.(HRK / Abstract

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