Quality Dilemmas in Higher Education in Zimbabwe: Qualitative Perspectives

Christopher Zishiri

Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Foundations, Primary Education and Pedagogy, Midlands State University, Gweru, Zimbabwe

ABSTRACT

This study analysed the systemic challenges undermining the quality of higher education in Zimbabwe, tracing their roots to colonial legacies, post-independence policy shifts, and persistent socio-economic instability. Despite ambitious frameworks like Education 5.0, resource constraints and political-economic crises have created a paradox where institutional goals outpace practical capacity. Using the Social-Ecological Systems Theory, the research adopted a qualitative, interpretive approach, engaging 30 academic staff and students across five universities through interviews, focus groups, and observations. Findings reveal severe staff demotivation driven by plummeting salaries, unrealistic promotion criteria, inadequate research funding, and deteriorating collegiality, perpetuating declining educational standards. These challenges reflect more profound structural failures, including misaligned policies and underfunded infrastructures, which collectively sustain quality dilemmas. The study advocates for transformative interventions to rebuild supportive academic ecosystems, emphasising equitable resource allocation, fair incentive systems, and collaborative governance to institutionalise quality assurance. By linking macro-historical factors to micro-level experiences at the institutional level, the research contributes to theoretical debates on educational quality in crisis contexts. It offers practical insights for policymakers seeking to reconcile Zimbabwe's higher education aspirations with its fragmented realities.

Keywords: Higher education, quality in higher education, quality dilemmas in higher education, academic staff

BACKGROUND

The quality of higher education has been a subject of ongoing research globally, with various studies revealing numerous challenges and opportunities for improvement. In Zimbabwe, the landscape of higher education has undergone significant transformations over the past few decades, influenced by political dynamics, socio-economic changes, and global educational trends. As the country strives to position itself as a leader in education within the Southern African region through Education 5.0, quality dilemmas work against this aspiration. In particular, the rapid expansion of the higher education sector in the context of a sustained economic decline placed significant pressure on universities and other providers of higher education, leading to concerns about the quality of higher education (Amadhila & Guest, 2022). Historically, Zimbabwe boasted a robust higher education system that produced skilled professionals who have made positive vibes across the global job market. However, brain drain due to sustained economic decline and political instability adversely impacted the quality of higher education over the past 3 decades, particularly from the mid-90s through to the 21st century.

A chronicle of Zimbabwe's higher education historical legacy provides the foundation for understanding the quality dilemmas that are the focus of this study. In the 1980s and 1990s post-independence euphoria, Zimbabwe's higher education system emerged as a beacon of intellectual renewal, anchored by the triumvirate of academic freedom, shared governance, and collegiality. These principles were not mere ideals but lived practices: universities thrived as spaces of collaborative decision-making, where faculty, students, and administrators collectively shaped institutional trajectories, and scholarly discourse flourished unimpeded by

external pressures. This era, marked by optimism and nation-building, saw academia as a microcosm of Zimbabwe's broader aspirations for democracy and equitable progress.

While higher education in Zimbabwe is rooted in the country's colonial past, its contemporary configuration is shaped by post-independence developments. During the colonial era, education was designed primarily to serve the interests of the white minority population while neglecting the educational needs of the majority indigenous Black people (Zvobgo, 2021). Despite this imbalance, the colonial education framework produced a cadre of skilled professionals, particularly in medicine, engineering, and public administration (Moyo, 2021). The attainment of independence in 1980 renewed emphasis on expanding access to higher education and aligning the educational system with the country's development aspirations (Mawere, 2021). The new government significantly invested in education, increasing enrollment and fostering a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape. This post-independence period saw the rapid growth of the higher education sector, with the establishment of teachers' colleges, polytechnics, and universities across the country (Munetsi, 2021). From a single university in 1980, Zimbabwe's higher education sector grew to 13 universities by 2024, alongside polytechnics and teachers' colleges. However, this rapid expansion occurred against economic instability, political neglect, and global educational shifts, creating systemic quality dilemmas.

While exclusionary, Zimbabwe's colonial education system laid an institutional foundation that prioritised technical and professional training. Post-independence, the government sought to democratise access and decolonise curricula, viewing education as a vehicle for socio-economic transformation (Mawere, 2021). Investment in higher education surged, with enrollment rates and higher education institutions proliferating. This expansion was initially celebrated as a marker of progress, enabling marginalised communities to participate in national development (Munetsi, 2021). However, scholars argue that quantity often overshadowed quality during this period, as infrastructure and staffing failed to meet demand (Chitambara, 2021). The legacy of colonial elitism also lingered, with post-independence institutions struggling to balance quality with academic rigour, particularly as global trends emphasised market-driven education models. The transition from a colonial to a democratised system faced significant challenges that undermined the quality of higher education. The economic decline persisting from the late 90s through to 2024 is attributed to the poor salary and working conditions in Zimbabwe, a direct reflection of the political neglect of the academia, which led to the outward migration of academic staff, adversely impacting HEIs' ability to maintain quality in higher education.

In recent years, Zimbabwe introduced a heritage-based Education 5.0 education model, which stands on five pillars: teaching, research, innovation, industrialisation, and community engagement. This model was expected to reposition not only the country's education sector but also industry and service sectors for the attainment of sustainable development goals in accord with the United Nations' Agenda 2030 SDGs (UNDP, 2020; UNESCO, 2017). While ambitious, this vision clashes with the reality of underfunded institutions struggling to meet basic operational needs such as paying academic staff a living wage. Whereas Education 5.0, with its focus on innovation and industrialisation, is noble for developing countries like Zimbabwe, its implementation has not been matched with factors that should sustain it. The rhetoric around the Education 5.0 model overlooks systemic inequities affecting academic staff, who are the quality gatekeepers and key drivers of this ambitious education system. Besides neglected academic staff, the implementation of Education 5.0, like its predecessor educational systems, has been hamstrung by inadequate funding, with universities lacking laboratories, technology infrastructure, and industry partnerships to attain its noble objectives.

While the legacy of a once-robust education system in Zimbabwe continues to shape the aspirations and expectations of many, pursuing quality in higher education remains a pressing concern as the country seeks to leverage Education 5.0 to drive its sustainable development goals. The success of this ambitious educational system depends on delivering quality higher education, which is tasked with the responsibility to produce innovative and industrious graduates capable of transforming and driving the ailing economy. The starting point in this journey is to address the dilemmas affecting quality issues in higher education institutions. This study, therefore, explored these dilemmas from the lived experiences of university academic staff and students.

Research Question

What are the key factors undermining quality assurance in higher education institutions in Zimbabwe?

Statement of the Problem

While Education 5.0 has the potential to drive sustainable economic growth, persistent quality dilemmas in higher education in Zimbabwe raise concerns about its ability to meet regional and global educational standards. A key gap in efforts to address this problem is the lack of bottom-up input, which is essential in informing effective policies that address the root causes of the dilemmas. This study, therefore, explored the lived experiences of university academic staff and students to identify the underlying factors sustaining these quality issues.

Rationale of the Study

Quality education is a cornerstone of social equity and sustainable development. Maintaining quality in Zimbabwe's higher education is vital for economic recovery and global competitiveness. Nevertheless, quality dilemmas have eroded graduate employability and stifled the objectives of Education 5.0, which encompasses teaching, research, innovation, industrialization, and community engagement. To reverse the persevering decline, it is evident that there is a need to reform centralized quality assurance frameworks that stifle institutional autonomy and limit context-specific solutions, as seen in regional peers like Botswana. Realistic quality assurance policies that facilitate rather than hinder quality could bridge skills gaps, drive industries, and align Zimbabwe's higher education with global standards in tandem with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4). Through balancing global standards with local needs, Zimbabwe can restore its higher education system and reposition it as a driver of socioeconomic transformation, reclaiming its role as a regional education hub. Without robust quality assurance, Zimbabwe risks further isolation in the global higher education arena, diminishing its capacity to address local challenges ranging from climate resilience to technological advancement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The craving for quality teaching and learning outcomes is essential for every credible institution of higher education. Extant literature (Bohlens, 2025; Harvey, 2024; Nguyen et al., 2024; Hardina, Amin & Wardana, 2024; Falola, 2023; Takaruza Munyanyiwa & Nyaruwata, 2020) focusing on both developed, developing, and underdeveloped countries shows that the issue of quality standards in higher education is a top priority agenda, aligning with sustainable development goal number 4 (SDG4). This goal advocates for inclusive and equitable access to quality education, including higher education, that promotes opportunities for lifelong learning for everyone (Mpofu et al., 2024; Motala, Sayed & Maggott, 2023; Togo & Gandidzanwa, 2021; United Nations, 2015). This literature review explores quality dimensions in higher education, focusing on Zimbabwe. The review leverages this study's view that outside university corridors, quality standards in higher education propel a nation's sustainable development efforts. At the same time, a lack of them erodes institutional success and reflects negatively on a country's general lack of progress. According to recent studies (Muroiwa & Chittoo, 2024; Hardina, Amin & Wardana, 2024), key elements of quality education include qualified academic staff, ethical leadership, competency-based curricula, inclusive practices, robust digital infrastructure, and quality assurance systems. To improve quality in their processes, some HEIs have adopted the Total Quality Management (TQM) philosophy to effectively respond to the demands and expectations of their diverse stakeholders and maintain a competitive edge in the market (Bohlens, 2025).

However, Zimbabwe's higher education system faces many challenges that undermine the quality standards. Existing literature attributes economic, technological, policy-related, and socio-cultural barriers as some of the base factors impeding quality assurance in higher education (Muroiwa & Chittoo, 2024; Bhowa & Aribino, 2024). Existing literature paints a stark picture of Zimbabwe's higher education sector: a system grappling with the dual burdens of historical inequities and contemporary crises. While post-independence expansions democratised access, they also entrenched structural vulnerabilities, as economic collapse and political neglect eroded quality. The brain drains, underfunding, and politicised governance have created a cycle of decline,

with institutions struggling to retain talent, update curricula, or foster research excellence. The late 20th century marked a turning point as Zimbabwe's economy entered a prolonged decline, exacerbated by hyperinflation, sanctions, and political mismanagement. Amadhila and Guest (2022) highlight how fiscal constraints crippled higher education funding, leading to deteriorating infrastructure, outdated curricula, and inadequate research resources. Universities faced severe budget shortfalls, forcing reliance on tuition fees and international partnerships, often prioritising profit over pedagogical quality. Concurrently, hyperinflation eroded academic salaries, triggering a "brain drain" as faculty migrated to better-resourced institutions abroad (Chikanda, 2021). In the early 2000s, over 70% of Zimbabwean academics left the country, leaving institutions understaffed and reliant on underqualified adjunct lecturers (Bhowmik, 2024; Chitambara, 2021). According to Zishiri, Jekese, and Muchabaiwa (2024), this exodus weakened institutional governance and research capacity, further entrenching quality disparities between Zimbabwean universities and regional counterparts.

Political instability compounded the quality dilemmas threatening the credibility of higher education in Zimbabwe. Mpofu (2021) noted that authoritarian regimes stifled academic freedom, with universities pressured to align their intellect with state ideologies. The critical scholarship was viewed with suspicion, leading to state, institutional, and individual censorship of faculty members (Machikou, 2024; Tshuma, Msimanga & Sibanda, 2023), all narrowing of intellectual discourse, which is a vital ingredient of quality. Gukurume (2019) found that universities in Zimbabwe presented a socio-political space in which everyday political struggles were fought overtly and covertly. These struggles negatively impacted the delivery of quality higher education outcomes.

Additionally, Amir, Bilal and Khan (2023) noted that chronic underinvestment in academic infrastructure, evidenced by dilapidated and inappropriate lecture rooms, inadequate library resources, and intermittent internet connectivity and power supplies, undermined teaching and learning outcomes in higher education institutions. University expansion, augmented by the multi-campus system, while laudable for inclusivity, strained the scarce resources available and diluted quality assurance mechanisms. Scholars (Chitambara, 2021; Chikanda, 2021) have noted that the erosion of standards of teaching, research, and institutional governance in higher education in Zimbabwe, collectively contribute to the obtaining quality dilemmas. This problem points to the need for solid and inclusive approaches to address the challenges, which is rooted in a complex mix of perceptions, practices, and systemic challenges. This study explored the perspectives of university lecturers and students, to understand the quality dilemmas experienced by HEIs in Zimbabwe. While the bulk of the reviewed literature attributes inadequate funding as the root cause of quality dilemmas in higher education, this study synthesised the diverse lived experiences of the participants to understand the context-specific dilemmas and offer actionable recommendations.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilised a qualitative research design to explore the complex, context-specific quality dilemmas in Zimbabwean higher education. Grounded in an interpretive philosophy, the adopted methodology prioritised in-depth disposition of stakeholder experiences, historical legacies, and socio-political dynamics shaping educational quality. The study employed a multiple case study design, examining five purposively selected universities (public and private) to capture diverse institutional contexts. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with 30 participants, 5 focus groups with university students and document analysis of policy texts, accreditation reports, and institutional archives. Interviews explored themes such as the impact of economic decline on teaching quality, assessment quality, perceptions of Education 5.0, and the effects of brain drain. FGDs provided collective dialogue on systemic challenges including resource shortages and political dynamics interference in academia. Document analysis contextualised institutional perspectives within and without historical and policy frameworks, triangulating findings to enhance credibility. Hence, using narratives, institutional practices, and policy frameworks, the study laid bare the lived realities of academics, administrators, students, and policymakers, while identifying pathways for systemic improvement.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who possessed rich, relevant insights into quality-related challenges. The sample comprised 20 academic staff from varied disciplines and career stages (early-career to senior professors), 5 university administrators involved in quality assurance, 2 policymakers from the Zimbabwe Council of Higher Education, 25 university students. Five 5 universities were selected to

reflect geographic diversity and type (public/private). Data were analysed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. Interview and FGD transcripts, alongside policy documents, were coded inductively to identify emergent themes. To ensure rigor, member checking was conducted, allowing participants to review and validate interpretations of their narratives. Triangulation across data sources further enhanced trustworthiness and depth, ensuring an inclusive representation of voices shaping and experiencing quality dilemmas.

The study exercised ethical rigor, given Zimbabwe's politically sensitive environment. Informed consent principles were adhered to, with guarantees of anonymity and confidentiality. Pseudonyms were employed to replace institutional and individual identifiers in reporting. Given the risks associated with critiquing state and institutional policies and their figureheads, the study exercised caution during data collection, with personally identifiable data, and recordings securely stored. Participants were debriefed on their right to withdraw at any stage. Additionally, the study ensured reflexivity by documenting the current researcher's potential biases and engaging in peer debriefing to minimize interpretive subjectivity (Omodan, 2024; Rahman & Deuchar, 2024; Khoa et al., 2023). The potential bias inherent in qualitative data was a possible limitation, particularly the participants' reluctance to critique political authorities openly. This potential limitation was mitigated by building rapport with participants and triangulating findings with policy documents and archival records. Focusing on a limited number of institutions was another potential limitation that may affect generalizability of findings. However, thick and contextual descriptions, supported by verbatim extracts from participants, ensured the transferability of study results to similar settings.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study gathered data from university lecturers and students, to reveal a complex interplay of perceptions, practices, and systemic challenges which hindered the attainment of desirable quality standards craved in higher education. This discussion synthesises the study data, highlighting the critical areas of concern while also identifying potential pathways for reimagining quality assurance in Zimbabwe's higher education landscape. Six themes emerged from analysis of the study data and they are discussed in the paragraphs that follow. The discussion is concluded by a reconciliation section that outlines this study's vision on how the quality dilemmas in higher education in Zimbabwe and other contexts that share similar contexts, can address the identified dilemmas.

Theme 1:   Erosion of Academic Autonomy and Professional Identity

Data under the first theme shows that one of the foundational dilemmas affecting quality assurance in higher education in Zimbabwe, lies in the perceived erosion of academic autonomy. Participants noted that the declining quality experienced in higher education institutions was a function of the exploitative structural systems. They believed that the status of the academia has been belittled by the pittance salaries that were paid to university academic staff. While they did not view quality assurance frameworks in their institutions as infringing on their academic freedom, they believed that the low salaries dissuaded them from implementing measures that ensure quality learning outcomes. Their perceptions of this dilemma were not rooted in a desire for unchecked independence but reflected their concerns about how rigid, top-down QA policies that overlooked the role of staff motivation in enhancing or hindering quality. While maintaining quality standards in higher education was key, participants perceive them as misaligned with their existential realities. Data shows that lecturers in the participating 5 universities were severely burdened by survivalist hustling due to their rock-bottom salaries. They were least concerned by the issue of maintaining quality in their university tasks starting from teaching, setting and marking, and examinations, supervising students' research work, and assessing students' work-related learning among their other core activities. This dissonance was exacerbated by their socioeconomic precarity, where quality assurance compliance competed with time spent securing supplementary income.

Theme 2: Bureaucratization vs. Transformative Quality

The prioritisation of compliance over meaningful improvement has reduced issues of quality in higher education to a performative exercise. Academics distinguish between quality and transformative excellence for

enhancing teaching, research, innovation, and student outcomes. However, in their neglected, demotivated situation characterised by payments of universal salary scales regardless of their academic credentials and experience, quality issues were viewed as bureaucratic rituals that no one, including the government, was serious about. Thus, quality check activities were relegated to ticking boxes for accountability, primarily for compliance purposes, rather than for realising the noble quality assurance intent. This finding mirrored similar trends observed in the United Kingdom by Cheng (2009), who established that 50% of surveyed academics resented QA's administrative demands. The reviewed studies in Finland also revealed that quality assurance measures resulted in excessive workload and negligible academic staff benefits. Hence, they were resented. In this study, 80% of the participants echoed a similar resentment, arguing that ensuring quality in higher education was unnecessary given the oppressive work conditions they suffered. This disconnect was situated in contexts where the authorities were not eager to address core issues like low salaries and resource scarcity, among other pressing challenges affecting the quality standards in higher education.

Theme 3: Resource Constraints and Survivalist Disengagement

Zimbabwe's persisting economic deterioration has crippled higher education funding, directly impacting academic motivation. With salaries failing to meet basic needs, lecturers resort to survival strategies, including side jobs and vending, leaving little energy for quality assurance engagement. Participants dismissed quality assurance measures as time-wasting and a distraction that is not worth it, reframing quality in higher education from a marker of excellence to a bureaucratic burden. This survivalist mindset erodes collegiality, as collaboration is sidelined by individual hustling. Furthermore, unrealistic promotion criteria and scant research support were reported as demotivating factors that demoralized the academic staff, who perceived implementing quality assurance measures as an additional hurdle rather than a pathway to growth. A prolonged lack of investment in research and development exacerbated the quality dilemmas in higher education, stifling research efforts and innovation, which are the key ingredients in achieving quality in higher education. These challenges further perpetuated a cycle of disengagement among academic staff.

Theme 4: Misalignment of Stakeholder Priorities

QA's failure in Zimbabwe stems from conflicting stakeholder definitions of quality. For government and management, QA is a cost-cutting and compliance weapon. For academics, quality standards should enhance all the pillars of Education 5.0 (teaching, research, innovation, industrialisation, and community engagement). However, it isn't easy to successfully realise these pillars with many demotivated academic staff. For students, quality upholding quality standards in higher education is a promise of value for the money they pay for their education. These divergent meaning structures create superficial consensus but deep operational conflict. For example, while the government exploits underpaid staff to deliver quality at no cost, academic staff are disillusioned by low salaries. They are indifferent to the issue of delivering quality education. This misalignment fostered cynicism and collusion against the intent of quality assurance.

Theme 5: Compliance and Systemic Dysfunction

Quality assurance in Zimbabwe's higher education remains rhetoric and allegorical, where compliance becomes an end in itself. Academics engage in dramaturgical compliance, performing QA rituals without belief and commitment to the quality process and its value. For instance, teaching, research, innovation, and community engagement are viewed as time-wasting activities replaced by parallel activities that bring income to complement the meagre salaries paid to higher education academic staff. Data shows that the core functions of academic staff, which should ensure quality in higher education, are dismissed as "meaningless activities that are not worth committing time to. Furthermore, resource scarcity, including inadequate infrastructure such as substandard lecture rooms and poor internet connectivity, renders QA efforts irrelevant. A lack of genuine dialogue compounds these dilemmas, as the data reveals. As one participant noted regarding the issue of pegging university salaries to regional parity, "the government always announces but never implements, and the quality of higher education continues to decline." Consequently, though several measures are suggested and implemented at the institutional level by QA departments, they fail to improve outcomes, as policies are resented and circumvented by demotivated academic staff in conjunction with students who equally commit

little time to their studies as they engage in activities that bring income for survival and funding their education in the absence of any form of government assistance.

Theme 6: Leadership, Culture, and Prospects for Alignment

Effective QA requires leadership that fosters ownership rather than imposition. This study found that excluding academics from QA design undermines their sense of ownership, a critical issue in Zimbabwe, where policies are centrally mandated and are top-down. Building a quality culture demands addressing structural inequities, including raising academic staff salaries to match or even exceed regional levels, revising promotion criteria to realistic expectations, and investing in higher education infrastructure in both public and private institutions. Regional collaborations (e.g., SADC partnerships) could mitigate brain drain, while decolonised curricula might enhance relevance. However, without aligning stakeholder visions, QA will remain a bureaucratic weapon starved of academic buy-in.

Reconciling Quality Visions

Quality dilemmas in higher education in Zimbabwe reflect systemic fractures between policy intent and academic realities. QA's failure to improve teaching, research, innovation, industrialisation, and student experiences stems from its bureaucratic framing, resource constraints, and neglect of academic staff welfare and voices. For QA to transcend rhetoric, stakeholders must reconcile competing definitions of quality by incorporating the voices and concerns of all stakeholders as the building blocks for the construction of high-quality standards in higher education. Quality standards in higher education should be a product of a coalition of all the key stakeholders, including government, HEIs, academic staff, and students. This requires participatory policy design (PPD), involving mainstreaming academic staff and students in QA planning, resource mobilisation (RM) to address the low academic staff salary inequalities and infrastructural decay, and a leadership mentality shift from impositions to collegiality, prioritising authentic quality assurance measures through pedagogical and research enhancement over compliance. Implementing quality measures is challenging in an environment where the academic staff, the hands-on drivers of quality in education, are demotivated due to bottom-rock salaries. While the focus on compliance is noble, disregarding hygiene factors like salaries and discouraging openness stifles critical thinking, which themselves hinder or enhance quality in higher education.

Furthermore, collegiality, once the glue binding higher education institutions, is fraying under the weight of top-down directives and a culture of mistrust, contributing to the quality dilemmas. The erosion of these foundational pillars has sparked profound unease about quality issues. This study posits that until these transformative steps are taken, quality dilemmas in Zimbabwe will remain, stifling the transformative potential of higher education, particularly Education 5.0.

The consequences are sweeping. Scholars (Moyo, 2023; Harvey, 2024) caution of a quiet crisis in which the very identity of higher education institutions in Zimbabwe, as sites of innovation and social critique, is being hollowed out. This reckoning demands not just nostalgia but a reimagining of quality assurance governance frameworks that reconcile all the factors contributing to upholding higher education quality. As debates on quality assurance intensify, the resilience of Zimbabwe's higher education hinges on its ability to revive salaries commensurate with the stature and decorum of university academic staff, the spirit of collegiality which promotes the autonomy that once defined Zimbabwe's higher education golden era.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommendations for enhancing quality in higher education.

1. The government should elevate academic staff salaries to regional parity to address survivalist disengagement and restore their motivation.
2. Higher education institutions in Zimbabwe should mobilise resources to modernise lecture halls, libraries, and digital infrastructure. Establishing grants for research and innovation to align with Education 5.0 pillars should be treated as a priority in addressing quality dilemmas.

3. Higher education institutions should reconfigure their quality assurance from an exclusive focus on bureaucratic compliance to an inclusive and transformative emphasis that promotes teaching excellence and student engagement, for high standard higher education outcomes.

4. Higher education institutions should restore academic autonomy to rebuild trust and collegiality while promoting academic excellence to attain QA.

5. The Zimbabwe Council of Higher Education (ZIMCHE) should replace unrealistic higher education promotion criteria with achievable criteria tied to quality assurance metrics.

6. Higher education institutions should decolonise the quality assurance governance systems in collaboration with academic staff to reflect local and global relevance. They should incorporate decolonial perspectives by integrating student feedback to ensure learning outcomes meet labour-market demands.
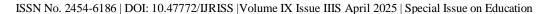
Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest regarding this article.

Funding

REFERENCES

1. Amadhila, E., & Guest, R . (2022). Economic Decline and Higher Education in Zimbabwe: A Crisis of Quality. Journal of African Education, 15(2), 45–67.

2. Amadhila, E.M. & Guest, J. (2022). Teach outside your comfort zone: A qualitative study of higher education students' conceptions in Namibia. Cogent Education, 9(1), 2026189.

3. Amir, H., Bilal, K. & Khan, M.I. (2023). Efficacy of Investment in Educational Institutes and Human Capital for Sustainable Economic Growth in Pakistan. Annals of Human and Social Sciences, 4(2), 586-598.

4. Bhowa, M. & Aribino, N. (2024). Education with Production or Education Pragmatism as Solution to the Skills Shortage in Zimbabwe: Policy with Continuity?. Lighthouse. he Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University Journal of Law, Economics and Public Policy, 136-160.

5. Bhowmik, S. (2024). Unveiling Patriotism's Power against African Brain Drain. African Renaissance, 21(1), 187.

6. Bohlens, C. (2025). Corruption in Accreditation at HEIs: When Corruption Erodes Trust in Higher Learning. In Navigating Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Global Higher Education (pp. 165-192). IGI Global Scientific Publishing.

7. Chikanda, A. (2021). Brain Drain and Academic Mobility in Zimbabwe. Harare : SAPES Trust. .

8. Chitambara, P. (2021). Education and Development in Post-Independence Zimbabwe. African Development Review , 33(4), 512–528.

9. Falola, T. (2023). Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni and African Decolonial Studies. Oxfordshire: Routledge.

10. Govender, L. & Naidoo, D. (2023). Decolonial insights for transforming the higher education curriculum in South Africa. Curriculum Perspectives, 43(1), 59-71.

11. Gukurume, S. (2019). Surveillance, spying and disciplining the university: deployment of state security agents on campus in Zimbabwe. Journal of Asian and African Studies, 54(5), 763-779.

12. Hardina, R., Amin, M. & Wardana, M.R.F. (2024). The Role of National Education Day 2024 in Improving the Quality of Islamic Education in Pasuruan City. Journal of Pergunu and Contemporary Islamic Studies, 1(1), 147-169.

13. Harvey, L. (2024). What have we learned from 30 years of Quality in Higher Education: academics' views of quality assurance. Quality in Higher Education, 30(3), 360-375.

14. Khoa, B.T., Hung, B.P. & Hejsalem-Brahmi, M. (2023). Qualitative research in social sciences: data collection, data analysis and report writing. International Journal of Public Sector Performance Management, 12(1), 187-209.

15. Knaus, C.B., Mino, T. & Seroto, J. (2022). Decolonising higher education: Definitions, conceptualisations, epistemologies. In Decolonising African Higher Education (pp. 1-20). Milton Park: Routledge.

16. Machikou, N. (2024). Are African Scholars at Risk? The Invisibility of Africans in Relief Policies for Endangered Academics. In Academics in a Century of Displacement: The Global History and Politics of Protecting Endangered Scholars (pp. 263-290). Wiesbaden: Springer.

17. Masuku, M.M. & Makhanya, T. (2023). Ubuntu Philosophy and Decolonisation: Interpretation of Inclusivity in Higher Education. In Using African Epistemologies in Shaping Inclusive Education Knowledge (pp. 395-410). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.

18. Mawere, T. (2021). Post-Colonial Education Reforms in Zimbabwe. International Journal of Educational Development , 40(3), 89–104 .

19. Motala, S., Sayed, Y.Y. & Maggott, T. (2023). The SDG agenda and university transformation in Africa: The decolonial turn deferred? African Journal of Teacher Education, 12(2), 189-209.

20. Moyo, L. (2023). Academic Freedom in Decline: The Politicization of Zimbabwean Universities. Harare : SAPES Trust.

21. Mpofu, F.Y., Mpofu, A., Mantula, F. & Shava, G.N. (2024). Towards the Attainment of SDGs: The Contribution of Higher Education Institutions in Zimbabwe. International Journal of Social Science Research and Review, 7(1), 474-493.

22. Mpofu, S. (2021). Education 5.0 and National Development in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research, 29(1), 112–130.

23. Munetsi, N. (2021). Expansion and Equity in Zimbabwean Higher Education. Southern African Review of Education, 27(2), 78–95.

24. Munyanyiwa, T. & Nyaruwata, S. (2020). Higher Education's Institutions Response to Statutory TQM Case Study. In Quality Management Implementation in Higher Education: Practices, Models, and Case Studies (pp. 303-326). IGI Global.

25. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. (2021). Epistemic injustice. In Knowledge for the Anthropocene (pp. 167-177). Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing.

26. Nguyen, H.B., Vu, N.Q.D., Dinh, D.T. & Pham, H.H. (2024). Quality Assurance in Distance Higher Education: A Bibliometric Study of Scopus-Indexed Publications Between 1993 and 2024. Electronic Journal of e-Learning, 23(1), 34-52.

27. Omodan, B. (2024). Research paradigms and their methodological alignment in social sciences: A practical guide for researchers. Oxfordshire : Taylor & Francis.

28. Rahman, M. & Deuchar, R. (2024). Ethics in Qualitative Criminological Research: Risks, Boundaries, Emotions, and Reflexivity. Oxfordshire: Taylor & Francis.

29. Thondhlana, J., Abdulrahman, H., Chiyevo Garwe, E. & McGrath, S. (2021). Exploring the internationalisation of Zimbabwe's higher education institutions through a decolonial lens: Postcolonial continuities and disruptions. Journal of Studies in International Education, 25(3), 228-246.

30. Togo, M., & Gandidzanwa, C. P. (2021). The role of Education 5.0 in accelerating the implementation of SDGs and challenges encountered at the University of Zimbabwe. International journal of sustainability in higher education, 22(7), 1520-1535.

31. Tshuma, L.A., Msimanga, M.J. & Sibanda, M.N. (2023). "Playing" in the eyes of the Ferret team: Examining the use of surveillance strategies by Zimbabwean journalists. African Journalism Studies, 43(1), 53-69.

32. UNDP. (2020). Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved 12 3, 2023, from https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals

33. UNESCO. (2017). Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives . Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

34. United Nations . (2015). Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Retrieved December 4, 2015, from URL: https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda

35. Zishiri, C., Jekese, G. & Muchabaiwa, W. (2024). Challenges in Implementing Education 5.0 in Higher Education in Zimbabwe: A Qualitative Analysis. International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 8(3), 3113-3121.