Quality Assurance in Higher Education for Flexible Open Distance Education/Learning in Papua New Guinea

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Education and Social Work - University of Sydney

March 2017
AUTHOR’S DECLARATION

This is to certify that:

i. This thesis comprises only my original work towards the Doctor of Philosophy degree

ii. Due acknowledgment has been made in the text to all other material used

iii. The thesis does not exceed the word length for this degree

iv. No part of this work has been used for the award of another degree

v. This thesis meets the University of Sydney’s Human Research Ethics Committee (HERC) requirements for the conduct of research.

Name: JANET BULUMARIS RANGOU

Date: 23rd March 2017
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To God be the GLORY forever

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My special thanks to both my Chief Supervisor, Dr. George Odhiambo and my Associate Supervisor Dr. Kevin Laws for their patience, guidance and continued encouragement throughout the entire research project. Dr. Odhiambo taught me simple lessons of being calm and focused throughout my PhD journey. My sincere gratitude goes to the staff and Faculty members of the University of Sydney Education and Social Work Faculty for their support. Special thanks also to the PhD Research Writing Buddy Group from the faculty. This group was my PhD family or ‘wantok’ throughout my studies and was the source of my inspirations and commitment throughout my PhD journey. I am also so grateful to Ruth McHugh and Vivienne Haye who assisted me with editing my thesis.

Special thank you indeed to the PNG Office of Higher Education (OHE) through Professor David Kavanamur for the support and permission to access the PNG Universities for my data collection. I am indebted to the research participants in the selected PNG universities who willingly opened their doors to me. Lastly, I am so grateful for the support from my loyal family – my husband Constantine and daughters Constance and Hannah-Jan and my mum Regina Mapus - I love you all.
My special thanks especially to you all for being ever patient with me and for your understanding in times when I was absent from home due to thesis activities, conferences or other scholarship requirements. Special thanks to Dr. Helen Geissinger, my mentor and life coach, for your ears and encouragement always.

In all gratefulness, this thesis is dedicated to my God and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit- who is the source of my strength throughout this phase of my life.
This thesis is a case-study of Quality Assurance (QA) practice and policy discourses for Flexible Open Distance Education/Learning (FODE/L) in the Papua New Guinea (PNG) Higher Education (HE) sector. From a global to local sensemaking perspective, analysis was applied to QA for FODE/L in PNG Universities. The main argument is that PNG FODE/L has the potential to bloom providing QA is supported as an inclusive organisational culture. PNG FODE/L currently exists within a fragmented, broken and unstable QA system.

The study utilised a qualitative research design approach using multiple data collection methods. Four primary data sources were used: first, semi-structured individual interviews with selected leaders of PNG universities; second, focus group interviews with FODE/L practitioners; third, open-ended questionnaires administered to students and finally, documentary evidence – FODE/L QA policy documents collected for analysis. Qualitative data analysis involved an exploratory approach for thematic coding through an interpretive process. Findings highlight existing QA grey areas. First, inclusive QA practice for FODE/L is yet to be established and sustained within QA cultures and frameworks at meso (national) and micro (institutional/individual) levels of practice. Second, meagre QA policies exist at national and institutional levels. Third, QA leadership and management lack visionary leadership for an innovative, sustainable ethical and positive FODE/L for a harmonised PNG HE sector.

Given the findings, this study identifies opportunities for a sustaining QA culture and proposes a QA framework based on ethics, integrity and moral standards, called The Ethics Enterprise QA Model for PNG FODE/L. This proposed model
might shape and improve the current PNG FODE/L system, hence providing research data for relevant planners and policy makers of PNG HE. Significant to research, this study fills a gap in PNG FODE/L literature. Whilst PNG FODE/L blooms, informed practice and policy through research remains vital for HE.
ACRONYMS

These acronyms are provided to guide the reader regarding the terms used in the study.

AA: Abductive Analysis
ACDE: African Council for Distance Education
AQS: American Quality Society
AUQAA: Australian Universities Quality Assurance Agency
CAQDAS: Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CHEA: Council for Higher Education Accreditation
CHE: Commission of Higher Education
CODE: College of Distance Education
COL: Commonwealth of Learning
COL-RIM: Commonwealth of Learning-Review and Improvement Model
DE: Distance Education
DEC: Distance Education Council
DES: Distance Education System/s
DFL: Department of Flexible Learning
DL: Distance Learning
DODL: Department of Open Distance Learning
DHRST: Department of Higher Education Research, Science and Technology
DWU: Divine Word University
EFM: European Foundation for Quality Management
EEQAF: Ethics Enterprise Quality Assurance Framework
FLC: Flexible Learning Centre
FODE/L: Flexible Open Distance Education/Learning
GIQAC: Global Initiative for Quality Assurance Capacity
HE: Higher Education
HEIs: Higher Education Institutions
ICDE: International Council of Distance Education
ICT: Information Communication Technology
INQAAHE: International Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education.
ISO: International Standards Organisation
LLL: Lifelong Learning
LMS: Learning Management System
MDG: Millennium Development Goals
NADEOSA National Association of Distance Education of South Africa
NHEQAC: National Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee
NQF: National Qualifications Framework
NEC: National Executive Council
PNG: Papua New Guinea
PNGNQF: Papua New Guinea National Qualification Framework
OECD: Organisation for Economic Corporation and Development
OER: Open Educational Resources
OHE: Office of Higher Education
ODL: Open Distance Learning
QA: Quality Assurance
QAA: Quality Assurance Agency
QAF: Quality Assurance Framework
TEQSA: Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
UNESCO: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisations
UNITECH: University of Technology
UOG: University of Goroka
UPNGOC: University of Papua New Guinea Open College
UPNG: University of Papua New Guinea
USP: University of South Pacific
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DEDICATION

As a woman hailing from a matrilineal society, I pursue a dream of resilience and passion to foster and nurture some contributions for the betterment of the people of PNG through quality, abundant and relevant lifelong learning (LLL) opportunities. My ingrained maternal and cultural instincts offer me inner inspiration to dream, advocate and pursue ideals and practices for the common good towards a better and unique PNG. An improved Open Distance Education/Learning system is possible as an acceptable, high quality learning option within the context of PNG. Quality Education is a basic human right for all. With a heart for the marginalised and the critical masses of learners who pursue LLL through Flexible Open Distance Education/Learning (FODE/L), this thesis serves as a gift to bring forth quality discourses, practices and a paradigm shift towards a conscious culture of continuous improvement.

Writing has been a real challenge with a big impact on me. After four (4) years on this PhD journey, I feel happy to be contributing some work into the field of FODE/L and especially on the essence of what it means for quality pursuits in Quality Assurance (QA). I have been enlightened to harness the power of now, to be attentive to the ideals of being conscious and mindful of what we do and in what Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are said to be doing. The culture of quality has to be one that fosters systemic, holistic consciousness, virtues and moral obligations by all, for all.

This thesis is a contribution to the FODE/L Higher Education sector in PNG. It is for the marginalised, neglected, unreached and silenced students in PNG, with whom I can associate and relate with. It is for the minds that see opportunities to pursue their dreams beyond the challenges and limitations of their realities. It is a
dedication to the dream for an acceptable, alternative, flexible, inclusive and accessible form of education for all. It is:

- a contribution to those passionate FODE/L practitioners who truly commit their efforts to ensure that learning is possible for those who need it the most.
- a contribution to leaders, policy makers and advocates of quality based FODE/L.
- an embraced vision for a virtuous and ethical QA approach for PNG.

I hope that this thesis brings forth some enlightenment for you.

Janet. H. Bulumaris Rangou.

23rd March 2017.
1.0 Introduction

Research into QA in Higher Education (HE) for FODE/L in PNG is challenging. This developing country, PNG, has a tertiary education system that struggles with its contextual realities to meet the needs of its citizens. This thesis centres on the HE sector with specific focus on QA in those PNG universities which are currently engaged in the provision of distance education and learning. Throughout the thesis, distance education and distance learning are used interchangeably to mean learning in situations where the learner is separated by distance and time from other learners and from the educational provider(s). In other educational systems internationally, much emphasis has been placed on the delivery of education in more than one mode, i.e. formal classes in face-to-face settings, and via various technologies to those learning off-campus and at calendar times different from those of the formal mode. As such, systems have grown and matured and even more emphasis has been placed upon the quality of the teaching/learning interfaces, the support for students in many different settings and the reduction of barriers to equitable access to tertiary education. This chapter consists of the following: 1) context of the study; 2) problem statement; 3) aim and scope; 4) significance; and 5) overview.

1.1.1 Context of the study

FODE/L is the cumbersome acronym used to denote distance education in PNG. It exists amidst contrasting perceptions. Whilst it is heralded as a vehicle for accessible, equitable HE for PNG’s masses and the means to promote LLL opportunities, it suffers from several stigmas. Latchem (2012) notes that Open
Distance Learning (ODL) evokes image hostility from mainstream providers and is
denigrated as a second-rate form of HE associated with society’s less privileged. By
examining the quality of FODE/L offerings in PNG, this research attempts to
delineate the basis for QA in HE and show how ethical, quality-consciousness
thinking can pervade every distance educational provider’s operations. One’s dream
is of an enhanced quality FODE/L system wherein all providers maintain ongoing
mindful reflections and analyses of their strategies, educational offerings and student
support mechanisms. It is within a culture of care for quality improvement, change
and creativity. This study focuses specifically on PNG universities that currently offer
some form of FODE/L programs and services. According to a United Nation
Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation’s (UNESCO) publication by
Khivlon, Patru, Moore and Tait (2002) the definition of distance education is
highlighted as:

“Teaching is conducted by someone removed in time and space from the
learner, and…aims to include a greater dimensions of openness and flexibility
whether in terms of access, curriculum or other elements of structure.”

Flexible learning dissolves the aspects of distance, space and time through the
integrative functions of educational technologies. This study uses the UNESCO quote
as the basis for analysing the ways in which distance learning in PNG is open, flexible
and accessible in each of the universities involved.

HE in PNG is comprised of 6 universities, 8 teachers’ colleges, 7 technical
business and 5 nursing colleges. Some private institutions and several local
community colleges also offer some aspects of HE and FODE/L. Universities are at
the forefront of HE teaching, research and engagement with FODE/L in PNG. Within
the PNG system of HE, there are four different sectors, as shown in Fig. 1.1.
The provision of FODE/L varies from one university to another. To date, each provides various forms of teaching/learning. An absence of an institution like an Open University remains. An Open University (Dar & Yeasmin, 2010) is one that is dedicated solely to FODE/L development, production and delivery. In general, PNG provinces have established and maintained one or more learning centres or campuses in areas of large population which are used by the various FODE/L providers for live lectures, tutorial help, practical labs, and computer access. Some universities deliver programs to the Solomon Islands and Kiribati, although these are quite limited in scope.

Learning technologies are yet to be fully utilised in PNG’s HE universities. Blended learning approaches and print media are the common delivery mode. Whilst the notion of ‘distance learning’ provides a line of thinking that learners study in isolation, this study to takes into consideration the potential of flexible delivery where appropriate and affordable technology dissolves the distance between learners, among learners and FODE/L institutions to enhance learning. Competent Information
communication technology (ICT) platforms, coupled with an emphasis on quality in learning outcomes are proven successes in developed nations and even in some developing ones. Nevertheless, innovative approaches for flexible learning is currently non existent due to the lack of ICT infrastructure and other compounding issues such as lack of government support for FODE/L and the very high cost of internet accessibility.

1.1.2 Governance and Policy Planning for FODE/L in the Higher Education Sector

With recent restructure, in 2014, the PNG Government created the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology to replace the Office OHE. OHE is now the Department of Higher Education that comprises of three main divisions: Executive, Higher Education Development, and Corporate and Student Support Services, as shown in Figure 1.2 below.

![Organisational Structure of the Office of Higher Education](image)

**Figure 1.2** Organisational Structure of the Office of Higher Education, adapted from Office of Higher Education (2010)
Organisational structures in the various FODE/L-offering universities include policy and planning, programs and development, student support, professional training and finance and management. Currently, FODE/L comes under the dual mode system of delivery, with a blend of face-to-face interactions and distance learning via printed content, exercises and activities. An example of blended flexible learning involves residential periods in which students and facilitators interact. Materials are given to students in the residential blocks structured within the learning program rather than being distributed through the learning centres. Other approaches are strictly materials-based whereby learning materials are developed, packaged and sent to students. Students may be provided with live tutorials to complement learning guides and resource books. However, the learner experience of their services require that providers urgently examine ways to improve (Abrioux, 2008; Rooney, 2015). Out of the six universities in PNG, four now offer FODE/L to students. In their vision/mission statements, these universities proclaim that they are bringing tertiary education to the people. Illustrated in Table 1.2, a dual-mode university is one where programs offered through its main campuses are also offered in University Centres within PNG. A single mode university is one that offers study materials delivered through FODE/L programs, independent of courses offered on campus.

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### 1.2 Statement of the problem

HE in PNG offered by the conventional universities is in crisis today (Abrioux, 2008, Garnaut & Namaliu, 2010). The research problem is that lack of systemic QA cultures and literacies (Ehlers, 2009) prevail in the current PNG FODE/L models from universities. QA in FODE/L for HE is fragmented from a poorly led and under-financed national HE system. Garnaut and Namaliu (2010) also highlighted the paucity of seminal research on QA in FODE/L. There is a lack of research into QA needs and already evidence of resistance, irony, contradictions and ingrained sceptical thinking. The ongoing negative vein of discourse emerging about/from PNG FODE/L-offering universities obviously illuminates a research gap on QA. This research illuminates findings relating to QA aspects in FODE/L-offering universities and establishes a documented basis on which well-formulated QA procedures and practices can flourish in the future.

### 1.3 Aim and scope of the study

This study intended/aimed to explore and evaluate the current status of, challenges to, and opportunities for QA culture and good practices in PNG’s FODE/L-offering universities. The scope of this research is specific to PNG’s FODE/L-offering universities within the context of HE in a developing country with many problems of poor infrastructure and the availability of passionate and learned human resources to effect quality changes. The conceptual framework of this research fosters critical sensemaking of QA in FODE/L. A QA culture is one of constant improvement, and therefore critical to the achievement of positive outcomes.
and the ‘common goods’ of education. In addition, it is a tool for personal and national development.

Figure 1.3 Improving Quality through Change and Innovation from Lemaitre (Commonwealth of Learning, 2010)

Based on the conceptual framework of Lemaitre (2014) outlined in Figure1.3, this research embraces the notion of QA as a culture of constant progression and innovation. It is a culture where passion and creativity foster growth rather than stagnancy or maintenance of the status quo. QA for FODE/L in PNG has to be approached through Quality Improvement Framework dimensions (Inglis, 2005, Jung & Latchem2012, Lemaitre, 2014) whilst also being inclusive of cultural Melanesian values. These values are concepts of territorial space, harmony with nature, spiritual richness, commonwealth and virtues for common goodness.

1.4 Significance of the research

This study is important because it sheds light on principles and practices in the HE FODE/L arena, and demonstrates the ways in which these contribute to national development in PNG. It addresses how QA can be altered and improved amidst the current ‘quality failure’ issues identified by Garnaut and Namaliu (2010) and
Lockwood and Koul (2010). Quality failures in universities (Rooney, 2015) remain a sensitive issue in the midst of many other challenges, so urgent remedial measures and positive outcomes are badly needed. This research identifies challenges and opportunities for the development of workable and pervasive QA frameworks, policies and procedures. The list of issues relating to quality highlighted in reports by the authors cited above reflects the need for research that might provide the basis for insights and solutions. Whilst FODE/L activities and services continue to bloom, ongoing professional development and capacity building for administrators and academics also contribute to enhancing quality outcomes. It is a moral obligation to the critical masses of students situated in the rural contexts of PNG.

This research study aims to understand the nature of QA in HE for FODE/L. Open Distance Learning (ODL) depends on the active principle of bringing teaching to students learning in their homes, work places or communities. Various authors (Abrioux, 2008; Kember, 2007; Melton, 2002; Mishra, 2007, Ngugi, 2011) demonstrate that ODL is a valid concept that can promote access and equity of educational opportunities for all. High quality ODL products and services are critical to ensure learner success, stakeholder satisfaction, and the maintenance of trust. This research contributes to an improved understanding of FODE/L in relation to QA perspectives. Insights are harnessed into the ways in which QA systems, policies, practices and challenges are addressed to embrace opportunities in new teaching/learning technologies, such as the open educational resources (OERs). Furthermore, developing an understanding of the teaching/learning literature advocates for thinking beyond the current status of ODL to improving QA in the 21st Century (Abrioux, 2008). Such ideals are possibilities for realisation by the various stakeholders of contemporary modern HE and FODE/L in PNG.
In addition, this research contributes to knowledge building in PNG and adds to the limited pool of scholarly findings within the area. According to the International Council of Distance Education (ICDE) (2011), a real need exists to analyse the impact of QA policies where they are in place and address the gap in current understanding of FODE/L in PNG. The number of useful papers and research in ODL remains limited, which highlights the lack of rigorous and sustainable research within the region. Aligned to national development, this research contributes to PNG’s development goals in the area of quality-enhanced active learning within the capacity-building opportunities offered by FODE/L in PNG (Department of Planning and Management, 2009). Capacity building in the development of QA consciousness fosters a culture of quality in HE in FODE/L. Linked to the PNG’s Vision 2050, PNG Higher Education Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals, this research project addresses quality, access and equity policies for a learning society.

The research questions are:

1. What is the nature of QA in PNG’s universities that provide Open/Distance learning programs and services?

2. What are the major obstacles facing the universities in their attempts to ensure quality standards and practices in PNG?

3. To what extent do existing institutional QA guidelines, processes and support meet the demands of OER users in FODE/L?

The research strategies used to answer these questions consisted of individual interviews with University Vice Chancellors, Pro Vice Chancellors and Deans of FODE/L departments from the selected universities. Focus group interviews were
conducted for FODE/L practitioners and open-ended student questionnaires were
given to FODE/L learners from the selected universities. In addition, institutional QA
documents were analysed from selected universities in PNG that offer FODE/L
programs and the office of Higher Education.

1.5 Researcher’s cultural and professional dimensions

The researcher’s cultural and professional values contribute to the pursuit of
this research topic. Culturally, the researcher is influenced by the indigenous cultural
diversity within the context of this research. The researcher values the indigenous
Melanesian philosophy (Narakobi, 1989; Nongkas & Tivinarlik, 2004; Vallance,
2007) and attempts to link it with the creation of options for access to Higher
Education in addressing poverty alleviation and sustainable practices of flexible open
learning opportunities (Khvilon et al, 2002). This Melanesian philosophy is embedded
in spirituality, communal relationships, and sacred essences of life, harmony and
values for common goodness. Complementary to the researcher’s cultural dimension,
her professional background has matured from a classroom teacher, to an instructional
designer for open distance learning with an interest in life long learning, sustainability
and quality assurance. Such professional growth has continued to evolve and mature
through the ideals of learning beyond the confines of classrooms with interests in the
research discourse of quality PNG FODE/L in contemporary times. There is
determination also from the researcher to contribute to the institutional, national and
global agenda for QA.

1.6 Terms

The following key terms are used for conceptual understanding.
1. Quality: The concept of quality invokes debate, as it can be fluid or vaguely understood, can differ from one institution to another and, in some cases, is rhetorically used. In various HE contexts, quality means excellence, worth, value for money, fitness for purpose, required standards, evaluations, or continuous improvement of educational products or services. For consensus and conceptual understanding, an initial effort to consider the definition of quality is imperative. Prasad’s (2010) definition states that quality in HE is an educational process, ensuring that students achieve their goals, and that societal needs are satisfied for national development. Some institutions consider quality from various consumer aspects such as market competitiveness, customer satisfaction, standards being maintained, institutional accountability, transparency, fostering motivation in employees, institutional credibility and prestige, status and image.

2. Quality Assurance (QA): The meaning of the term quality assurance as used in this research relates to a systems approach. QA is a set of mechanisms in a system to ensure that a specified level of quality is maintained within an institution based on clear, shared statements on quality procedures (Commonwealth of Learning, 2010). QA is related to capacity building in any institution that aims for improvements that lead to stakeholders’ satisfaction. This can be achieved through quality assessment /evaluations to ensure that institutions are doing what they claim to do. For a FODE/L institution, QA mechanisms are designed to prove and improve an institution’s positive reputation through its educational products and outcomes. This includes the development and production of learning materials, academic programs, and student services support, and standards of student learning which capture student satisfaction.
3. Higher Education (HE): In this research, the term refers to PNG institutions such as colleges and university institutions engaged in the provision of educational products through FODE/L delivery for tertiary students.

4. Flexible Open Distance Education/Learning (FODE/L): This is a complementary mode in which various technologies aid student learning and enhance the delivery of study materials in the concept of ‘open-ness’ or prevention of barriers to learning. Flexible learning involves a series of interventions that aims to optimize student learning, and involves a mixture of face-to-face and distance learning where the use of ICTs is evident (Kember, 2007). Kember suggests that open learning consists of four elements: “open entry, study anywhere, freedom to study at a time chosen by the student within a specified semester and high degree of openness over the choice of courses to make up a degree programme” (Kember, 2007, p. 7). He remarks that distance learning is not open learning. Kember explains that a program may be open for entry but within the confines of face-to-face learning only.

5. Open Educational Resources (OERs): OER is a term that links to question 3 of this research project. Aligned to the notions of openness and accessibility for all, OERs are usually good quality pieces of software or digital teaching programs adapted to educational purposes, with low costs. OER is a term first used by UNESCO in 2002 in a forum for improving ODL materials for developing countries. In situations where learning materials suffer from poor quality, OERs may enhance and augment materials when critically needed.

6. Distributed Learning: Distributed learning (Saltzberg & Polyson, 1995) and distance learning are complementary to each. Distributed learning “is an instructional model that allows instructor, students, and content to be located in different, non centralised locations so that instruction and learning occur independent
of time and place” (Granger & Bowman, 2003). Such an instructional model is used flexibly with blended learning approaches, classroom based courses or virtual classroom based. The contextual relevance of the learner is an important consideration beyond the learning instruction. Learners’ needs drive the instructional designing of courses. Granger & Bowman (2003) affirm that learning strategies involve active learning that foster learners’ engagement for higher order analytical interaction that attracts deep learning and meaning making.

1.6 Overview of thesis

This thesis is organized into 8 chapters, of which, Chapter 1 describes the context of the research and provides the statement of the problem. Chapters 2-4 provide the background for QA concepts as applied to HE. These chapters address the concepts and contexts of QA, as shown below:

![Diagram showing the scope of background literature chapters in Chapters 2, 3, and 4](image)

**Figure 1.4** Scope of background literature chapters in Chapters 2, 3, and 4

Chapter 2 highlights QA in the broader and global contexts whilst Chapter 3 presents QA within the confines of HE with specific reference to universities. Chapter 4 is a dedicated contextualized chapter on the QA development in PNG FODE/L.
Chapter 5 sets out the methodological features and justifies the research design.

Chapter 6 presents data analysis and the treatment of data. It discusses the use of qualitative data analysis strategies emerging within the data sets and the use of the NVivo software to aid the sensemaking processes of analysis through the process of thematic coding. Chapter 7 provides the results of the research derived from the rich narratives of the coded data as well as the discussions of those results.

Chapter 8 concludes the research discussion, notes limitations, and highlights potential future research helpful for filling in the gap in PNG FODE/L research literature.

The next chapter brings forth some insights into QA within the wider global context of society.
CHAPTER 2: THE GLOBAL CONTEXT OF QUALITY AND QA

2.0 Introduction

This chapter goes far and wide to embrace the nature, history and practices of QA from a global perspective. The QA portrayed within this chapter employs a mapping strategy to examine QA global settings. It focuses on the critical aspects of what it is, why it matters, its relevance to different contexts, and current trends. The influences exerted by QA thinking and practice, when highlighted in this manner, are then traced to the PNG educational situation. QA is seen to be global in many applications and is a trend creating ripple effects, at the very least, on local realities.

2.1 Globalisation

QA can be envisioned as a system that attempts to produce quality outcomes in many international areas of activity, such as manufacturing, commerce, IT, science, and even FODE/L. The world hosts a network of connected markets, labour, goods and services, and research endeavours that operate across sovereign borders via international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Milman, 2014), the United Nations (UN), World Health Organisations (WHO), UNESCO, The World Bank (WB), and others affect politics, education, world peace, security and health agendas in countries around the world. International organisations require people with competence, skills and knowledge who are always willing to learn. Conti (2013) notes that globalisation is a revolution that requires sustainable development. QA activities and reported QA outcomes are now accepted elements of international business, trade, and political discourse. Quality thinking and quality-conscious actions...
are required in today’s world of connected systems and can inform actions leading to sustainable, prosperous and harmonious futures for humankind.

2.1.1 Global Cultures

Culture is an essential component of any human society. It is closely associated with the unique qualities of, and challenges facing, each person. Spencer-Oatley (2012) defines culture as “a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions shared by a group of people” (p.2). This definition relates to a sense of belonging and identity. A person may opt to harness his/her cultural consciousness or may diffuse his/her cultural traits to accommodate the realities of their situational settings. A traditional culture pertaining to a certain group of people usually determines how they do things in certain contexts for specific reasons, compared with an organisational culture, which determines people’s performance of the organisation’s activities. Cultures can be traditional, modern or hybrid. Conti (2006) suggests that cultures can be seen as the ‘lifeblood’ of systems and are therefore a vital element of human societies and any of their endeavours. Systems thinker Gharajedaghi (2011) claims that the essence of culture includes peoples’ experiences, beliefs, attitudes and ideals, and is a reflection of their shared history and identity. A sustaining element of human society is maintained because ‘…man creates culture and culture creates him’ (p.61). A ‘global culture’ implies activities, values, thinking, and philosophies that apply across the world. Whether or not such a culture could exist is debateable.

2.1.2 Cultures within systems thinking

A system comprises inter-connected sub-systems that are designed for a particular purpose. In today’s complex world, systems thinking is essential to harness
the principles of openness, purposefulness, multi-dimensionality, emergent properties and counter-intuitive behaviour within the systems in which we work (Conti, 2006, 2011, 2013; Gharajedaghi, 2011). When considerations of culture are consciously included, they are not isolated from systems thinking. Cultures cannot be treated as isolated phenomena because they exist within various systems in nature, society, and global interactions. Our world is part of a natural system within the solar system that answers to mechanisms beyond human control. Energy emitted from natural systems is a necessary component of human society but the energy generated by human activities can be controlled by humans, for example in global trading systems.

2.1.3 Globalisation Management Culture: Quality System Thinking

Quality thinking is a set of conceptual tools that humankind could utilise to oversee development in our globalised world to achieve balance, harmony and sustainability (Conti, 2013). This means that quality thinking prevails from personal convictions, and good management can embody conscious efforts to ‘do the right thing’ within the realms of ethics, morals and social justice. Suvorov & Suvorova (2015) describe the “…formation of upbringing and educating a perfect human professing a proper worldview with basic components of belief, spirituality, harmony-ethics, harmony-morality, harmony-peace, harmony-love, mutual understanding, patience, tolerance, personal and collective harmony, and Christ’s ethics” (p.158). This comprises an ideal training for global citizenship and is perhaps not attainable. Luhmann (2013) suggests that quality thinking requires attention to “what matters most” to stakeholders’ values and expectations fostering open systems to boost creativity and sustainability as opposed to closed systems governed by entropy.
2.1.4 Culture of quality and QA

A culture of quality embraces QA processes such as management, monitoring and evaluation. This research advocates the application of QA processes as essential to many aspects of activity, such as FODE/L. O’Dwyer (2011), in examining the accounting domain, emphasises the need for sustainable QA to infuse all accounting and professional practices. In addition, Sass and Dryzek (2014) go beyond the activities of the workplace to show that QA can comprise either overt change (which can also be political), or underlying influences that can pervade layers of meaning and lead to individuals practising critical awareness of their cultural and work environments.

Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld (2005) raise the complex issue of cultural borrowing. Practitioners from dominant organisations in, for example, trade and commerce, often require the use of methods and processes from their own culture to be accepted and utilised by workers living in a less developed country. These seemingly global methods often are applied, but are not sustainable, in local contexts due to the lack of conceptual understandings, inadequacy of local resources for that purpose, and/or inappropriateness or irrelevancy of the required interventions. Weick et al suggest that a process of sensemaking prevails, and impositions from other settings may be adopted through a process of alignment with the local visions, culture and understandings of local practitioners.

With the 21st Century aspiration of a connectivist culture (Siemens, 2014), inter-connectedness is sought through global politics, economics, bilateral multi-trade relations and other global relationships. Advancements in technology are keys, enabling various levels of electronic (e-) co-operation, sharing of e-resources, e-dialogue and e-teaching/learning across national borders. When the question of
quality becomes a factor for consideration, both the nature of ‘quality and QA processes are investigated while value for investments is also sought. QA then becomes the mechanism whereby quality outcomes are achieved within a culture of updated norms and practices. The application of proactive QA systems can identify levels of quality failure or deception. QA serves as the ‘silver thread’ interwoven through the contexts of time, geography and significance leading to effective global systems. It is therefore fitting to use a worldview perspective regarding QA so that one does not dismiss the reality of global-local contexts, cultures and tendencies.

2.2 Definitions and Theories of QA

Having established the importance of QA as a culture within a myriad of systems, this section illuminates the various definitions and theories used in this study. The word ‘quality’ has varying historical and contextual roots. Historically, the quality movement with regard to products goes back in time to Europe when guilds were formed based on the apprenticeship system and a craftsmanship model. Shad, Nair & Wilson (2011) show that factory systems of the nineteenth century utilized some QA activities in product inspection. According to Dictionary.reference.com, ‘quality’ emerges from the 12\textsuperscript{th} Century Old French word \textit{qualité} meaning "quality, nature or characteristic" of something. A term coined by the philosopher Cicero translates to mean "what kind of a". In modern literature, it is treated as an attribute of something (Mishra, 2007; Salehzadeh, Shahin, Kazemi, & Barzoki, 2015) and can be of exceptional consistency, fitness of purpose, value for money, and transformative (Harvey & Green, 1993; Mishra, 2007). Quality may be contained in face value judgments and appreciation of certain traits that appeal to satisfaction, such that its definition varies among people, contexts, and perceptions. According to Nielsen (2003, p.237), the word has ‘\textit{a priori} authority and thus the legitimate right to accord
status to one thing over another’ but it is a contested, slippery term meaning different things to different people. Conti (2006) suggests it is a feature/property characterising an object, a person, an animal or a situation with positive or negative implications in association with value. (Ossiannilsson, Williams, Camilleri, & Brown, 2015) suggest that quality prevails in conflicts or tensions as a comparative term in management and institutional systems. Although accepted within a universal discourse, it can therefore be argued that what is deemed to be of quality is judged by established human attributes, purposes, and perceptions of relevance.

Communication and Information Technologies offer new insights and challenges into QA outcomes (Middlehurst, 2001). Dale (2015) highlights that QA in management systems, based on the fulfilment of quality requirements are achieved through strategic planning, deployment of QA frameworks, product delivery, customer satisfaction and continuous evaluation of quality results. Verduyn (2014) defines the Kano Model(Juan, Huang, & Chen, 2014) as “…an insightful way of understanding and categorizing…customer requirements for new products and services”(kanomodel.com) This model, developed in Japan by Noriaki Kano, is used very successfully in that country’s manufacturing and also can be extended to inform practices in services such as healthcare and education (Verduyn., 2014). QA processes may differ depending on the context; hence no model exists that fits all QA purposes. The American Society of Quality (www.asq.org) is a group of quality practitioners pursuing the ideal of a global emphasis on quality. Their ideas link to creating a better world through global networks that accommodate varying visions. Whilst it seems beneficial to embrace global approaches to QA, there can be a blind spot at the personal level. Personal ownership of the notion of QA might become a trap because QA can be seen as something external to an individual, i.e. an attribute of
the manager, not of the worker. It can be seen as a form of control with strict regulations for workers, as well as a source of jobs for audit professionals. Desired outcomes often hinder an organisation’s bureaucracy. This results in wastage of time and money if improvements such as those outlined above do not ensue. Harvey and Green (1993) suggest that quality can be a philosophical concept with democratised values in how people perceive it in relation to stakeholder relevance, while Nielson (2003) sees quality as a powerful tool.

2.2.1 Theoretical assumptions and models

QA is based on concepts absorbed from the following: systems theory, chaos theory, cultural theory and other related perspectives including, but not confined to, Total Quality Management (TQM), Japanese practices of Kano and Kaizen, and the interesting concept of ‘zero defects’ (as applied to manufacturing). Mishra (2007) notes that the industrial and manufacturing sectors of Europe and the USA produced professionals who developed many QA practices: Deming, Juran and Crosby, for example. For them, quality was pursued from the viewpoint of identified defects and deficiencies. Deming’s work enabled Japan to accept QA as a management priority that has produced excellent results in manufacturing and production due to enthusiasm, vision and drive evidenced by top management. Believing in longevity, Deming advocated for long-lasting, sustainable approaches, rather than quick fixes, to obtain organisational quality outcomes. Zairi (2013) noted that Deming aligned his ideals of quality with the transformation of work cultures to achieve systematic monitoring, analysis and control, resulting in high productivity. Deming developed 14 criteria for performance, a theory of chain reactions and a seven-point action plan. Figure 2.1 illustrates Deming’s ideas.
Deming’s approach is a proven method for harnessing and sustaining quality while instilling a greater consciousness of the intricacies of production. In contemporary times, TQM is widely accepted and embraced in organisational change and transformative dynamics. TQM is discussed further in section 2.2.2 of this chapter. Zairi (2013) notes that Joseph Juran’s ideals reflect Deming’s work. Juran’s quality definition is ‘fitness for purpose’ where quality fits the needs of production using three main steps: structural annual plans, training, and quality-focussed leadership. Juran’s trilogy of quality improvement involves quality planning, quality control and quality improvement (Zairi, 2013). Like Deming, Juran links quality to management and suggests that poor quality is a result of poor management. He developed ten steps for improvement consisting of: awareness of the need, goals creation, re-focussing and re-directing organisational structures, training, problem-solving through projects, success recognition, results communication, maintenance of change records, and
annual improvement cycles. From the 1920s-1940s, Juran and Deming pursued their passion for quality. The differences between these two thinkers are customer satisfaction and organisational transformation. Whilst Juran focused on a customer’s expectations from a systemic approach, Deming’s philosophy and practice advocated transformational cultural change in the pursuit of quality outcomes. Juran’s ideals of quality included quality dimensions such as planning, control and improvement as shown in Figure 2.2.

Phillip B. Crosby, an influential thinker in the United States, focused on harnessing quality from a ‘zero defects’ angle. According to Crosby, quality is ‘free’ whilst lack of quality incurs costs. Early prevention of defects in products or systems necessitates certain interventions such as being attentive, conscious of processes and activities, and awareness of their end results. Quality consciousness evolves when management practises mature and established priorities for quality development are fostered.

Figure 2.2  
Crosby’s steps for quality awareness adapted from Zaire (2013)

Crosby advocated four absolutes for the management of quality: conformance to set standards, preventative strategies, accepted measurements of quality, and the adoption of zero defects (ZD) as the performance standard. In Figure 2.2 of Crosby’s
steps for quality adoption, his thinking links with Tolle’s (2011) spiritual ideas of ‘feeling-realisation’, which bring forth enlightenment by being in touch with reality.

As well as the foregoing practitioners, Zairi (2013) lists others such as Feigenbaum (1970s) who coined the concept of ‘Total Quality Control’ (TQC), Ishikawa who established the Ishikawa ‘fishbone’ diagram in the 1960s, and Taguchi who defined quality from a social perspective in the 1950s. Antony (2015) proposes a comprehensive list as shown below:

- leadership for quality,
- customer advocacy,
- use of applied statistical methods by QA professionals,
- creation of a culture of continuous improvement/incremental innovation,
- employee empowerment/engagement/ownership,
- training and education about/for quality,
- extending quality considerations into the supply chain,
- the product environment and
- continuous learning leading to sustaining issues of quality.

All of the above assumptions and models relate strongly to industrial practices and activities. The TQM and the Japanese models discussed below also have the potential for being applied to services such as healthcare and education.

2.2.2 The TQM philosophy

The 1980’s quality impetus was toward competency and competitiveness in global markets. It helped underpin Japan’s success in revitalising industries after being crippled by the consequences of World War 2 (2014; Weckenmann, Akkasoglu, & Werner, 2015; Zairi, 2013). Whilst TQM has been lauded for its international
success in business performance, marketing, and improved customer services, Rahman & Talib (2015) note there are some critiques of TQM.

One criticism applies to the transferrable nature or adoption of TQM to sectors other than industry or business. If simply transferred, rather than carefully adapted, TQM can be irrelevant to service providers such as the government sector. According to Harvey and Green (1993), TQM has practical applications but also means different things to different people. Whilst TQM can be said to be just common sense (Biech, 1994), questions are often asked as to why it is universally practised if so sensible. TQM is often aligned to systems of organisational planning and analysis that are ‘plagued by mechanistic methodologies’ (Gharajedaghi, 2011; Harvey & Green, 1993). Such approaches are challenging for management in modern day scenarios.

Similarly, Rago (1994) studied the mismatched application of TQM from industrial based sectors to government sectors. Often when TQM is applied to the government sector, the compromise between quality and costs in industry does not mesh in government service delivery. It is evident that the complexities pertaining to Government cultures differ noticeably from business settings thus challenging the methodologies used in the application of TQM. For example, additional customers do not mean additional revenue in the delivery of government service. Furthermore, quality versus quantity poses contextual challenges. Rago believes that, whilst TQM is an approach that is workable in some sectors, its adoption to other sectors besides manufacturing and industry may be futile. Rahman & Talib (2015) identified barriers to the effective harnessing of TQM for positive quality outcomes. Three main issues were identified as: people, managerial shortcomings and organisational deficits. The study revealed that barriers of communication (managerial), lack of top management commitment (managerial), resistance to change (people) and lack of co-ordination
between departments (organisational) were key issues while high staff turnover (organisational) was found as the least barrier across organisations. TQM efficacy culture can lead to sustainability through continuous educational efforts and modifications to fit the demands of the organisational realities.

2.2.3 Japanese models

Two Japanese quality ideas are presented herewith. The Kano theory of satisfaction and the Kaizen practices leading to continuous improvement are comparatively analysed. Löfgren, Witell and Gustafsson (2011) note that Kano aligns to strategic thinking in business where emphasis is on the relationship between organisational performance and customer satisfaction with products or services via evaluative processes.

Kaizen, on the other hand, means improvement, derived from the Japanese language, ‘kai’ means ‘change’ and ‘zen’ meaning ‘for good’ hence ‘change for better’ (Khojasteh, 2016). The practices associated with Kaizen show that change emerges through the act of doing things well. This expectation implies continuous improvement in the manufacturing/industrial sector. Whilst both are focused on quality enhancement and customer satisfaction, Kano depends on the notion of attraction whilst Kaizen emphasises a culture of product consciousness with incremental improvement. According to Lee, Lin and Wang (2011) the ideal of attractive quality changes some attributes during the lifespan of a particular product/activity, making it applicable to industrial research. It is also applied in business research, e-services, banking and travel services to improve customer satisfaction with relationship quality attributes (Juan et al., 2014). Similarly, Kaizen values contextual awareness, and focuses on what is being pursued, be it a product, service or policy implementation. Interestingly, Kaizen embraces evolutionary
approaches and mutates from a system that advocates ‘no wastage’ to ‘Just In Time’ (JIT) production. Singh and Singh (2015) relate the Kaizen approach to quality improvement through continuous, small incremental steps rather than revolutionary/transformative changes. It is an inclusive participatory process within organisations, based on each individual’s personal conviction of the need for quality.

Both ideals developed in the Japanese context after World War 2. Herzberg’s study published in 1959 of people’s attitudes to work, contributed to practices developed by Noriaki Kano (Lee, Lin, & Wang, 2011) with emphasis on employees’ satisfaction in the working environment. Singh and Singh (2015) point out that the practices of Kaizen draw upon Deming’s 14 points in the TQM, while Kano activities are based on its five quality attributes ‘being must be (basic) one dimensional (performance) attractive (motivational) indifferent and reverse’ (Salehzadeh et al., 2015). Kaizen fosters mindfulness and consciousness. According to Etzioni (1968) consciousness is a ‘prerequisite of an active unit, which is self-reviewing and self-correcting in order to realise more fully its value’ (p.231). Quality consciousness and on-going improvement are favoured over a culture of complacency, stagnancy or status quo in the pursuit of quality work.

2.2.4 Functions of QA

Institutions and organisations pursue QA competencies for greater accountability and transparency in their endeavours. QA in such organisations aligns with their constancy of purpose in delivering products and services with great quality. There is a clear connection between QA practices and the ways in which people in organisations value and define quality which could be found in value for money, excellent service and/or fitness for purpose (Atwater, 2001). Quality usually closely resonates with ethical, moral, secure and legal dimensions of the delivery of products.
and services by organisations. The practical applications of QA are now evident in almost every sector of human activity from a call centre in Mumbai to an island resort in PNG. Where there is cross inter-networking and an ever-increasing need for trust and credibility, QA activities are vital to the support of sustainable, lasting and meaningful services and products. It is ironic that, in spite of plans and expectations, the culture of QA can mutate into something that was not initially thought of. QA in the disguise of collaboration and empowerment can actually be modern ‘imperialism’ (Gough, 2006; Robertson, 2012). As a global phenomenon, it involves strategic planning and paradigm shifts in practical situations. QA is sometimes referred to as the cornerstone of trade, production, manufacturing, and service industries. Globally, lessons from countries like Japan and the USA show that QA evolves as an incremental, on-going culture of improvement or, in contrast, that it can be transformative and bring about radical changes to the way things are done.

2.3 QA trends

The emergence of the ‘Quality Revolution’ of the early 1980s (Conti, 2013) and the strategic alignment of TQM thinking and practice, promoted improved and on-going quality outcomes. In the USA and a number of European countries, managers took ownership of quality control methods for the purposes of mass production (Dahlgaard & Dahlgaard-Park, 2006; Mishra, 2007). These have been extended from manufacturing and production contexts to other sectors including health and education. Weckenmann et al. (2015) agree that the quality movement has evolved from manufacturing quality inspections and defect detection to TQM for organisation management in many different fields. Whilst it is essential to think globally, one is also challenged to remain sensitive to the realities of the local contexts. This discussion compares international practices in various parts of the
world where QA is pursued. It is now an important issue for economic, health and educational policies in most countries.

QA has remained an essential component of global endeavour in the broad sectors of different global settings. International practices of QA are evident in both the developed and the developing nations of the world in many ways. Whilst QA is contested, advocated, trialled and embraced as a global culture, a point for consideration pertains to how different nations determine their priorities and choice(s) of TQM continuous improvement, customer/consumer satisfaction, and/or social justice outcomes within their national contexts (Jabnoun & Al Khafaji, 2005). Kodate (2010) shows how QA is expressed in three universal health systems in three different countries (England, Sweden and Japan) and demonstrates how political pressures from government, public discourse, and events influence QA policies in those contexts. In terms of market competition, QA accountability in health policies has become a widely used tool in developed countries such as those studied. QA systems in health care pertain to two types: profession-driven or patient-oriented, and this is due to various challenges such as QA discourses, research, and data management in relation to national and international standards. Vasliena (2015) discusses QA with contextual references to the tourism industry in Russia. It is a case of using the International Standards Organisation (ISO) frameworks for ensuring and monitoring quality from a systems approach perspective. With sensitivity to recent events such as terrorism incidents, subsystems such as security monitoring, surveys of tourist satisfaction and monitoring of regional measures of tourism development, proactive QA remains significantly vital within QA frameworks for legislative and tourism development program effectiveness. QA and quality discourse are important in various sectors like the sciences, medicine, research, clinical trials and education. For
example, within the area of space shuttle management, unique QA processes were found necessary. Atwater (2001) shows the need for a critical attitude towards safety, and close attention to ethics and quality. Five elements safety, timeliness, reliability, ethical attitudes to space operations, and integrity within the US Space program are prescribed in the ISO. Atwater describes how a ‘risk-based audit approach’ (p.56) is fostered through the application of QA practices and an ethical consciousness of the realities of organisational management. An integrated audit plan for such an important and innovative program is needed for the effectiveness of the program.

In some parts of the Asian region, QA initiatives and culture in organisational contexts are significantly evident. The Japanese enthusiasm for quality thinking and practices offer lessons for the utilisation of QA within the region. Dahlgaard & Dahlgaard-Park (2006) provide some historical analytical insights into the evolutionary nature of this culture from its humble beginnings of the Six Sigma to ‘lean’ production and eventually TQM. In 1949, Japan embraced an insightful but proactive approach to studying and learning from the U.S manufacturing industry’s mass production methods. From this point, the Kanban system of production evolved. The Kanban system is the basis of ‘lean production’ where the ‘no wastage’ (muda) approach pervades all work activities. Dahlgaard & Dahlgaard-Park (2006) state that lean production focuses on minimising wastage of manpower, production, time and space. Over time, Japan embraced the TQM approach to foster the human factor in developing appropriate company cultures that emphasise the essence of humankind.

In the context of Europe, QA has its own trajectory and historical landings in the various domains of politics, economics and business. Among the plethora of quality initiatives are the regional initiative known as the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) in 1991, the 1999 Bologna Declaration, plus the
European Quality Award and European Excellence Awards in 2004 which, collectively, give synergy to quality discourse within the European region (Bandyopadhyay & Nair, 2015). Consequently, national quality initiatives have flourished. However, Tsimillis (2015) describes the situation in Cyprus, where there is hype about QA and quality enhancement, with limitations in the area of training and QA awareness gaps that need remedies. In another recent study of QA conducted under a European Union project titled PHAR-QA, it was revealed that existing QA systems were resource and management based with room for improvement in specific areas where relevant competencies still needed to be included in their QA systems (2014). On a positive note, quality in HE in 29 countries of Europe was firmly established under the Bologna Declaration (1999) which has seen extensive work by national governments to standardise degrees, coordinate levels of instruction, and engage with many thorny issues such as language of instruction and publishing.

QA in Africa is also being advocated in different sectors of the society and can be said to be at different levels of progression. One obvious example of the need for QA is within the international labour market where it is needed, particularly in the areas of education, health and many other sectors. Most QA initiatives in the developing countries of Africa are being developed and trialled with regard to efforts in capacity building, research and local ownership (Materu, 2007; Odukoya, Chinedu, George, Olowookere, & Agbude, 2015).

In Oceania, the two developed nations of Australia and New Zealand have established QA cultures. Whilst the concept of quality audits has taken the world by storm, with the hope of ensuring quality, transparency and accountability, its relevance to many developing countries with small economies has been questioned, especially in the small island countries of the South Pacific.
2.4 Global Models and Frameworks of QA

The QA processes applied to a given situation depend on the theoretical assumptions and definitions used. Thus, various models and frameworks are utilised depending on the area of activity in industry, business, education, innovations, international security, or other sectors. This section focuses only on four main popular QA models, which are the ISO 9000+ series, the Baldrige criteria, Capability Maturity and the Six Sigma models. TQM will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The ISO 9000 Standards pertain to the management of quality, whether product, workers or systems. The ISO set of procedures began development in 1946 and has been updated regularly since. The ISO 9000 series of international standards exists as a key tool for common quality management. QA jobs such as Quality Manager, Quality Auditor and Quality Consultant (Fonseca, 2015) have emerged from the ISO system. With its requirement for constant review, the ISO 9000 model continues to evolve. Psomas & Antony (2015) highlight further significant impacts such as company internal motivation and employee attributes. Vaslievna (2015) adds that the use of ISO 9000 model indicates that current realities like security needs and anti-human behaviour pose levels of anxiety and stress for the Tourism industry and security monitoring. Tourist satisfaction requires that QA is a must in the development of that industry.

The second model for consideration is the Baldrige quality model. The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award is highly esteemed in the United States of America and is an integrated evaluation of the delivery of value-added quality by a company, institution or service(Mishra, 2007). Where the TQM model’s emphasises the management of quality systems, the Baldrige criteria focuses on excellence that evolves with constant revisions in response to societal and market needs. It is a well-
rounded approach to quality enhancement that puts leadership as a priority, followed by active strategic planning, customer satisfaction, monitoring and evaluation, sustainability issues, and dimensions for further improvement.

Third is the Capacity Maturity Model (CMM), which is a Carnegie-Mellon product, intended as an evaluative tool for software development. The model measures processes at five levels of maturity. In contrast to those above, the CMM is concerned with defined steps based on evaluation and team-based approaches. These levels of maturity are defined as initial, repeatable, defined, managed and optimising. The evaluations consider the following:

1. Team selection for assessment undertaking
2. Administration of maturity questionnaire on site
3. Analysis of responses to identify key analytical areas
4. Site visit of the team for interview, document analysis
5. Team’s identification of strengths and weaknesses
6. Report from Team indicating results and findings (Mishra, 2007).

The fourth model is named Six Sigma. Mishra (2007) relates the development of this model to Motorola, USA, in 1983-89, with its basis in the manufacturing industry. It is based on the concepts of customer value and improvement where the correlation between low defects and costs, and customer satisfaction is very strong. The acronym DMAIC refers to the process of Defining, Measuring, Analysing, Improving and Controlling (Dahlgaard & Dahlgaard-Park, 2006; Mishra, 2007). Like the other adaptable models, Six Sigma has been applied to sectors other than business and industry such as education because it favours teamwork and training to achieve its potential.
QA is a series of processes leading to quality outcomes within a variety of models and practices. The models outlined in this section serve as windows into the processes, innovations and thinking involved in their development, and the practical realities to which they are applied. Whilst the literature emphasises certain popular QA models in the industrial and business sectors, there is also evidence of the effectiveness of QA when applied intelligently to certain systems in healthcare, education and some types of research.

2.4.1 QA Networks

Global QA networks, societies or communities are becoming increasingly available. These networks are established to foster quality discourse, collaboration, learning initiatives, research and other quality-enhancing activities such as conferences and seminars. The American Quality Society (AQS) is a classic example of an organisation established to give quality a global voice. Similarly, a common justification for the establishment of a QA framework (QAF) within an organisation pertains to maintenance of consciousness of the organisation’s purposes and mission. The QAF provides direction in the deployment of mechanisms such as policies, action plans or implementation strategies toward the quality activities or processes of continuous improvement. Turnman-Bryant (2015) uses the example of a QAF known as the Lighting Global QAF. This is an example of a QAF that is market-driven and based on the principles of affordability, diversity and innovation, rigor, stability and insight. The Lighting Global Quality Standards are an example of a global quality network for electricity. This QA program is one where QA information is critical in influencing the flow of products, information and finance through the supply chain to customers.
Organisational improvement in the area of QA is evident in both practice and theory. An example is where a conceptual framework is developed through continuous improvement and thus builds on existing frameworks that serve the purposes, needs and priorities of organisation (Nelson, Poels, & Genero, 2011). In their study, the authors describe a comprehensive Conceptual Modelling Quality Framework (CMQF) that merges two frameworks. The needs and specifications of such a QAF require in-depth comprehensiveness and high-quality presentations of information systems for user domains, plus systems analysis and room for error corrections. In work where precision is paramount, QA forms the cornerstone of practice at the micro-, macro- and meso-levels of operation.

2.4.2 QA audits, tools and techniques

With the prevalence of greater accountability, transparency and good governance in both private and public sectors of the economy, QA remains vital to organisations. Heldman (2015) looks at project management and lists the tools needed: QA management and control tools, quality audits and process analyses. QA audits are usually performed by QA Professionals. QA audits may be done internally by the organisations or externally as an independent review. Depending on how QA is specified within the management quality plan or strategy, QA can be mandatory or voluntarily executed, or can be done periodically, regularly or at random. In many organisations, QA is achieved through a process of continual improvement derived from reviews of current practice. The continual assessment of processes and outcomes is essential to internal audits (Kinser, 2014).

External review, on the other hand, occurs when professionals from a reputable QA agency are required to conduct a quality audit for an organisations or entity. They are given their terms of reference or they bring their own criteria for the
assessments. At the end, they produce a certificate of compliance or report that specifies the strengths and weaknesses identified in the process of the QA audit. The internal or self-assessment QA processes and the external QA practices complement each other (Commonwealth of Learning, 2010) and thus focus on the good organisational practices and outcomes. If reported clearly, Quality Audits give value, credibility, and positive indicators to stakeholder satisfaction. Whilst critics of Quality Audits may claim that the audit culture is all about power and control, in fact, audits may be a vital sustaining components of the organisation’s culture directs its focus on on-going improvement. Some benefits are: customer satisfaction, ethical or legal requirements are met, corrective measures are proposed, improvement is identified, action plans are confirmed as per implementation, gaps are revealed, and best practices are highlighted for the organisations.

2.4.3 QA tools and techniques

A QA process uses various tools inclusive of quantitative, analytical as well as facilitation tools (Mishra, 2007, Heldman, 2015). According to authors (Bamford & Greatbanks, 2005; McQuater, Scurr, Dale, & Hillman, 1995) both (tools and techniques) are hands-on methods, skills, means, or mechanisms used for specific tasks to foster continuous improvement or change. A quality tool is a device intended for a specific role. It can be in the form of cause-and-effect diagrams, Pareto analyses, relationship diagrams, control charts, histograms, or flow charts (Heldman, 2015; McQuater et al., 1995; Mishra, 2007). Techniques are complementary to tools but have wider applications like Statistical Process Control (SPC) which includes benchmarking, quality function deployment, failure modes and effects analysis, plus design of experiments (Bamford & Greatbanks, 2005; McQuater et al., 1995). For
example, graphic representations, such as the diagrams used to illustrate inter-relationships, clarify the problems in a complex situation (Heldman, 2015).

Brainstorming is yet another tool that can be used in generating solutions for problems. When collaboration and teamwork occur, ideas for improvement can be mapped out by knowledgeable people sharing and building ideas flexibly. In QA, it is a useful tool used tactically for purposeful outcomes. In QA, it is a useful tool for purposeful outcomes. Mind-mapping techniques are effective with brainstorming along with the use of affinity diagrams to group and organize thoughts and facts around central idea or issues. Checklists are also used as tools for assuring that quality from specified attributes are checked off or identified as not being evident. SWOT or situational analyses are analytical approaches that can be useful for identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats within the contexts of quality in a product, service, project or organisations as a whole. These QA tools and techniques for continuous improvement can be successful when used by well-trained professionals. Bamford & Greatbanks (2005) revealed how different tools and techniques were used coherently, based on appropriateness, and revealed that simplicity is a winning criterion for the application and success of such tools. The relevancy, appropriateness, affordability, adequate timeframe, and simplicity of tools and techniques coupled with knowledgeable practitioners have the capacity to produce successful quality outcomes.

2.5 Glocalisation of QA

The term ‘glocalisation’ (or ‘global to local’) surfaced in the 1980s from the Japanese context through the local application of agriculture and business techniques adapted from other countries. The term ‘glocal’ is derived from a Japanese term ‘dochaku, which means living on one’s own land’ (Robertson, 2012, p.194) and thus
is linked to the notions of the creation and construction of local realities blended with international trends. Such an approach contains the dimensions of self-determination and workable ideals in local realities. Whilst the concept of globalisation usually infers positive attributes, it can also be seen as a process of increased dominance of one culture over others (Robertson, 2012). Glocal strategies are not just the mimicking of global ideas, but are the development of workable paradigms that are applicable, effective and affordable in local contexts. Global citizenship is a concept that is taken from a glocal sense. Whilst it can be argued that contemporary global citizenship can be achieved in local realities, the notion of global citizenship in itself opens up debates about structured global inequality, social justice and moral decay.

Global competency has an acceptable connotation for integral human development endeavour of citizens within their glocal contexts without physical disposition of place. The sensemaking and consciousness perspectives of glocal thinking are such that local contextual practices remain sensitive to global issues. A process of global mindfulness where positive ideals are embraced both actively and locally can foster, sustain and focus individuals’ mind-sets on quality thinking, and influence local practices of QA. Milman (2014) reminds us that individuals who engage in glocal thinking must consciously connect local realities, culture and needs to the bigger world where global citizens and technical innovations flourish. In some contexts where legacies of harsh colonial experiences exist and neo-colonialism has crept in, ideals of glocalisation are often questioned through critical discourse.

2.5.1. Development of a Glocal culture

The meaningful translation of QA into local understandings requires a process of sensemaking. This means pursuing what is contextually relevant in the local realities of culture, nature, economy, society and government. QA from a developed
country like Japan appeals, but the practical reality of it being applied to a developing country’s context like PNG, creates distortion, disillusionment and confusion.

Various factors are in play when determining the QA systems, models and theories to use, because QA is not a mechanical activity. It relies on individuals to contribute their efforts, motivation, insight and appreciation to foster the intended outcomes in organisations, industries and/or products. Wherever people exist, there is the culture-driven tendency to do things in certain ways. Lingard (2010) finds that an ideal system of QA policy or strategy from a global setting may not work in a particular local situation, so QA advocates and policy makers are challenged to be sensitive to the culture, aspirations and needs of local contexts. Thus, QA practitioners pursue their ideas using an engaging consultative and progressive approach where people are empowered to develop the needed skills and capabilities. These people are involved in QA decision-making so they will develop into resourceful partners in the creation and sustainability of QA systems, vision and goals within an organisation, and perhaps in their society. Such a participatory approach is likely to foster the QA culture, compared with a set of dictatorial directives. Sustainable integration through glonacal strategies implies global, national and local paradigm thinking (Yung-Chi, Morse, Ince, Chen, Chiang, & Chan, 2015). This involves sensemaking that builds on existing norms and paradigms such as peoples’ connection to nature, and spirituality, upon which their local culture thrives.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has brought together ideas about QA, first from the great thinkers of the quality movement, and second from the various theoretical concepts that evolved into the modes and practices in use today. The historical trajectory of QA was described, and systems, models and tools were examined. This literature review found
that QA’s roots in industrial manufacturing are widely acknowledged internationally and that some aspects of QA have metamorphosed successfully to other areas, such as services. The chapter concludes with QA from a glocal perspective where global ideals of QA are being fostered in local contexts for assuring quality through the creation of local services and products.

The next chapter presents QA in the context of Higher Education.
CHAPTER 3: QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

3.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, QA was analysed from the global contexts of quality management in the business, industrial and related sectors. This chapter (3) focuses on QA in HE. It emphasises the prominence and significance of QA in the Global HE Education scene through a sensemaking approach. Today’s changing landscape of HE provides interest on how HE quality is nurtured, cultured and assured, particularly in light of the logical ideals and practices surrounding its significance and value. QA practices from other sectors in society have been applied in some HE systems, often resulting in either appreciation or dismay. Nevertheless, with the varying HE systems available, there is no ‘one size, fits all’ (Kanwar, 2013) QA model that exists globally. Based on various appeals, uniqueness and other realities, QA systems in HE are established within logical frameworks, which have evolved over time. This chapter presents a critical review of literature relating to three main levels of QA influences in HE. First, the meaning of QA is presented, second, the significance of QA is highlighted and third, QA is viewed from global scenario with references to HE’s changing landscape. This chapter maps QA within the global HE terrain of the 21st Century by sensemaking the current driving forces, trends and practices in local realities of developed and developing nations.

3.1 Meaning of QA in Higher Education

Quality attracts diversity in meaning and interpretations. Harvey and Green (1993, p.9) define the term ‘quality’ in HE within five different categories of discrete
but interrelated concepts. These are, ‘exceptional, perfection, fitness for purpose, value for money and transformation.’ First, exceptional quality means that its provision is excellent, unique and highly valued as it conforms to high standards. This definition of quality relates to uniqueness and remarkability. Second, quality perfection implies that there is no prevailing defect from the start of a service, product design or system. This is linked to quality as a culture (Commonwealth of Learning, 2010; Deming, 1986). Quality achievement can be challenging when organisations continue to struggle with the lack of adequate resources and capability. Quality as perfection can also be applied to various aspects or components of HE systems. The pursuit for perfection becomes an evolving process through a culture of improvement (Fiedel, 2007) as opposed to a one-off accomplishment. Third, quality is defined as fitness for purpose from Juran’s perception of quality and used in both business management contexts and education (Makoe, 2015b). In HE, quality remains a management issue that safeguards the reasons and intentional goals for which HE advocates. The quality is based on the persistence of propelled vision and mission statements towards strategic aspirations. Fourth, quality is defined as value. This definition relates to the attributes of excellence and fitness for purpose. The quality of HE provision is valued and appreciated by its relevant stakeholders for the purposes and values upon which it exists. Finally, quality is defined as transformative. Changes from learning experiences in HE pertain to transformational organisational culture, practice and service delivery. Quality brings forth transformative changes through equity, access, and thus social justice (Makhanya, 2011).

From theoretical perspectives, QA can be contested in various theories for HE. Systemic quality approach lies within the theoretical thinking of HEIs as systems operating within the wider dimensions of HE. Mishra (2007) contends that HE
systems exist within the abstract concept of an organised unitary whole system. Such a system has complementary sub-systems, defined within boundaries from its environmental supra-systems. A systems view of HE is an open system that situates itself in an influencing environment. This influencing environment puts into the system, energy that undergoes transformation through educational processes. Inputs into the HE system are resources (human, financial & physical) such as students, academics and non-academics, buildings, and funds for operational and infrastructural costs. These inputs are transformed through educational processes in the curriculum, management and support structures and thus give back into the environment the transformed outputs such as educational products. These outputs are employable graduates and/or research outputs to foster knowledge building in society and fulfil the demands of the labour markets. QA therefore, situates itself within the open systems theory where “openness means an exchange with the environment” (Luhmann, 2013). Within this theoretical assumption, QA can be viewed as a psychic (conscious) system, which is a trait of an open system that involves an input/output modal. In such a scenario, there is an ongoing reflective, critical sensemaking process within a QA consciousness culture. QA in HE requires a reflexive consciousness approach of thought processes in sensemaking inputs, process and output of quality factors. This theoretical dimension of QA is therefore anchored within a systems view approach based on ongoing or incremental conscious improved quality outcomes. Whilst the systems view of QA demands inclusive responsibility, it is also vital to view quality theoretical assumptions from a vantage point of conscience and virtues. QA in HE can also be seen from the perspectives of sustaining systemic moral values, virtues and essential traits for integral human development. Products of quality assured HE is manifested within the wider society. Given the nature of HE, QA can
be viewed from the notions of conscience and personal responsibility. Watson (2014) poses a question pertaining to how important HE is, in public reasoning for thinking about what we are doing and ultimately, cultivating humanity. Cultivating humanity is a quality attribute in enabling recipients of HE to be developed in human integral aspects of having civic responsibilities, with moral and ethical principles in life. In doing so, educators and practitioners of HE become role models and advocates of their university missions and values. Alluding to Watson, the ideals of public reasoning and the demand to cultivate humanity, are necessary QA attributes in contemporary HE contexts. This means that modern universities are answerable to the HE five (5) Cs which are; conscience, character, competence, citizenship and capacity. This research suggests the addition of another notion, which is sacredness, complementary of the five Cs.

![Figure 3.1: Theorising QA for humanity cultivation adapted from Watson (2014)](image)

Sacredness calls for respect and appreciation of one another’s humanity cultivation as a theoretical dimension of embracing quality. The essence of embracing sacredness requires sensitivity, respect and dignity towards the common good in all that we do.
3.2 Significance of QA in Higher Education

The significance of QA in HE is multidimensional. It includes the global changing landscape of HE, and the emergence of various stakeholders and trending cultures amidst the current demands of the 21st Century for quality HE provision. This section argues that the significance of QA in HE is due to many contesting forces and cultures. First, one of the significance of QA in HE is due to the surge of globalised HE within the logic of wider globalisation trends. There is no turning back from the demands of globalisation in HE’s current dynamics. Globalisation seeps through the fluid borders of HE institutions in national contexts via networks of foreign research, movement of students and faculty collaborations based on global standards. Alongside globalisation, accountability and quality are global agendas (Heap, 2013). Globalised HE through technological connectivity is therefore linked with education of foreign students, off shore campus establishment by Western Universities, online learning, academic collaboration, and professional partnership associations. This is also evident through alternative approaches such as Flexible Open Distance Learning, online learning, and ideals of mass education through open education approaches in Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) cultures. Considering such a global trend, the reality of globalisation of HE warrants QA as a vital aspect in ethical practice and justifications of the international and globalised HE.

Second, the effects of a globalised HE influence transformations in HE. Globalisation promotes connectivity (Siemens, 2014) through international collaboration and networking for global competency and citizenship. Whilst it can also be seen as an external driving force, it is added pressure for some HEIs. These commonalities are inclusive of, reduction in funding, greater interests in HE initiative by various stakeholders, the demand for HE and the changing landscape of HE.
delivery through technological innovations. The differences are such that whilst the developed nations flourish within the flow of globalisation as dominant providers in HE global markets, the developing countries remain as the targeted customers of the globalised and capitalised HE market. It therefore perpetuates the tendency for the existence of a dependency culture, and further intimidation via globalisation of HE from the developed world upon the already struggling HEIs in developing nations. Whilst globalised HE can be a transformative tool for development, it can also be a form of neo-colonialism (Altbach, 2015). The underlying motives of modern HE can be sensitised within QA perspectives for equality. It is within these dimensions of sensitising globalised HE that the expansion of QA and its significance in HE are linked to forces such as diversification of HE from pluralistic providers, private sector HE provision, international demand for HE and the establishment of multi-levelled QA regimes (Kinser, 2014).

Third, the presence of Western models of HE is evident in developing countries today (Job & Sriraman, 2013). This is persistent due to issues such as lack of government funding, World Bank’s emphasis on basic education, and lack of resources for quality HE provision. It is one of the ironies of development that HE in developing countries often struggles within the adopted Western models of HE, designed for neo-colonial dependency. In some cases, HE systems continue to evolve through rigorous reforms, for better or worse, whilst in other cases status quo prevails hence poor quality remains. As such, the need for revitalising HE through good practices and efficacious HE systems remains idealistic in such settings. As HE continues to suffer from reduced funding and lack of quality resources, the ideals of embedded functional QA mechanisms matter significantly.
Fourth, QA in HE relates to the global demand for HE which has been evident in recent decades (Kanwar, 2013). There are also new players in the global HE sector. Providers of HE today are no longer only public, government funded HEIs but also private HE providers, transnational HE partnerships and others. The 21st Century HE fosters plurality, and a diversity of HE hosts now prevail not only from the traditional situated campuses but also via new flexible delivery options from the private, public or government sectors alike. The justification- for demands in quality assured HE is linked to such trends and also to inclusive social justice. A paradox surfaces herewith that whilst education is seen as a universal right, it is also a costly and accessible commodity to acquire.

Modern day HE consumers include individuals pursuing their HE qualifications through flexible LLL options. LLL is where learning is a lifelong process, not determined by age and time. Some level of critical issues comes into consideration when HE is inclusive of private providers, whose efforts can be questionable in the areas of QA regulation of their offerings. Further questions can be asked about the avenues available for students to air their grievances concerning the quality of learning, and the materials, programs and courses offered by these private providers of HE. Besides that, the question of accountability and transparency is often raised with such providers of HE. In another vein of thinking and questioning, does quality matter to those private providers of HE? Systems of QA and/or vibrant cultures of quality make HE ethically responsible and credible for students to harness. The significance of QA is an important ethical and moral aspect of the HE sector that promotes the value and credibility of programs and services offered to relevant stakeholders.
QA is a cultural norm for most HEIs. This is based on many factors with the logic of quality being of the essence. According to (Odukoya et al., 2015) quality culture endures and stabilises QA practices within organisational contexts. QA fits into a quality culture, which is supported by an institution to produce quality in a continual and inclusive response to what the organisations do. In establishing QA cultures, organisations have to be ready to accept and proactively implement their quality endeavours. The establishment of QA mechanisms are necessary to institute QA culture in an organisation and are significantly important for the attainment of sustainable quality outcomes. They are inclusive of QA frameworks, QA plans, QA policies, and agencies to foster the organisational quality intentions. QA as a culture in HE is purposeful to achieve what it is intended for. Whilst it can be argued that HE needs to be widely accessible and inclusive to serve influential demands from stakeholders as well as being relevant to society and the economy, its intentions also have to be clearly made and understood. QA is thereby strongly advocated to address the current dynamics and complexities that are blending and posing challenges to traditional, conventional HE today. Custodians of HEIs who are passionate about quality as a culture through the process of QA see it not only as fashion but also as an attribute that is vital to the sustainable aspects of HEIs (Westerheijden, Bjørn, Stensaker, Rosa, & Corbett, 2014).

Another contributing factor to QA being significant in HE lies with the ideals of ethics and value for money. Consciousness of the ethical essence brings forth reciprocal trusts and values to foster institutional creditability (Bogue, 1998). QA therefore has deeper meanings and relevance to what matters most. Virtues like honesty, integrity, transparency and accountability must prevail. If there is passion for HE provision in course offerings, program delivery, services promoting greater
humanitarian good then QA culture comes naturally. On the other hand, in the world of global partnership across sovereign borders, proactive QA in HE is necessary in making sense of the external and internal influences linked to power and control. Whilst QA is deemed to foster good practices, it can also be seen as an agenda emerging from international QA superpowers in International Higher Education from the developed world (Ramírez, 2014). An obligatory act is to be sensitive to global QA and their relevance to local contexts. Vigilance is also needed to critically assess the intentions of QA.

### 3.3 QA from Glonacal perspectives

QA is reflected upon from perspectives (S. Marginson & Rhoades, 2002; Vidovich, 2007; Yung-Chi Hou (Angela) et al., 2015) to harness the macro, meso and micro levels of QA influences. Arguably, QA emerges from multiple influencing societal forces. QA can be analysed through a ‘glonacal agency heuristic’ advocated by Marginson and Rhoades (2002,p.289). They highlight the significance of local dimensions as important when considering global and national trends such as QA. In their consideration of agency, it is one that refers to an entity or organisation that exists at global (macro), national (meso) and local (micro) levels. Examples of global agencies are QA regimes which are regulatory bodies established to advocate and provide policy instrument to regulate QA in HE (Jarvis, 2014). In recent decades these regimes include; UNESCO, World Bank, International Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (INQAAHE), International Council of Distance Education (ICDE), Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Global Initiative for Quality Assurance Capacity (GIQAC) and the OECD.

QA agencies that exist at regional and national levels are inclusive of examples like: the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in the Bologna Process
for fostering international co-operation academic recognition in the region (Chalmers & Johnston, 2012); the UK’s integrated and unitary QA agency (QAA) (Kirkpatrick, 2012); the African Quality Assurance Network or AfriQAN (Sarah & Butcher, 2012); the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN); the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA); Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA); Indian National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC); and New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit (NZUAAU) (Yung-Chi Hou (Angela) et al., 2015). Further, QA agencies at institutional levels are inclusive of examples like the Indonesian Universitas Terbuka’s QA framework, The UK Open University QAA, the Open Universities Australia’s QA system, and the Botswana Open and Distance College QA framework. The alternative meaning of an agency given by Marginson & Rhoades (2002) includes: professionals and their abilities to individually and collectively take action (exercise agency), at the global, national, and local levels. These can be professional groups that extend across national borders such as associations of Open and Distance learning. National groups can be inclusive of committees, such as committees of vice chancellors, that influence national and institutional policies, and there are local collectives such as professors and administrators who proactively compete in HE markets. At each level, there are different formal agencies and collective human actions central to global HE endeavours.

The globalisation of QA and establishment of QA systems, networks and auditing practices are currently evident in half of the global national HE contexts (Eaton, 2012; Jarvis, 2014). Such a QA trend is a neo-colonial control mechanism, imposed by superpowers for influence over less powerful nations of the world. However, the presence of QA regulatory bodies in HE has the potential to enhance
quality for relevant stakeholders. In modern realities where International HE has become a market, its quality significance is essential. QA is therefore internally driven to serve the purpose of improving learning outcomes. The question arises as to how that is different from QA as a controlling mechanism or approach exerted by external organisations such as QA agencies and auditing organisations, or sovereign government through political and economic interests. The application of QA practices from other sectors of the economy and society into the HE sector has resulted in either appreciation, or dismay from mismatching practices within the realities and uniqueness of the HE sector. In the last couple of decades, the QA movement in HE has emerged from country-based operations and grown into regional and global QA developments such as QA agencies, networks and publications to foster the discourse and practices of assuring and improving quality in HE. The formation of QA agencies on international, national and even at institutional levels is being recognised with supporting reference from international organisations like UNESCO, the World Bank and OECD (El-Khawas, 2013). This seemingly emerging phenomenon is often linked to QA as a political agenda in some contexts, linking HE with governments for greater accountability, transparency and good governance. QA being global has emerged into the internationalization of HE, focusing on new HE challenges of expansion across borders where there is emergence of new providers and a demand for public accountability (Eaton, 2012). Such challenging new HE landscapes make it marketable, offered in flexible alternative modes with technology enabled learning environments and accessible mobile devices that can be used for personalised learning experiences. According to Choudaha and Edelstein (2014) transnational HE education is growing with various models inclusive of ‘branch campuses, licensed foreign degree programmes provided by local institutions, articulation agreements, distance
learning degrees and online degrees’ (www.universityworldnews.com). It is obvious therefore that FODE/L is part of this international trend that brings QA into critical assessment. Such a trend poses QA challenges to question whether the traditional meanings, mechanisms, and frameworks of QA are appropriately addressed. Contextual relevance remains a sensitive issue too. Whilst it is indeed an advantage for developing countries to continue to learn from powerful and influential developed nations, it is also not always a practical strategy to adopt unquestioningly ideas or practices from different contexts. Such practices may not always work in a developing country context such as PNG.

The QA discourse and movement has actually been a driving force for change and reform in the contexts of HE in the last couple of decades. In trying to chart QA over the last twenty years, Ewell (2010) highlighted various trends of QA where he referred to the QA process in the US as being initially focused on resources over the last twenty years, but now changing focus and moving beyond the inspection of assessment to students’ evidence of learning outcomes. It is a common contention that QA is now a global agenda that cuts through international and national borders where academic review, audits, accreditation and quality control are frequent in HE education contexts (Choudala & Edelstein, 2014; Ewell, 2010). This may be true in the global sense, whereas, in the developing countries where the myriad quality issues facing HE still struggle among other limiting factors, QA practices as such are yet to be fully implemented and nurtured along with sustainable policies. These QA policies are yet to be embedded within practical management systems to achieve sustainable and implementable positive outcomes. This overview of QA application is a generalised statement and does not discredit developed countries that are very competent and have focused on QA in the last decade. Whilst there is evidence of
quality successes, the unhappy episodes of QA deficiencies in the lack of sustainable policies, frameworks, processes and QA cultures do exist these days, in both developing and developed countries.

3.3.1 QA landscape in Higher Education

The QA landscape in HE is dynamic within the flow of globalised transactions between different continents, regions and countries. As such, global HE is equipped with various models of QA. QA is now being considered as an important activity, the norm and part of the culture within the various QA models in HE. It can be argued that although QA is a common agenda and practice in well-developed and established systems of HE in the last decade, there is still room for improvement. The demand for QA pro-activeness is due to a transforming landscape of HE from various forces of internationalisation of HE, student mobility, and the use of innovative technology. The HE sector today is being transformed with new ideals cutting across all other sectors of the economy and society. In addition, there are evidently different approaches and practices within which QA is being pursued and different QA options or frameworks being used. A one size fits all QA framework (Kanwar, 2013) is not possible, therefore any selected QA options depend on the situational relevance within which it is established. From institutional, to national and regional options of QA, careful consideration for adoption is a necessity through a process of inclusive consultation with relevant stakeholders. It is essential to consider the contrasting differences between the establishment of QA in developed and developing nations. Notably, in the developing world, QA has challenges associated capacity building, professional development for QA personnel and the general conceptual realisation of QA as a culture to strengthen the impact of modern day HE.
3.4 QA frameworks and models

The QA in HE landscape exists within an emerged model known as the International Model of HE. It is also known as the Global Model of HE, where sensitivity to QA is strongly pursued to assure different stakeholders’ confidence and trust. This model of HE is based on the ideals of international partnership and collaborations. It is a model whereby quality assured HE among nations is pursued to ensure quality based on agreed program delivery across sovereign borders, in a trend called Transactional Higher Education. Factors such as the demand for HE, the increase in student mobility and the increase in economic and profit making opportunities in the sector thus give QA prominence in HE. Furthermore, International organisations such as the OCED, UNESCO, World Bank and the INQAAHE have prompted the need for better QA frameworks in the education sector. The INQAAHE is specially focused on promoting QA in the HE sector (www.inqaahe.org) as an International QA Association that promotes the theories and practice of Higher Education. Aimed at the promotion of good practice in QA (Stella, 2010; Stensaker & Maassen, 2015), the INQAAHE has expertise in establishing QA mechanisms, options and approaches in various contexts. A good example of such an initiative highlighted by Stella (2010), is an INQAAHE project that focussed on a QA Situational Analysis of Forty five (45) Small States. According to that project, Small States were characterised by a population size of 1.5 million people or fewer. The purpose of the study was to propose contextual QA options.

There are varying differences in the models and regulatory frameworks of QA in HE contexts within the international, regional, national and institutional levels. Various QA models are used globally and thus it is a challenge to find the most appropriate one for an institution’s specific needs. Considering those that have been
used, a critical review is given here to assess and analyse QA models. Mishra (2007) outlines various models of assessing quality in educational contexts such as the “Baldridge criteria, ISO 9000:2000 standards, the Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI), Six Sigma, The Total Quality Management for total quality care, the ABET, NBA, the NAAC, ICAR and the DEC models” (p.42-61). These models have their strengths and weaknesses and are applicable to education and training in various contexts. Specifically related to FODE/L is the DEC model from India which was established a decade ago to promote, coordinate and maintain the standard of ODL. Whilst trying to make sense of QA models, it is necessary to distinguish QA from accreditation in HE. QA is an incremental process of improving quality, while accreditation may be considered a one-off process for vetting HE programs for quality assessment.

QA frameworks are among the numerous mechanisms established to foster QA culture. QA mechanisms are established within organisations to harness the ideals of quality as a culture and also to pursue quality outputs. These mechanisms are inclusive of quality directives within an institution’s strategic plan and mission, QA policy frameworks, quality standards guidelines for good practices, and establishment of QA agencies. In a study on QA frameworks in HE (Job & Sriraman, 2013) the authors outlined a framework for deliberating globalised models of QA in international education application. Globalisation cuts across four zones of ‘inter-governmental negotiations, institutions’ global dealings, national system setting by governments, and local institutional agendas’ (Simon Marginson & van der Wende, 2007). What does this mean for HE? Whilst this can be viewed as an advantage for some nations, it can also be detrimental for some developing countries.
QA becomes a contested activity when it becomes a necessity rather than just optional. QA adds value to the credibility and integrity of HE, as it is a system, which verifies HE’s validity and output. In a world of competiveness, QA culture in HE ensures market value to the products and services from the sector. Depending on the context of HE, QA is taking its place in systemic approaches more readily where there is an increased discourse and action planned around its implementations and growth. In some regions of the world QA in HE has developed into a tsunami whereby HEIs have no choice but to comply with the demands for QA as an emerging HE culture.

In related concepts surrounding QA, a standard is not the same thing as QA. When discussing QA standards, the intention is to map out what standards of QA are. QA standards can be referred to as the way HE treats QA to meet certain values or conditions. For instance, an organisation that oversees national Higher Education may have certain standards set for HEIs to comply with in order to satisfy certain requirements. HEIs may then be required to provide a self–assessment report to indicate their level of compliance to set standards. Such a practice encourages the culture of self-improvement, and of being conscious of public scrutiny. However, a danger surfaces where QA is seen as a bureaucratic outcome rather than a means for enhancement, growth, and continuous systemic improvement. It is therefore essential to learn how QA systems in various contexts of HE have been established.

3.4.1 QA Agencies in HE

The consequences of having new players, and the changing landscape of HE in the last decade, sees the grounding of QA agencies in HE. QA agencies are either internal or external. In some HEIs QA agencies are established physically on site or are based within a committee-based approach. In other contexts, the ideals for QA agencies are gradually being realised within a QA framework and a culture of their
own. There are instances where HE has actually set up QA agencies within institutions to promote QA as either independently or part of the University. In cases where the QA agency or unit remains an independent agency, it is focused on assuring that courses, programs and services of the university are presented to the agency to assess if quality is part and parcel of the process and/or that the offerings meet the set standards.

The HE QA agency’s role is not to intimidate HEIs but to encourage and empower HE providers to accept an incremental and ongoing process of QA within a national culture of quality. The scenario is one, which is a win-win situation for both the HE QA agency and for the HEIs. There has to be reciprocity from both parties whereby HE QA agencies feed the HEIs agencies and vice versa. In that way, there is general mutual understanding on common areas to pursue, there is sustainability through quality practices, and a vibrant, open and collaborative approach exists for national and sovereign HE within a particular context. In the ideals of self determination and realisation, HE in various countries can be seen to be taking ownership and identity through national HE systems that incorporate the local contextual, as well as global, relevancies to QA with emphasis on ownership and totally responsible HE. In a world where much of the ideals seem to be flowing from super national players of global HE or developed nations, this can be seen as modern imperialism. Modern day imperialism is such that in today’s world, global players in the HE, or supranational nations of the world continue to sell their ideas and strategies to less developed countries knowingly, to capitalise on the ignorance of these less developed nations. Countries on the periphery of this contesting global market of HE, notably developing nations, are considered as consumers of HE products from countries at the core centre of the circle that are considered as having ‘super’ selling
mechanisms and products of QA. There is also a responsibility for the less developed countries to be conscious of QA through a responsive, self-determining attitude towards a culture of ongoing improvement. The concern to evaluate and proactively assess what is valuable, good investment and can be responsibly enacted in local contexts. Self-efficacy for QA is needed for HEIs to invest in if QA is to be sustained in local realities (Sarah & Butcher, 2012).

3.4.2 QA in HE as a profession

Professional roles in QA have become obvious as QA establishment and regulation becomes prominent in macro, meso and micro levels of QA initiatives (Ossiannilsson, Williams, Camilleri & Brown, 2015). It is an emerging trend for professionals to be involved in the QA process in QA agencies. These QA professionals engage in QA within different roles of leadership, advisory, managerial and implementation. Such roles are QA managers, reviewers, external assessors or academic auditors. QA professionals are also concerned with QA policies, frameworks, implementation plans or ensuring that guidelines and procedures for QA are followed and maintained. Sustainability of QA initiatives depends on QA professionals situated across all levels of implementation and practice.

Sustainable QA is costly. If HE prioritises QA it has to ensure that sustainability is adhered to in terms of quality and the cost of having quality remains as a culture that is seen and advocated for. Established QA cultures shows in quality outcomes from the services provided and products that HEIs produce. Stakeholders of HE provision are diverse according to what they have to gain from an HEI. Students are the most important group of HE stakeholders and their needs have to be met through trustworthy, ethical, sound and responsible HE within the context of where they are situated. Sustainability for students means having students who value
HE and demand it, who are willing to harness the opportunities which remain central to ensuring their needs are met, their graduate attributes are realistic and practical and they are employable at the end of their learning journeying from any given HE context. It therefore imperative that HE’s QA strategically factors in costs to have quality over quantity to enable HE to achieve its prime purpose of achieving its planned outcomes.

Saarinen’s (2005) study on the Bologna Quality Process looked at policy change as a result of continuous discursive and persuasive process. She prefers an empirical approach over a theory-driven process to describe such a policy change. Although the context of the research is contextually different in the developed world with differing cultural and other socio economic issues from PNG, there is value in examining such a study. For instance, the methodology used in the study (document analysis) is applicable to one’s study in the PNG context. Whilst the discourse analysis used in this study seemed very fitting, the researcher could have also triangulated her methods to use interview, focus groups and case-studies to inform her findings. Further research could actually capitalise on this and expand on such research limitation.

Another study (Refsgaard, 2005) discussed HarmoniQuaA guidelines, a comprehensive set of guidelines for multiple modelling domains combined with supporting software. This QA guideline was developed for modern day water management resources but some parts of it can be adapted to education. The guidelines for software quality (Mishra, 2007) used widely in “engineering for correctness, reliability, efficiency, integrity, usability, maintainability, testability, expandability, portability, reusability and interoperability” (Watts, 1987 cited in Mishra, 2007, p.25) are applicable to HE. In Refsgaard et al (2005), the study
provides some ideas that can be applicable to FODE/L when trying to identify credible QA models. As seen from the study, the development of QA guidelines progresses through a consultative approach where all stakeholders are involved in their establishment. The study demonstrates that QA initiatives become successful if there is motivation, support, and active participation by all parties for their use.

Practical QA guidelines and necessary knowledge is also critical in developing relevant QA guidelines for those initiating the QA process.

3.5 Flexible Open Distance Learning in Universities

Transformed HE through Flexible Open Distance Education is currently offered in dual mode universities, regional universities, consortium designed open universities, open universities and mega universities. Traditionally universities were located in physical spaces of classrooms, with lecture room and droves of students attending lectures or classroom seminars in the contexts of face-to-face learning. Along with traditional Open Distance Learning HEIs, there are now new players. Today, such traditional approaches are being challenged with virtual spaces where learners are connected to other students using improved technological innovations that foster connectivity. Complementing the three universes (Gourley, 2011) the open distance learning universe also contributes to meeting the current demand of HE. These universes were; ‘the universe of the traditional universities, the universe of the open and distance learning providers and the universe of private sector providers of higher education.’ (p.13). The tyranny of distance learning (Evans, 1989; Northcott, 1984) is now addressed through technology and QA initiatives to scale up FODE/L as an improved option for learners. There is an increase of blended approaches of learning where lectures are a combination of face to face and distance flexible learning through various virtual media approaches. Whilst technology can seem to be
a sweeping tsunami in the context of HE, its adoption and integration can be seen at different levels in various contexts. As mention by Ehlers (2013) the degree of maturity of technology use in HE varies from institution to institution and context to context.

Digital inhabitants of the new landscapes in HE demand that quality of learning is offered to them. The inhabitants of these changing landscapes of HE are the learners of this century, commonly known as ‘digital natives and digital immigrants’ (Prensky, 2001; Teo, 2015). Digital natives have been referred to as modern day learners from early childhood learning to college who belong to societies where technology is part of their everyday lives. Digital immigrants, learners and educators alike are being converted into using and harnessing digital tools in their social as well as their professional environment. Where Life Long Learning (LLL) is a worldwide trend, students of all ages are now pursing HE qualifications. Quality assured education in any medium is necessary in HE amidst the new challenges and realities. As highlighted by Prensksy (2001) such digital citizens and natives are learners growing up with and using, digital gadgets such as, computers, video games, mobile technologies, digital music players, video cameras and other digital technologies. These digital natives are learners who are using social media, wikis, blogs, podcasts, tweets and other digital tools and user-friendly computer application programs that can be easily downloaded. Classroom based learning has changed as students are bringing their technological devices and skills. Students can more easily communicate and search for information instantly unlike learners from a decade ago.

3.5.1 Open learning landscapes in HE

In today’s global scenario of HE, the landscape is changing with open learning cultures being evident and posing greater challenges to old traditional classroom
practices with, as highlighted by Ethers (2013), new inhabitants of the new open learning landscapes. What is termed as open learning cultures are inclusive of open educational resources, open schooling, open universities, open HE programs and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). This research situates itself within the culture of open learning. One would ask, how relevant are the current QA mechanisms within the changing landscapes faced today? A culture can be said to be the way in which people conduct themselves within their belief systems. An open culture relates to learning ecologies in HE where ecology can be defined as an open system that is interconnected with various components that are vibrant and self-organising through a process of constant change and ongoing mutations with the notion of a flexible approach to thinking. An ideal QA framework therefore embraces a cultural dimension of constant improvement and self-sustainability through a process of consultation from everyone within its system.

### 3.5.2 QA Frameworks for FODE/L

In reference to the three different universes highlighted earlier in this chapter by (Gourley, 2011), the universe of the Open Distance learning has taken QA seriously in in recent years (Commonwealth of Learning, 2010, Kanwar, 2013). QA in FODE/L contexts is a new phenomenon that comes in various approaches based on varying arguments. Some advocates of FODE/L argue that QA in FODE/L is different from face to face delivery whilst others think that despite differences in delivery, the principles of quality remains the same (Insung & Latchem, 2012). Given the nature of FODE/L, its providers are challenged to promote quality within the varied FODE/L delivery of dual mode universities, open universities, regional based universities and newer entities such as the Open Educational Resource Universitas (OERu). Examples of frameworks used in FODE/L HEIs include the use of internal and external QA
agencies. Considering the myriad FODE/L HEIs, an insight into QA frameworks used is vital. First, it is worth understanding QA in regional Universities, such as the University of South Pacific (USP) and the University of the West Indies (UWI). These two universities offer FODE/L programs across different island states in the Pacific and Caribbean isles respectively. USP has internal QA establishments and also uses external QA agencies to assess and review its FODE/L. The UWI’s QA framework harnesses fitness for purpose as its definition of quality. Its QA review cycle consists of five phases, namely; reporting and follow up, visit by QA unit staff, appointment of review team, self assessment exercise and visit of review team (Chandra.R, Thurab-Nkhose.D, & Marshall.S., 2012; Stella, 2010). A proposed framework for regional universities ideally is inclusive of vision, mission, and guiding philosophy indicators, curriculum and instruction performance indicators, student support performance indicators, institutional support performance Indicators and Technology support performance indicators (Chandra.R et al., 2012). The challenges of regional universities are diverse but with passion for successful FODE/L, QA offers the way forward in sustaining quality.

Second, QA in Open Universities and Mega universities is also important. Varied models of QA for ODL exist in different countries. Some are required to comply with National Quality Frameworks, some do not have national directives but have their internal QA models, whilst others assure quality through national accrediting bodies (A Kanwar & Clarke, 2012). In other QA practices, QA is driven through a centralized strategy with the establishment of Institutional QA Units. Kanwar & Clarke (2012, p.104) listed some countries with such QA arrangements; Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK), Universitas Terbuka-Indonesia (UT), Open University of Malaysia (OUM) and Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSI). The
quality of UT is an example of a Mega Open University QA culture. It is rigorous and persistent within a culture of QA fostered through ongoing consultation and based on 107 best practice statements. Upon UT’s establishment of an operational plan (2001-2005) QA became a vital activity eventuating in the creation of a QA Framework. Best practice statements drive the QA initiative within a QA Policy Manual. Areas of emphasis are policy and planning, human resource recruitment and development, learners, program design and development, course design and development, learner support, assessment, and media for learning (T Belawati, Zuhari, & Wardani, 2012). In the spirit of continuous improvement, UT also harnesses external QA assessment and accreditation internationally and nationally from the International Council of Distance Education (ICDE), The International Standardisation Organisation (ISO) and the National Accreditation Board of Indonesian in Higher Education (BAN-PT). UT embraces extensive collaboration and networking with regional and international partners in the QA discourse and initiatives for FODE/L. It foster very close links with the Asian Association of Open Universities in sharing best practices within the Asian region.

Third, QA framework for dual mode universities poses interesting insights. The approach to QA differs from university to university. In some dual mode universities quality is treated the same and thus the same QA framework is applied across both modes. In other contexts, QA is applied within its own framework for FODE/L under an overarching QA framework. Prior to the hype of e learning, a growth of ODL in developing countries was evident and continues. Latched (2012) highlights that some dual mode universities made and are still making, a mess of Open Distance Learning in the dual mode initiatives where they pursued fashion rather than real convictions of ODL. Instances of ambition and excitement can also
dampen the quality outputs. In an effort to harmonise ODL within dual mode universities, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) offers a QA model for them known as the COL-Review and Improvement Model (COL-RIM). Figure 3.2 shows the COL-RIM QA model, an ideal model for FODE/L.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 3.2 The COL-RIM Framework: Kanwar (2013) attributed to Commonwealth of Learning www.creativecommons.org license**

This model harnesses the essence of fostering QA cultures with quality improvement as ongoing activities. According to Kanwar (2013) the COL-RIM approach is one of a low cost – ‘do it yourself model’, it requires an external review panel, it develops systemic thinking and organisational learning, and focuses on capacity building. FODE/L has the potential to succeed with quality providing QA mechanisms and attitude towards quality are the prime focus over everything else.

Fourth, QA for OER in FODE/L universities uses the TIPS QA framework. TIPs is an acronym where T stands for the Teaching and learning process which has 16 criteria; I stands for information and material content with 7 criteria; P for presentation, product and format with 8 criteria; and S for system, technical and technology with 7 criteria (Butcher & Moore, 2015). QA frameworks for FODE/L vary from country to country. In some contexts, it is either voluntary or mandatory for HEIs to have their
FODE/L entity reviewed and assessed through QA processes. Where it is mandatory, if DE institutions fail to perform an academic audit, they are not allowed to recruit students the following year, or when funding is given, it is reduced or withheld accordingly (Jung, Wong, Li, Baigaltugs & Belawati, 2011).

5.5.3 QA and Open Educational resources

The Open Educational Resources (OER) movement is an emerging QA issue in FODE/L. The intention of OER is to complement the ideals of ‘open’ resources to bring about quality resources for the improvement of FODE/L programs through a sharing culture. Such an intention highlights OER as a genuine intervention in contemporary FODE/L and not ‘as a passing fad’ in ODL like other educational technologies (C Latchem, 2012). OER is a phenomenon becoming obvious as technology increasingly becomes part of teaching and learning in the 21st Century. The Paris Declaration on OER in 2012, calls for the promotion and peer review of OER and thus mechanisms for assessment and certification of learning outcomes through the use of OER (Kanwar, 2013). OER has emerged as a new wave of innovative strategies to improve teaching and learning. In some cases, OER has come from different beginnings. For instance, in UK’s OU, the possibilities of OER integration came from internal as well as external factors. Internal motivation from the university itself, based on the vision and mission of the institution, was a driving factor that enabled stakeholders’ appreciation and readiness for OER. Second, an external driver for the integration of OER came about from the OER community who supported an OER project in Open University-UK (OU-UK). Whilst OER can be seen as the way forward to improving quality in education programs today, questions are being asked as to what models are suitable for what contexts and levels of education.
The MIT Open Course Ware model is one that triggered the idea of OER where the institution decided to offer free courses to any users. OER development began for individual tutors and lecturers based on their individual courses taught on campus. The model is ideal for face-to-face classroom teaching but can be adopted, reused and modified for ODL learners. The OU-UK’s model is specifically targeted for ODL learners based on the principle of self-paced learning. A general consensus to the QA literature questions what types of evaluations are used for assuring quality when HE ventures into open educational programs (Kanwar, 2013; Kelty, Burrus, & Baraniuk, 2008). FODE/L educators are engaged in reflecting on the way teaching is done and rethinking the way learners learn through the use of Open Educational resources (OER). From national contexts where OER integration in HE is encouraged, lessons learnt from other contexts are useful such as the need for QA policies to monitor and regulate OER (Schuwer, Kreijins, & Vermeulen, 2014; Scull, Kendrick, Shearer, & Offerman, 2011). Examples of developing countries show how OER are valued and encouraged in FODE/L contexts. As reflected by Ngugi (2011, p.281),

“OER is not a panacea but an incremental step to bridge the yawning gap in access equity and quality that prevail in much of Africa.”

In a further supporting statement, (Gourley, 2011) affirms that OER initiatives aim to provide open access to high quality on a global scale. Whilst advocates call for the utilisation of OER in HE where decline in quality learning materials are evidenced, it is important that QA mechanisms are established to cater for such innovations. Useful mechanisms for assessing, controlling and enhancing quality prevails for FODE/L even when the quantity of study material is greatly increased.

There is evidence of OER projects that are well focused on promoting OER. (Butcher & Moore, 2015) indicated OER initiatives such as; OER impact, Map,
OpenLearn, OERu and UNESCO-COL and OER Chairs which have various focuses on OER within the open education culture. The OERu is established under the philosophy and thinking of openness through open educational resource sharing, open educational resource practices, open access, open licensing, open source, open philanthropy and OER partnerships. It forms partnerships with formally recognised quality assured HEIs and academics. OERu embraces a community of scholars sharing information freely. Its core mission is to serve learners who are excluded from the privilege of attending tertiary institutions. The argument herewith is that OER and OER initiatives have the potential to provide HE that is both of high quality and accessible thereby of HE in addressing the demand for HE now and in the future. There are reservations concerning contextual realities and how such innovations can be readily accepted into the mainstream or conventional scenarios of HE delivery. Open Educational Resources universitas (OERu) is a classic example of a university that has emerged out of the philosophy and culture of Open Educational Resources.

3.5.4 Open Universities: A Global Blooming Factor in FODE/L

Open Universities surfaced in the 1970s (Hanna, 2003) and continue to evolve into new open learning systems, models and concepts of educational approaches and practices. These new open learning systems, models and concepts are enabled by modern digital technologies in the delivery of FODE/L. Throughout the world there has been an increase in the number of innovative Open Universities such as Mega Universities (Daniel & Mackintosh, 2003) that are dedicated mainly to the provision of ODL using an array of technologies and pedagogical approaches. These are inclusive of learning technologies such as Moodle which situates courses in an LMS platform to be offered to students using e-learning or online learning options.
The Asian region and the African continent are leading regions of the world with the establishment of Open Universities. In the Asian region alone, there are 70 Open Universities out of which 13 are Mega Universities (Kanwar, 2013). Open Universities tend to offer courses using blended approaches where students have the opportunity to learn independently via the flexible options given to them but at the same time can take the opportunity of attending residential components whereby they have the opportunity to interact face to face with their facilitators. There are benefits of this system or approach is that the students engage in a natural and humanistic manner for learning with other students and their program facilitators. The human factor becomes an essential component of learning. All learners are not the same therefore they need different types of motivational strategies.

3.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, QA is a necessary aspect in Higher Education in this era of great changes and innovations. Whilst the essence of HE relies on its relevance and
delivery of programs to serve the demand for HE in the economy, QA remains an essential dimension. This chapter highlighted the meaning of quality pertaining to exceptionally, perfection, fitness for purpose, and value for money and transformative attributes. QA in HE is established from models and approaches from other sectors and serves with more emphasis on transparency and accountability. This chapter also highlighted the global changing landscape of HE such as cross border HE delivery, the emergence of new players in the sector and the complexities of being part of globalisation and international HE. Technology enhanced HE serves the needs of contemporary digital natives that are entering the HE with their own sets of digital tools. These challenges are contributing reasons for QA’s presence in HE especially in universities offering FODE/L. QA discourse and advocacy prevails from the global QA regimes that are currently championing the QA agenda through policy and practice initiatives, advisory roles and support to ensure that the quality of HE is addressed well. The presence of QA agencies and their roles in QA serve as a blooming profession. QA for FODE/L evolves into a culture of quality in the various options for FODE/L delivery, thus there is no one size fits all model or approach. Whilst the demand for FODE/L increases, properly designed QA systems are needed to foster systemic quality outcomes within QA systems and frameworks that are integrated, effective and consistent. A cultured QA system for FODE/L in HE has to serve the quality priorities of HE at any level of delivery.

The next chapter is a corresponding background chapter that focuses on QA in the HE sector.
CHAPTER 4: PNG’s HIGHER EDUCATION QA AND FODE/L

4.0 Introduction

QA process for FODE/L in PNG is said to be evolutionary (Mannan, 2010) and may truly succeed when quality enhancement serves as a national priority and QA is integrated into FODE/L systems. With specific focus on QA in FODE/L, this chapter channels the QA discourses into a situational analysis of the PNG HE space. Unlike the previous chapters, this chapter highlights the contextual analysis of PNG QA systems for FODE/L with consciousness of global to local (glocal) sensemaking. The main argument in this chapter demonstrates that QA is a required ethical practice that leads towards accessible and equitable harmonised HE and a revamped FODE/L. There is hope for an improved FODE/L amidst its perceived myths and quality realities in PNG. Whilst advocates of FODE/L see QA as a way forward, critics argue that FODE/L is a mismatched approach compared with the conventional campus-based university delivery. Critics associate FODE/L with low quality, second-rate and unimportant forms of learning.

This chapter contains five main areas of situational analysis from relevant literature ranging from PNG Higher Education QA and its FODE/L component to comparative scenarios from developed and developing nations in Asia, Africa and the Pacific, and regional discussions on QA with critical lessons learned.
This chapter illuminates aspects of best practice that are needed to help scale up current quality procedures of modern FODE/L.

### 4.1 QA in PNG HE

PNG is defined as a developing country in terms of the United Nations’ measure of social and economic status. With a population of about six million, it is culturally rich, with more than 850 indigenous languages (ADB, 2012; Mannan, 2010), and is geographically diverse, with far flung islands, mountains and valleys which inhibit transport, communication and the delivery of social services to the majority of the its rural based population.
The map below brings forth the contextual setting of this study.

![PNG Map](image)

**Figure 4.2: PNG map from Open Source PAT free software**

From a historical perspective, the intention for ODL can be traced back to the period of colonial history and followed through to the time of self-government and independence in 1975. According to Guy (1992) correspondence schools existed in the mid-1950s under the colonial days for three main purposes. First to provide locally developed Grade 5 and 6 courses for indigenous public servants. Second, to provide higher-level courses from the Queensland Correspondence School for expatriate workers and their children in remote areas. From an analytical perspective, correspondence schools in PNG emerged as a colonial initiative, though initially, a tainted colonial option. It was never intended for all of PNG then, but only a selected minority. Dorney (2016) affirms that in 1921, only ‘£12’ ($24) was spent on native education’ by its colonial ruler. Third, correspondence schools provided secondary education to a privileged few since there was no secondary education system.
A positive result from PNG’s early Distance Learning (DL) was the locally designed courses for the few indigenous PNG public servants. The changing nature of DL resulted in various name changes from Correspondence Schools, to Adult Education Branch of the Department of Education to the School of External Studies, in 1988 to the College of Distance Education (CODE) and then again lately to Flexible Open Distance Education (FODE) College. The inclusion of matriculation courses along with its current courses from year 7-10 is now the focus of the FODE College. Currently, FODE offers basic High School to secondary level of education for students who cannot access conventional schools. In reference to figure 4.3, to date –FODE/L is blooming with four universities and more tertiary HEIs venturing into alternative flexible open mode of DE delivery.

DL in the PNG university sector commenced with UPNG Distance Education (DE) initiatives in 1974. Known as the Department of Extension Studies, the
Department struggled in the 1970s but picked up in 1985 with new leadership and outreach rigour (Guy, 1992). In the early 1990s enrolment was steady with courses not being diversified but efforts being made in course maintenance. A decade later, in 2001, UPNG took on an ambitious approach to DE and embarked on ‘rebranding’ their programs by off-loading its matriculation programs to FODE and concentrating less on pre-university programs. It is now known as the Open College of the University of PNG. The college has built up a new organisational structure with its head office in Port Moresby but decentralised to 5 Open Campuses and a network of University Centres and Sub Centres located throughout PNG.

First, the University of PNG’s Open College (UPNGOC), established in 2001, provides accessible educational opportunities to students in remote and isolated locations throughout the country. Distance education began at UPNG in the 1980s with somewhat limited matriculation programs and a couple of diploma programs offered by the Department of Extension Studies. The name changed in 2001 to UPNG Open College in 2001 with emphasis on FODE/L as an alternative approach to increasing the educational opportunities available to the unreached critical mass of students in PNG. The UPNGOC closed the matriculation studies and began developing certificate, diploma and degree programs through dual mode offerings.

Second, the University of Goroka targets secondary high school teachers. Its Department of Flexible Learning (DFL) is a department within the university targeting the secondary school teacher-training program. Being a dual mode FODE/L in nature, these same courses are taught by lecturers in the usual on-campus delivery of programs. The core team of ODL practitioners at the DFL consists of a dean, an instructional designer, a student support officer and an administrative officer. Its
demographic student audience consists of secondary school teachers and postgraduate students vying for Secondary Teaching Diploma and/or degrees.

Third, the University of Technology’s FODE/L unit is known as the Department of Open Distance Learning (DODL). It is a hub for students trying to upgrade their grade 12 HSE results to gain the GPA credits needed for tertiary studies. The DODL also serves as a platform for professional development for teachers in the specific subject areas of physics, maths, chemistry and agriculture. The department intends to offer a Masters program in Geo-mapping as well as a Master program in Agriculture in the near future. Similar to UPNGOC, the DODL has a network of centres in PNG offering a popular Matriculation program to school leavers. The target student population are Grade 12 school leavers pursuing matriculation studies to upgrade their Year 12 grades for possible entry into universities, teacher education for professional development of secondary school teachers, and a couple of postgraduate Masters programs.

Fourth, Divine Word University is a private university that offers programs for flexible learning. Its FODE/L centre is known as the Flexible Learning Centre (FLC). Its approach is different compared to the national, public universities mentioned above. Although private, this university is mandated under the same accreditation regulations by the PNG OHE. Its FLC programs are targeted for the professional development of public servants and other workers both within the public and private sectors of the economy. The FLC offers its programs via a ‘blend’ model comprising face-to-face components and distance learning beginning when students attend the main campus for a couple of weeks to start their programs. They continue their studies from their workplace and return to the campus at the end of their course. In this single-mode approach, the academic teaching staffs are located within the faculty
and teach FLC students. Some levels of autonomy exist at the FLC compared to the FODE/L universities. Like UPNG, DWU has changed in name and structure over time. At the time of this research, the FLC was being merged into existing faculties within the university.

It is notable that PNG FODE/L emerged from education for public servants and adults to the provision of DE for high school students because the number of secondary schools was insufficient to cater for the growing population. This situation had worsened between the first and second decade after independence, as highlighted by Van Trease (1991, p. 111). A change followed with the establishment of more secondary schools, but with corresponding space limitations in universities. Plans to provide more HE spaces may address this ongoing deficit if the proposed National Open University of PNG goes ahead.

In 2001, an ambitious program of capacity building was funded by AusAid and supported by distance learning specialists for UPNG. UPNG academics were encouraged to develop printed learning materials for university curriculum-related study packages. The university provided information, access and support services to its learners through Study Centres in most provinces. Since the program began 15 years ago, a body of learning materials has been created to some extent and student enrolments have increased significantly. As previously highlighted, a number of other tertiary institutions and three other PNG Universities have embarked fairly recently on Flexible Open Distance Education Programs with some degree of success but a resultant plethora of quality challenges. The universities currently engaged in FODE/L are established but struggle to sustain good quality practices due to a host of national and institutional limitations. PNG might consider addressing QA at both these levels. The growth of ODL in most parts of the world (developed and
developing) has seen an increase in the establishment of Quality Assurance Agencies to deal specifically with HEIs offering FODE/L of any sort. QA agencies are yet to be established purposely for PNG FODE/L. Successful Distance Education Systems (DES) in context of developing countries may offer lessons for PNG’s FODE/L. However, caution remains that imported ideals and practices or ‘imported memes’ (Colin Latchem, 2014) are to be carefully nurtured, successfully transferred and promoted for success, expansion, evolution and advancement.

PNG HE embraces QA as a culture (CHE, 2010; Czuba, 2000; DHRST, 2015). Universities are expected to perform QA with reference to the revised National Standards specifications and the PNG National Qualifications Framework (PNGNQF). Garnaut and Namaliu’s 2010 Report revealed the extent of quality control deficiencies in PNG State universities. Their rigorous review of QA standards and frameworks contributes to the QA discourses within the PNG Vision 2050 plan and the recently enacted Higher Education Plan 2015-2024. These documents highlight FODE/L in the current dual-mode FODE/L universities and the proposed PNG Open University.

The expansion of HE through FODE/L drives the need for basic on-going good practice. The literature confirms that many universities are confronted with QA issues (Ngugi, 2011, Garnaut, 2010 & Abrioux, 2008, Shah, 2011; Odhiambo, 2011). Radical reforms within the HE sector are evidenced globally. PNG’s updated national policies encourage the development of an integrated regulatory framework under the HE 2014 Education Act (CHE, 2010; DHRST, 2015). The current universities cannot meet the demand of PNG HE. Hence, the expansion of current FODE/L modes is urgent. PNG’s National Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee (NHEQAC) states that all HE stakeholders are responsible for improving
the quality of educational systems and processes. The goal is ‘to produce employable graduates and to give students good quality, efficient, and cost-effective higher education’ (Czuba, 2000, p.7). Whilst accreditation can be an effective quality tool in HE, it has to prevail as an ongoing process. In PNG, it happens that often accreditation is a one-off activity as opposed to procedures that strive for continuous improvement. Another problem with accreditation concerns brand names. ‘Brand name’ universities may market university courses in which students enrol without checking the quality of the offering. Dual mode universities need conscience before promoting their offerings.

It is encouraging, though, that the PNG Government has established a Commission of Higher Education Distance and Flexible Committee to oversee policy framework enactment in PNG FODE/L. Emphasis now rests on strengthening HE initiatives for a quality, diversified and harmonised system. After decades of utilising a Western model of HE system, the time is ripe for a redesigned PNG HE that will reflect PNG values in modern times. This involves the integration and productive engagement with emerging new ideals and players in the HE sector like FODE/L and Life Long Learning trends.

This research study acknowledges other publications on quality (Commonwealth of Learning, 2010; Goff, 2015; Materu, 2007; Mishra, 2007; Stella, 2010) and investigates applicable quality management systems with sustainable models that are appropriately relevant to modern FODE/L, critical of the 21st Century. A number of QA research studies (Amaral & João Rosa, 2010; Harvey & Williams, 2010; Lim, 1999) criticise the application of irrelevant or mismatched QA models, like the industrially- based QA thinking, to Higher Education. They argue that these QA models, systems and processes are ideal to some aspects of HE but do not address
the complex nature of HE. Bryer (2014, p.99) states that universities can be influenced by ‘management fads’ that may be inserted into university contexts. Interestingly, the notion of transferability of practices and policies can either enhance or cripple HE. The potential exists for promoting an ecology of indigenous education for more “openness, intercultural sensitivity, shared spaces, and solidarities among stakeholders” (Shrestha & Khanal, 2016) rather than a fragmented, parochial, highly-politicised HE possibly motivated by political, personal or financial gains. Until such is realised, the PNG HE system will continue to be dislocated from its natural indigenous culture and uniqueness. As long as PNG remains an aid-dependent country, its national systems like HE will reflect aid-donating developed countries.

Globalisation forces and interests from various sectors of society also contribute to the reality of modern HE. The need for quality HE education is stipulated in various PNG National Development discourses (PNG Vision 2050, National Medium Strategic Plans). These are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG). For instance, goal number 4 of the UNSDG calls for education systems that foster inclusive and equitable access through life long learning (LLL) opportunities. Similarly, the PNG Vision 2050 slogan aims for a smart, fair, healthy and happy PNG Society by 2050, highlighting HE as a major means for achieving the goal. As the number of school dropouts continues to increase, a bottleneck situation prevails whereby current universities and colleges cannot meet the demand for LLL opportunities. Current universities are struggling to meet human resources demand and the estimated 320,000 well-qualified Papua New Guineans by 2030 envisioned by the Vision 2050 national plan (DPM, 2010). The desired increase of 16,000 annual graduate output from the current 15,000 outputs requires alternatives such as FODE/L. Kanwar (2010) highlights the growth of Open
Universities as an example whereby the global demand for HE is being met. However, PNG HE has to ensure that such provisions do not further disadvantage the students. Educational costs already deprive students of adequate access to needed educational services. A sustainable HE for FODE/L within a Conscious Quality Assurance Framework is essential, but it has to be one that meets the demand for education-for-all through quality service delivery rather than by profit making.

Neil and Hoosen (2013) note that QA becomes a challenge where established practices have to cater for flexibility and openness. In addition, multi-national companies may wish to merge with HE to promote their agenda, products, technological innovations and other aspects of business life. Bryer (2014) notes that QA best practice can include new pedagogical approaches and influences from business or government/private sector partnerships. PNG is unique in its cultural diversities, historical background and political issues, thus FODE/L HEIs need the establishment of effective and well-documented, fully resourced QA systems for both academic and administrative functions (Hope & Guiton, 2006). Mannan (2009) suggests that leadership committed to sustaining the quality culture with rigour and passion is needed as well. Hughes (2012) and Motova and Pykkö (2012) assert the need for a QA agency to oversee the various QA activities of HE institutions. QA is most often performed either of two ways: internal or external processes. The internal process through self-evaluations, institutions are required to conduct their QA evaluation based on their own institutional criteria and benchmarks. Such an approach allows the institution to be proactive within a culture of continuous change and improvement. External QA evaluations can be done on mandatory or voluntary bases. Institutions may invite QA professionals to conduct an external review on its programs and services. Here, the terms of reference are well defined by the host
institutions. The advantage of such an approach is that, external reviewers review the institution from its institutional perspective of an outsider. The institution is required to heed such evaluations and make improvements where needed. Examples of such QA activities took place in 2010 when FODE/L experts from the Commonwealth of Learning assessed the University of PNG’s Open College. In another example, the Divine Word University engaged the Australian Universities Quality Assurance Agency (AUQAA) to conduct an evaluation. Whilst there are a growing number of HE QA agencies for face to face campus teaching, the situation is not the same for FODE/L (Ossianilsson et al., 2015; Rashid, 2010). PNG HEIs are being encouraged to establish an independent QA sustainable approach, the establishment of a nationally based QA agency is vital to promote QA initiatives as an ongoing practice.

4.2: QA in PNG’s FODE/L

As highlighted in chapter 3, the delivery of HE through FODE/L contributes to the changes faced within the HE sector. PNG already faces many challenges and QA requirements for FODE/L is yet another. A culture of QA is one beyond the practice of checks and balances and requires a positive attitude among QA practitioners to ensure continuous improvement. In an effort to convince the sceptics of the value of FODE/L, its advocates must adopt mechanisms such as manuals and Quality strategies for FODE/L practitioners, which clearly outline the processes and procedures for use. The profile of QA could be raised by sustainable approaches such as QA forums, seminars, workshops, conferences, and journal publications to encourage dissemination of knowledge and information. The terminology used by educators requires clarification also. A conceptual focus on QA is an important aspect that is so often overlooked and hence could be a barrier for policy makers, enactors and customers of FODE/L.
4.2.1 Historical view of PNG FODE/L

A generational approach is pursued herewith, to see where QA fits into the culture of emerging FODE/L in this era. The demand for global access to HE through FODE/L has created obvious trends in FODE/L by the challenging of traditional HE by various interest groups and organisations outside the realm of education. Within the global context, FODE/L has existed for more than a century whereas in developing contexts it is only within a couple of generations. Changes are now visible whereby traditional universities are incorporating the dual approach mode of HE alongside various forms such as Open Universities (Khvilon, et al, 2002). Open Distance Learning (ODL) paves the way forward for the expansion of access to quality HE with the aims of poverty reduction and establishment of knowledge societies towards integral human development. Whilst the advocacy for ODL remains prominent, there are existing challenges in the face of modern alternative approaches to HE. These challenges vary in terms of: acceptance of FODE/L, the contrasting perception of how powerful FODE/L is, and the denial of FODE/L as a contributing form of HE that is active far beyond the reach of traditional universities. Considering ODL from a generational stance, figure.3 outlines the general trends pertaining to ODL’s first generation to the current 5th and 6th generation.
Anderson and Dron (2011) show that FODE/L has evolved from basic correspondence courses through stages, by the use of various technologies such as audio, text and video delivered by computerised devices and broadband access. These authors discuss the 4th and 5th generations of Open learning where flexibility and intelligent learning web 2 tools or semantic web technologies allow real time learning anytime, anywhere. They stress that high quality distance education can produce its intended value when optimal learning environments provide the best learning experiences for students. For PNG, FODE/L lingers at the 3rd generation approaches due to Internet accessibility, cost and reliability challenges within a struggling and inconsistent HE system.

The predicted aim for PNG is to become a ‘smart, wise, fair, healthy and happy society’ by the year 2050 (Vision, 2009). This ambitious statement targets capacity
building in human resources development through entities such as quality education and quality health systems. The 2015 PNG Higher and Technical Education Plan for 2015-2024 (DHRST, 2015) espouses the creation of more student places by the establishment of the PNG National Open University, which, the Plan predicts will enrol students from 2016 onwards. To date, this plan is yet to be seen. Expressed explicitly under QA priority, it aims to deliver diversified academic and training programmes within national standards, benchmarked against international best practices and the relevant needs of PNG (DHRST, 2015). Reynold & Wallace (2016) advocate that adaptive leadership fosters flexibility and the ability to explore emerging trends, innovations, and systemic changes and to deal with different levels of uncertainties. They suggest that, where organisations are tested, leaders persist to pursue leadership amidst continuous organisational complexity and change.

4.2.2 Flexible Distance Education System in PNG

Open Distance Learning is provided by the traditional and newer -universities in PNG. Currently, four universities are engaged in FODE/L. These learning activities are conducted under dual mode university arrangements. Such arrangements mean that programs offered through FODE/L are the same as those offered on campus in face-to-face contexts. Differences with the delivery of courses, programs and student demographics do exist in the PNG FODE/L offering universities. For example: some flexible components of face-to-face teaching may be blended with distance study. Some autonomy in financial delegation and staffing caters for the residential segments of programs. The PNG universities offering FODE/L tend to approach their options for delivery according to their institutional missions, goals and values based on national aspirations along with the international trend towards access for equity in HE. For instance, the UPNGOC has a network of
university campuses and centres throughout PNG and in the Solomon Islands. Amidst the gains of FODE/L at UPNG, challenges still exist, such as maintaining consistent sustainable learning supports for learners plus motivational and instructional design issues for both learners and academics. Obscured issues require fostering an institutional research culture aimed at understanding learners’ needs, as well as issues of relevancy and practicality for innovative teaching and learning by distance, especially the use of ICT. Success stories of students studying in FODE/L in PNG are emerging amidst critical challenges. Reviews on ODL in PNG (Garnaut & Namaliu, 2010; Lockwood & Koul, 2010) place emphasis on the need for quality improvement in FODE/L programs and services. The enactment and responses to critical reports and reviews such as those mentioned above is often sluggishly acted upon or they (reports) are shelved away due to lack of strategic actions plans to address the recommendations made. A proactive evaluation and monitoring structure will address such tendencies, if and when FODE/L becomes a PNG’s priority.

Considering the future of FODE/L in PNG, proper planning is imperative in order to encapsulate the emerging cultures of FODE/L pertaining to the 21st Century. Good planning fosters ‘consistency and reliability’ for customer inspiration, trust, and value in the delivery of successful programmes and services (Hope & Guiton, 2006). It is interesting to note that public accountability is pursued even more today in HE by various HE stakeholders like governments, industries, students, and international organisations, like the World Bank and UNESCO. The importance of strategic planning is encouraged for universities embarking on FODE/L delivery to carefully plan their intentions before a system is implemented to avoid undesirable outcomes (Minnaar, 2013) and to minimise unhappy QA occurrences. This is, reference to any mode of FODE/L delivery by universities.
Distance Education Systems (DES) exist in India, UK, China, South Africa, Fiji and Malaysia. The Indian DES is one of the biggest educational systems in the world with 14 Open Universities and over 200 Open Distance Learning Institutions (ODLIs). However, even in an established DES- there is evidence of challenges to ODL offerings. Khana and Bask (2013) refer to UNESCO (2010) to describe situations that need addressing such as the lack of appropriate business and educational models, and the lack of clear QA mechanisms resulting in unclear standards and poor quality of DE. With such FODE/L examples, a DES similar to the Indian DES might serve to inform countries such as PNG focused on developing their national FODE/L as sub-systems of HE delivery.

A DES can be contextually different but still have the universal aims of access, cost, quality, flexibility and innovation in learning. From a global perspective in the HE context, according to Daniels (1999) four institutional approaches are evident: 1) mega universities, 2) open distance teaching universities, 3) dual-mode institutions, and 4) ad-hoc technology-based teaching institutions. Dual mode FODE/L delivery has its advantages and disadvantages (Latchem, 2010). Dual mode universities have the potential to be FODE/L success stories. However, in some cases, ODL has been problematic where initial intentions (convictions) have been subsumed by other intentions whilst persisting challenges are ignored.

Amidst the challenging quest for improvement for PNG FODE/L universities, there has also risen the desire and rhetoric of attaining quality at world-class standards. The problem with such thinking is that there is a need for pragmatism and authenticity before pursuing ideals for fashionable global standards. When addressing QA in PNG’s context, it is essential to admit that quality suffers, embrace the current issues of quality failure, realise where action is needed, and pursue a pathway for
continuous self-improvement. QA activities pertain to attaining realistic solutions while building in both human and physical resources to address failing standards. Lessons learnt can underpin the endeavour for incremental quality improvement through updated QA processes. A systematic QA for FODE/L is one that has its procedures and processes clearly defined within each component. This means that the system is consistent and it clearly spells out specifications of procedures and processes so that consistency prevails towards attaining institutional overall missions and visions.

4.2.3 QA purposes in Flexible Open Distance Education/Learning

FODE/L HEIs’ common purpose of QA relates to institutional good practices. Amidst pressures for HE demand, embracing a culture of QA is essential. The main purposes of QA are to ensure that as HE becomes accessible, there is trust, credibility and satisfaction from the stakeholders regarding the products and services provided. Loss of trust in HE taints the good intentions of HE in emerging trends such as internalisation of the HE market, and mass education which has resulted in the shift and changing look of HE systems globally (Amaral & João Rosa, 2010). Within this vein of thinking, the question of conscience and personal responsibility for HE providers also surfaces. Modern universities’ efforts to be relevant often try to integrate public reasoning with societal needs in cultivating humanity. Those ideals are meant to equip learners to develop their ‘conscience, character, competence, citizenship and capacity’ (Watson, 2014). An institutional responsibility for QA-assured FODE/L agrees with political justifications for the services and funding that maintain FODE/L as a worthwhile and valuable HE delivery mechanism. Watson amplifies his ideals through his ten (10) commandments of HE for ethical FODE/L universities. First, FODE/L universities must strive to tell the truth, and second, take
care in establishing the truth. This involves authenticity, analysis and taking action against unethical practices. Third, being fair. This entails ‘equality of opportunity, non-discrimination and affirmative action’ (Watson, 2014). Fourth, being ever ready to explain actions with caution whereby there is accountability in freedom of speech. The fifth addresses striving not to harm wherein there is positive ‘progressive engagement’ (Watson, 2014) and sensitivity non – exploitation of human and the environment. Sixth, pertains to keeping promises through ethical advertising and practices whilst the seventh, is to show respect for colleagues, students and opponents. This requires listening to understand the other point of view thus ensuring that rational discourse is not derailed by prejudice, egotism or bullying of any kind. The eighth advocate for sustainability in the community and the ninth is about guarding institutional treasures responsibly and effectively. The tenth promotes the principles of continuous and constant improvement (Watson, 2014). Though simple, if followed, such statements ensure the creation and maintenance of reputable HEIs.

4.2.4 QA movement in FODE/L Higher Education in PNG

PNG’s FODE/L for HE is located in the traditional distance education culture, and operates within quality dilemmas. Current FODE/L suffers from issues such as incomplete programs, lack of updated course materials and resources, increasing costs, lack of proper student support, problems of equivalence between conventional and FODE/L and an inability to access and/or maintain modern resources. ODL is an essential form of development thus is ‘a viable means of providing quality education to increasing number of disparate students and still the demand for access education continues to grow’ (Makhanya, 2011). In PNG, however, it is perceived as second rate or an under-rated alternative form of education. The challenge for PNG FODE/L institutions requires investment in well-trained personnel and innovative QA systems
and approaches. Such approaches include viability in attaining national development goals and societal needs. Whilst sustainable QA mechanisms (systems) and methods are required in PNG’s HE for FODE/L, PNG values in FODE/L is strongly encouraged. Guy’s (1992) analysis of the ODL situation 23 years ago presented the reality of DE in PNG then and how it needed to be aligned to addressing the social dilemmas of PNG’s societies. The two most serious social challenges facing PNG then and at present are the breakdown in law and order and the high youth unemployment rates throughout the country. These challenges require sensitivity to be addressed for social transformation. According to Hayward-Jones (2016) law and order remains an issue and prevails as a modern day reality which impedes economic development in PNG. Weak governance, lack of improved health, a mediocre national education system, over reliance on extractive industries are issues that PNG struggles with today (Hayward-Jones 2016). Guy (1992) referred to the notion of socialisation that ties with Melanesian values which are consistent with integral human development; values of extended family, dialogue and respect for others, and a willingness to conserve and promote those aspects of the traditions of PNG. Social transformation also requires an awareness of the interdependence of individuals and societies. It is achieved by an education system that places emphasis on the teaching of social skills, morals and ethics; uses the vernacular as the initial language of instruction; bases more of its activities on the environment, particularly agriculture; and trains teachers with necessary skills and character to be socially and positively engaged with communities. The ideals of an Indigenous FODE/L system are vital and will be necessary to address social fragmentation whilst fostering positive, ethical virtues and sustainable traditional good practices. The realization of an under developed agriculture sector in PNG is also an area where FODE/L could revamp in
developing Life Long Learning programs for unemployed youth.

4.2.5 Dimensions of Quality

Quality can be seen from various dimensions or perspectives of FODE/L such as the content, editing and production of study materials, the immediacy of service to students and other stakeholders, as well as the software issues as highlighted in Mishra (2007). While it is important to see quality as a dimension applied to FODE/L, it is also important to consider quality integrated into a systems approach as advocated in total quality management (TQM) systems like the Deming, ISO, Baldrige and EFQM quality management systems. However, caution prevails in ensuring that the character of FODE/L in HE is more fully addressed in terms of academic rather than monetary aspects of education, although these are important in keeping a program viable. According to Scull et al. (2011), a ‘variety of quality assurance initiatives are evident to influence the design of distance teaching and learning, including best-practice frameworks, quality course rubrics and checklists, and regular discussion forums on teaching’ (pg. 142). Technological changes in the HE landscape require critical attention so that quality considerations influence such developments.

Mishra (2007) outlines an array of different tools such as; flowcharts, graphs, fishbone diagrams, scatter diagrams, control charts and brainstorming. These tools can be used when a problem arises and a solution is sought to visualise the problem through the QA lens. These QA tools were presented in chapter two (2) of this thesis. In the USA, notable tools currently used in QA processes for software review are embedded in learning management systems for ODL (Scull et al., 2011). QA tools associated with online learning are link with learning analytics for data mining on students at risk, to support QA for the course improvement and student support. The
demand for both internal and external data offers FODE/L institutions the opportunities to scale up their activities towards their intended outcomes through QA processes. A comprehensive QA toolkit (COL, 2009) published by the Commonwealth of Learning serves as a basic instrument for FODE/L in developing countries like PNG. Known as the COL-RIM model, it is designed for continuous improvement. The COL-RIM, unlike regulatory QA, requires no funding or licensing for its use and thus is offered on a voluntary basis (Plimmer, Clarke-Okah, Donovan, & Russele, 2012). The COL-RIM framework operates through 5 phases as previously shown in chapter 3 of this thesis. COL supports QA initiatives and has indicated positive results from its involvement in 14 institutions across Africa, Asia and the Caribbean (Kemp & Farrell, 2015). Farrell (2015) highlights the need for reviewing the framework based on results from the relevant sites of engagement. A weakness of the COL-RIM framework pertains to the lack of follow up on QA verifications and recommendations (Plimmer et al., 2012). PNG FODE/L universities have the option of seeking COL assistance in fostering QA reviews in their respective settings of delivery.

4.3. PNG QA research FODE/L

The PNG QA discourse on FODE/L is characterised by limited research-based evidence. To date, despite the ongoing rhetoric about QA for PNG FODE/L and the emphasis on the value of research in informing practices, only meagre evidence of scholarly, published studies into QA exists. PNG QA research literature offers insights into scholarly research undertaken on QA in HE for FODE/L from 2002-2016. This thesis provides ‘an eye opener’ into available research, QA topics covered and the types of research design or methodologies used to investigate QA processes for FODE/L in PNG since 2002. It summarizes the kind of research done,
helps to identify research gaps, and sets the way forward for future research into the area. The problem remains that QA research completed in the 14-year period is very limited and constrains professionals from envisioning the remedies needed in their institution. Research studies identified in the literature (Papoutsaki, 2006; Mannan, 2009; Abrioux, 2008; Garnaut, 2010; Laufa, 2009; Horne, Ngangan, Simaima, & Brown, 2015; Laufa, 2009) that refer to PNG FODE/L are quite interesting. They are mainly carried out by non-natives on various projects and/or terms of reference. PNG scholars published during this period highlight the need for QA mechanisms to be established within the HE systems (Haihuie, 2011; Horne, Ngangan, Simaima, & Brown, 2015; Laufa, 2009). In 2006, a journal article articulating a critique of QA systems in the higher education system in PNG was published (Papoutsaki & Rooney, 2006). The authors critically noted that QA systems in PNG universities were established with an international actor, the World Bank. They also highlighted the sad fact that PNG lacks an indigenous based HE. Although QA is mentioned, the paper lacks insights into QA for PNG FODE/L. Their analysis of colonialism and neo-colonialism practices mentions QA in both conventional HE and ODL in PNG. They observed that QA in PNG HE is reflective of neo-colonial influences from super organisations such as UNESCO, and the World Bank’s imposition of a western QA framework. They encouraged local researchers to contribute and take ownership of indigenous research in FODE/L (Papoutsaki and Rooney, 2006). Laufa (2009, p.100) made some critical observations in reference to QA where he emphasised that, ‘ODL providers have a moral duty to ensure that QA processes pertaining to standards and relevance are jealously safeguarded, maintained and sustained at all costs.’ Whilst identifying the issues of ODL in PNG, Laufa does not discuss in detail how or which QA models are used but acknowledges the efforts made. Laufa highlights the need for PNG’s
FODE/L QA framework to be informed by research efforts. PNG researchers with insiders’ perspectives on QA in FODE/L are encouraged to contribute ideas and perspectives in the area.

Abrioux (2008) conducted a study on the structural framework for HE ODL in PNG. The conclusions of this study highlight the way forward for PNG’s FODE/L systems and inform policy makers of necessary strategies to consider if FODE/L is to be scaled up. Amidst global demand for quality HE education through FODE/L, there is a great need for more local research focussed on this area. Garnaut and Namaliu (2010) highlighted the paucity of seminal research on QA in FODE/L in PNG and showed the value of partnership in research studies combining a PNG voice with a non-PNG voice. These authors critically assessed the quality of PNG universities. They focused on HE in the face-to-face context. Where they mentioned ODL, they noted that ‘partial indicators of quality are available’ which tell an unhappy story. Whilst the report is critically sensitive in portraying the real quality decline in PNG state universities, it indirectly supports a neo-colonial strategy on partnership and reliance on foreign consultancies and aid to improve PNG universities. It is also an evidence-based report portraying a broken HE system. In the quest for continuous improvement, FODE/L institutions have tried to commit themselves to both internal and external reviews. In 2010, a confronting but relevant report on FODE/L by Koul & Lockwood (2010) highlighted quality failure too. This is an example of a specific report that complements all other reports on QA in PNG.

According to ICDE (2011), more efforts are needed to pursue the contextual and cultural relevance of QA in the selected countries that were studied. Significant findings in that ICDE (2011) report show that meagre scholarly literature on QA benchmarks and policy regulations exist and are often false indicators of quality. This
study called for an analysis of the impact of QA policies implementation and practice. This is the most recent definitive report to highlight the need for more research and a determined development of QA and regulatory frameworks for FODE/L in PNG. From a critical perspective, however, this research was undertaken by a group of outsiders with vested interests in the field. Regulatory frameworks may pose limitations if flexibility and openness are not considered comprehensively.

Complementing this ICDE (2011) report, Haihuie (2010) contributes to the PNG FODE/L discourse on the concept of distance as an issue of sociocultural phenomenon. Haihuie’s ideals were limited to learner situational practices and he did not offer much insight into QA practices. His arguments revolved around quality within the ideals of social agents networking through negotiations and contestations that take place in PNG education. Haihuie’s research identified the need for structuring institutional policies for student support in three areas: instructional design, course delivery, and counseling and guidance. Such areas are socially and culturally relevant to the local context.

Papua New Guinean academics in the field of FODE/L are encouraged to engage in innovative research as a sustainable strategy for the way forward. A general consensus is that modern FODE/L HEIs must focus on highly ‘intensive rigorous controls to ensure that quality outputs are regionally and globally benchmarked as guided by recognised established regional bodies’ (Mbwette, 2011). Such contentions are supported in literature relating to quality in PNG higher education (Czuba, 2000; DPM., 2009; Garnaut & Namaliu, 2010; Lockwood & Koul, 2010) with some specific references to other FODE/L contexts. The challenge remains to pursue quality initiatives within PNG’s means and resources towards integral human development in local contexts.
4.4 Glocalisation for PNG FODE/L

The term ‘glo-cal’ refers to the ability to act critically in local contexts whilst learning from global scenarios. The global quality movement in HE links with historical trends, change, technological innovations, politics, economic issues or a combination of societal forces in play. The historical QA trajectory from the various global contexts confirms that QA processes prevail in different localities, cultures and societies according to specific defined norms and values. The HE QA literature shows its movement from the developed nations in Europe and USA and has spread globally in the last couple of decades. The QA movement is akin to a ripple in the ocean, which reaches the shores of developing countries like PNG producing mixed reactions, sensitiveness, reservations and some intimidation.

The diversity of traditional culture is a natural wealth for PNG. Though such an indigenous wealth may be taken for granted, it is needed to shape thinking and decision/policy-making in achieving authentic outcomes based on existing realities. Conversely, the tendency of being trapped in an indigenous cultural mind-set can be a barrier to new ways of thinking. Hence, it is vital to be open-minded whilst still culturally aware of the different and unique traditional cultures, in keeping them in perspective. The QA culture in modern PNG, which is being advocated currently, makes it evident that a national voice for quality is still needed to reassure people about services and products. QA for education is just as important as QA for other sectors. The QA regulatory discourses and systems mechanisms become priority areas in selected industries and services. In industrial sectors, where there are influxes of industries for natural resource extraction, indigenous societies whose livelihoods are harmoniously linked to their natural resources are often affected (Hayward-Jones 2016; Imbun, Duarte, & Smith, 2015), thus responsible quality
mechanisms are needed to foster quality outcomes through sensitivity, consciousness and mindfulness within for local realities. Where global partnerships are engaged, global partners and citizens alike are responsible for defining the ethical Quality Strategies for developmental endeavour in business, education or industry. The fallout caused by poor quality strategies is a burden for PNG. This is a sad and unhappy reality for modern PNG.

4.4.1 Regional QA movement

Although it is vital to explore QA in the FODE/L movement globally, regional comparative studies are as important for critical, comparative and sensemaking analysis. It is that regional comparative lens that this section is devoted to, in attempting to understand the QA movement within the Asia/Pacific region. PNG is geographically situated in the Asia Pacific region, south east of Asia, north of Australia and New Zealand and west of its neighbouring Pacific island nations. The two main neighbouring regions of South East Asia and Oceania are examined for regional comparisons with some insights from developing countries in Africa. South America and India are connected by sea to countries within the region. To its northwest lies the Asian region with growing hosts of FODE/L institutions, while in the southeast, the myriad developing island nations of the Pacific form the neighbourhood with the developed countries of Australia and New Zealand as anchors. In the HE sector, a study by Corcoran and Koshy (2010) notes that little evidence of sustainability activity in the Pacific exists, and more could be done. Sustainability in HE within the developing nations of the Pacific has to be combined with QA sustainable practice and policies, let alone the ways in which QA is done and accepted into institutional, national and regional cultures in HE.
Australia and New Zealand have matured their QA initiatives in their respective Higher Education sectors. In Australia, the establishment of its current Australian Higher Education Quality Assurance Framework in 2000 ensured that universities are quality focused in their activities (Shah, Nair, & Wilson, 2011). Success in developing QA frameworks and systems results from years of continual improvement in the HE sector. New Zealand shares similar success stories of having established QA systems for HE based on continuous improvement. The positive outcomes of having QA as a culture are also evident in Australian and New Zealand HE systems, which are inclusive of FODE/L. QA initiatives from the Australian and New Zealand’s HE include; credible HE reputation, international ranking, internal quality management systems with established QA hubs/unit/departments, emergence of a quality cycle, government monitoring, performance based funding, and, external quality audits that are instituted for positive quality outcomes. The success stories of dual mode Australia/New Zealand QA initiatives are potentially useful examples in the region.

In 2011, the International Council of Distance Education (ICDE), commissioned a study on regulatory frameworks for online and distance education in the South West Pacific/South East Asia region. It was aimed at enabling ODL institutions to foster work on Quality regulatory frameworks in their various contexts. Findings from the report revealed that little scholarly literature is available and only limited information exists on appropriate types of benchmarks and guidelines pertaining to FODE/L regulatory frameworks in the region (ICDE, 2011). Another finding from the report highlighted that the countries studied have National education plans, policies and regulations that are often false indicators of practical quality practices. Whilst evidences of QA frameworks and policies exist, impact analyses are
needed of these QA entities. Research will help ensure that such policies are not mere ‘window dressing’ but clear directives that lead to practicable, implementable actions with impacts that can be measured while continuous improvement continues. The University of South Pacific (USP) emphasises sustainability. USP is a successful FODE/L regional university, uniquely established across Pacific Island nations. Being the leading FODE/L university in the Pacific region with established campuses in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Kiribati, USP contributes to nation building through education in those small island nations through FODE/L (Corcoran & Koshy, 2010). As such, QA cultures of FODE/L, plus issues surrounding sustainable policies and practices, are relevant now and for future generations. Pacific regional FODE/L and QA researchers have great potentials in pursuing into more research that inform practices and build confidence in local contextual environments.

In the Asian region, a relevant study (Jung I et al., 2011) researched national ODL QA systems in 11 countries, with proactive QA initiatives. The Asian region is a growing hub of FODE/L Open Universities, and Open and Distance Learning Institutions that has increased its research outputs. The study revealed that FODE/L providers are conscious of QA’s importance and its integration in various stages of their circumstances. This report revealed that QA in distance education is in its early stages and with varying approaches to QA. Three approaches were highlighted; first, those countries with the same QA strategies for FODE/L and conventional education. Second, are those countries that apply FODE/L specific QA and third, those who were yet to establish QA mechanisms for FODE/L. Different models are used however; one of the models described is the QA ecological model (Jung, 2010) relevant to FODE/L. Mannan (2010) refers to the same model in an analysis of the QA situation at the University of PNG’s Open College, where QA initiatives evolved from the
establishment of systems to coordinate primary functions of policy and planning, course design, development, and student support. The ecological model of QA refers to an incremental, descriptive QA process in embryonic, evolving and matured stages of the system. From a critical stance, this ecological model of QA works best under effective FODE/L leadership wherein leaders are committed, passionate and proactive about authentic quality initiatives and outcomes. This is further realised when there is conceptual understandings, ongoing mentorship and critical discourse on addressing quality issues. There is always a danger of QA rhetoric without much action in actual implementation of QA initiatives. More so, complacency in the mature stage of the ecological QA model may defeat the ideals of continuous progression, increase and improvement of quality.

4.4.2 QA Insights from Developing Countries

QA for FODE/L in developing countries is an emerging issue. The quest for accessible, inclusive HE and poverty reduction, highlighted in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and UNESCO’ commitment to education in developing countries, has placed them under global scrutiny. Although crippled by the lack of established QA systems amidst reduced funding and the ongoing misconceptions and distrust of FODE/L, their struggling efforts towards the achievement of MDGs and other global agendas are obvious. It is reported by Khvilon, et al (2002) that ODL is the vehicle through which adult education is realised in developing countries for initial qualifications, in-service, and supplementary and professional training at the work place. Many developing countries are looking to ODL as a major strategy for expanding access, raising quality and ensuring cost-effectiveness in education. In Asia, QA triumphs; 11 cases of 10 countries and 1 state have well-established Open Distance Education QA systems, with some just introducing and others still in the
process of establishing QA for ODL systems (Jung.I et al., 2011). QA initiatives thrive in the developing countries with QA cultures and mechanisms, systems and processes in place where the demand for FODE/L is critically needed. With the increase of Open Universities, QA is vitally important. According to Kanwar (2013), Asia has 70 Open Universities, of which 13 are mega universities. Figure 4.3 illustrates the existence of mass HE education in Asia through the establishment of Open Universities, which justifies the need for QA regulatory mechanisms to be functionally available for QA purposes.

![Open and Mega Universities in Asia](https://www.creativecommons.org)

**Figure 4.3** Open and Mega Universities in Asia Kanwar, (2013), attributed to Commonwealth of Learning [www.creativecommons.org license](https://www.creativecommons.org)

While quality in ODL in Asia/Pacific countries is promoted and some form of regulation of ODL for quality and access is evident (ICDE, 2013), good QA practices take time, commitment, perseverance and passion. Insights from other Asian countries such as India, Indonesia and Malaysia indicate their QA efforts are working to ensure sustainability for improved and updated FODE/L.

In some African contexts, the quest for QA in HE/ FODE/L is emerging as a priority. For successful implementation, this priority involves continuous discourse and incremental advances in establishing QA in institutional units, as well as QA national agencies with active connections to regional and international partnerships networks.
The European Union supports the increased continental QA initiatives with the increase from 6 to 23 QA agencies and the formation of a continental framework for QA (Jongsma, 2014). The African Council for Distance Education (ACDE) promotes the quality of education and training through DE and e-learning (Sarah & Butcher, 2012). Hence, it has established a continental QA and accreditation agency that provides QA tools, QA audits, reviews, accreditation and credits transfer. QA discourse in DE is actively advocated from the institutional, to regional, national and international spheres with more room for development. In Southern Africa, QA is evident from national links with international affiliation within the HE sector (Makoe, 2015a; Mhlanga, 2012). In Makoe (2015) an analysis of different QA Toolkits shows an example of international best practices merging with local practices with specific focus on mission statements as a quality indicator pertaining to ‘fitness of purpose’ (Harvey & Green, 1993; Makoe, 2015a). The three-distance educations QA Toolkits are those of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), the ACDE and the National Association of Distance Education Organisations of South Africa (NADEOSA). While it is encouraging that developing nations pursue QA in the formation stage, what remains critical and uniform across the developing regions are the issues of QA implementation for sustainability long after the departure of international partners such as UNESCO, EU and the World Bank.

A general consensus is that modern FODE/L HEIs must focus on highly ‘intensive rigorous controls to ensure that quality outputs are regionally and globally benchmarked as guided by recognised established regional bodies’ (ICDE, 2014; Mbwette, 2011). Equity, access and costs are ideals for inclusive HE. Form a critical stance, whilst equity, access and costs are vital – their relevance to local realities are just as important. Those ideals require QA agencies to foster flexible QA approaches
and “the adoption of quality standards, guidelines and benchmarks for open, online
and distance learning into mainstream quality frameworks and protocols” (ICDE,
2014). Such statements are supported in PNG HE literature (Czuba, 2000; DPM.,
2009; Garnaut & Namaliu, 2010; Lockwood & Koul, 2010) with some specific
references to the other FODE/L contexts.

4.5 PNG way: Which way for FODE/L QA?

An underlying question remains – where do we from here? This is a question
that is asked by other Papua New Guineans from a glocal sensemaking paradigm.
The world that we live in is made of systems of every kind, nature and size. Within
systems, people’s relationships are formed based on factors such as race, ethnicity and
other interests. Relationships are also formed on political and socio economic
interests. The discussion here is aligned to what culture is, why it is important to
understand the myriad of cultures that interplay or mesh together in some level of
contestation or in collaboration. This section began by looking at the notion of
culture, the definition of what culture is, the emerging cultures of Higher Education,
the culture of Flexible Open distance education or learning, and the culture of QA in
various contexts with comparison to QA in global sectors of HE. Giving culture more
insight connects it to the relevance and situational setting of this research.

Nested in the Pacific Ocean, Melanesia is both a cultural and a geographical
region, consisting of the island countries of, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and New
Caledonia. This group of Melanesian countries is located in the Southwest Pacific
Ocean, northeast of Australia, and south of the equator. These island nations share
some of the most exotic geographical spaces of the Pacific Ocean and are diverse in
their political histories, experiences and national ideals amidst their cultures and
languages (Gardner & Waters 2013). Mela originates from a Greek word, and nesos
meaning island refer to the dark-skinned habitants of these islands
(www.thefreedictionary.com). The term ‘Melanesia’ may seem problematic when
used beyond the geographic location of a race and extended to historical encounters of
Melanesians with outsiders, especially those who brought colonialism. The term
therefore has its positive and negative connotations but is heralded here as a source of
identity and strength (Lawson, 2013) and is appreciated as a part of ethnicity, history
and personal identity. Early writers of PNG, from the early years of pre-independence
and soon after independence in 1975, advocated strongly for a ‘PNG Way’ (Narakobi,
1989). What makes PNG distinct from other countries is PNG’s deeply rooted culture.
The myriad cultural languages, and aspects of various societal practices in PNG
signify the need for on going cultural sensitivity when new ideas are advocated in
such culturally rich contexts. PNG is so diverse in cultural settings, traditions,
language and ways of doing things, all of which can be confronting to an outsider.
PNG boasts 850 plus languages (ADB, 2012; Mannan, 2010; McCallum, Miller,
Berry, & Hershey, 2016) spoken by its 6 million people. Invariably, socio-cultural
differences exist between these different language groups and so diversity is spread
across tribes and language groups throughout the country. Hence, meaning making
can be a challenge for those in search of common conceptual understandings amongst
belief, folklore and the traditions of living harmoniously with nature.

Cultural differences are obvious and can be found in the choice of language,
songs, folklore, learning styles, dances, rituals and subsistence food cultures that are
often not shared but are withheld as sacred valuables. Traditional knowledge is valued
in the context of belonging to a certain tribe, clan or family. It is sometimes perceived
that some of the nastiest methods of problem solving or conflict resolution are
through tribal warfare. What does culture mean to an indigenous Papua New Guinean
compared to culture defined by the Western world? Culture can be confusing to a Papua New Guinean when it entails understanding the wider perspective instead of an individual’s cultural setting, traditional boundaries and attachment to identity and cultural roots. In modern PNG, some of the cultural and traditional ways of thinking and acting impede the socio-cultural activities of modern era. Where over 87% of the population reside in the rural areas of the country, the eroded traditional cultural practices of today’s world are now flavoured with the influx of cultures from the outside world. The culture of the Wantok system is prevalent in the context of PNG societies. The term ‘wantok’ means ‘one talk’ where the common understanding is of mutual friendship within the language that is spoken. According to Okole (2005) beyond the mutual understanding based on a common language, it is a relationship system inclusive of commonalities such as ‘kinship connections, place or region of origin, social and religious groups or beliefs’ (pg. 374) and other similar affiliations in the society. The Wantok system is a Melanesian value that was traditionally practised for common family obligations, reciprocal assistance, and to maintain friendship and mutual cooperation through marriage and tribal affiliation. In today’s world, the Wantok system exists in clans, tribes, among various tribes and language groups. It is deeply rooted and thus can be appreciated for its advantages and at the same can be condemned for its popularity for nepotism thus corruption in modern systems of government and organisations. This traditional trait is linked the existing systemic endemic corruption in modern day PNG. Issues, such as nepotism or favouritism, bribery, prejudice, complacency culture are attributed to the Wantok system. PNG literature on the Wantok system (Okole, 2005; Tivinarlik & Wanat, 2006) portrays it as a reality in PNG and neighbouring Melanesian countries like the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia. The essence of the reciprocity value
in these Melanesian countries where the Wantok system exists promotes a sense of caring, security and sharing, thus creating unity amidst diversity in authentic cultural experiences.

Cultural grounding and PNG ways (Hermes, 2014) are enshrined within the National Goals and Directive Principles of PNG (Banks, 2014). These ideals are often oversights in contemporary PNG. For the purpose of pursuing progress through harmonious efforts in the HE context, FODE/L and conventional HE can mutually contribute to nation building by promoting QA tools that incorporate values such as ‘integral human development, equality and participation, national sovereignty, self-reliance, respect/appreciation for natural resources and the sacredness of environments thus fostering PNG ways in such endeavours’ (Narakobi, 2010, p21-35; (Narakobi, 1989). Education in PNG in its true sense must pertain to what is relevant (Rooney, 2015) whereby formal and informal quality indigenous education are established.

4.6 Conclusion

This literature review sets out a comprehensive discussion garnered from various aspects of quality assurance in HE for FODE/ and knits together the global, regional and local contexts. PNG as a nation appreciates FODE/L as a vehicle for development and transformative changes. PNG’s HE landscapes is changing with new technologies and new cultures of learning. QA is a partial solution to the problems currently faced by ODL in PNG. In embracing the various contextual studies (MingFen & KingKong, 2011) this research might extend this work into trying to develop a Melanesian framework for QA that encapsulates the positive Melanesian values for sustaining good practice for PNG FODE/L. For PNG FODE/L in HE, a persisting question is asked, how to act morally with responsibility in
difficult situations. There is hope for a positive FODE/L amidst challengingly high levels of corruption, complacency culture in the work place, lack of motivation, lack of role models in leadership positions, ethical and moral decay in service delivery and the tyranny of quality deficiency. The essence of thinking through a unique PNG based FODE/L is essential in the promotion of authentic indigenous PNG values that are linked with national goals and directive principles. QA in HE upholds public reasoning and the cultivation of humanity in values of personal responsibilities for the common good for all. These ideals can be fostered through civic educational programs and ideals.

The next chapter of this thesis is a presentation of the research design and methodology, which focuses the methodological aspects of collecting data to inform the search for more understanding on QA in PNG FODE/L.
CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

5.1 Introduction

This research is an exploratory study using qualitative methods. Qualitative research is situated in its own field of enquiry that embraces the natural settings of the phenomenon under study, involves interpretation and the construction of meaning pertaining to the realities perceived by the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It is used across multiple disciplines. According to Denzin and Lincoln, qualitative research does not “have distinct sets of methods or practices that are entirely its own” (p.6). The potential to secure rich details from qualitative research are valuable to this study on QA in PNG’s Open Distance Learning context. This chapter describes the qualitative methodological approach selected and the paradigm used in this study. It begins with the restatement of the research questions and the aim of the study, followed by the research paradigm and justification of the choice of research methods. The chapter also presents the research design, data collection methods, the data analysis methodology used within the theoretical framework plus the limitations encountered and the ethical considerations of this research.

5.1.1 Research Questions and Aim

As stated in Chapter One, the three main questions seek to provide a critical understanding of QA in HE for FODE/L within the contextual nature of PNG as a developing country. These research questions are:

1. What is the nature of QA in the PNG universities that provide FODE/L programs and services?
2. What are the major obstacles facing these universities in their attempt to ensure quality standards and practices in PNG?

3. To what extent do existing institutional QA guidelines; processes and support meet the demands of Open Educational Resource (OER) use in FODE/L?

The main aim of this research is to establish, explore, and evaluate the current status of, challenges to and opportunities for QA in the PNG universities that specifically offer FODE/L. This aim relates directly to research questions 1 and 2. Second, amidst the technological advances of this century, this research also aims to examine QA guidelines leading to the innovative and effective use of OER that can improve the quality of FODE/L. This aim relates to all the three research questions, as the use of good-quality OERs is an emerging trend in FODE/L. According to OER literature (Atena, Haveman, & Priego, 2014; ICDE, 2013; Khanna & Bask, 2013) OERs improve the quality of learning materials, services, contributes to capacity building of human resources and infrastructure is enhanced with the use of ICTs in FODE/L. Third, this research captures the various participants’ voices of FODE/L QA for meaningful ‘phenomenological insights’ (Tronvoll, Brown, Gremler & Edvardson, 2011,p.561). In so doing, the perspectives afforded by ‘insiders’ (Bazeley, 2007), i.e. the research participants wherein their realities are woven through a process of sensemaking and constructivist interpretation. By providing research findings in this area of concern, policymakers, FODE/L practitioners and relevant stakeholders are informed in improving existing systems the quality of HE offered by PNG universities. Finally, in examining the potential contributions of new stakeholders in the FODE/L provision in PNG (i.e. the proposed PNG National Open University), this research offers valuable insights to inform policy and practices for Quality as a culture.
5.2 Research paradigm

Research methodology and methods do not mean the same thing. Methodology refers to research approaches that are applied to derive knowledge by using specific methods to study a particular phenomenon. Research methodology is the science/theory of the research methods that are deployed to answer the research questions. This research employs ontological and epistemological paradigms in trying to understand the nature of current FODE/L programs and what knowledge is evident about the culture of quality that may lead into QA practices. It evokes constructive critical thinking about innovations for quality improvements that might be made in the light of global trends toward QA acceptance and enhanced practice in FODE/L. In seeking answers to the nature of being, the researcher tries to understand the nature of the QA phenomena in the context of FODE/L in PNG. This involves asking questions such as, what is the nature of QA, how is QA done and why is QA for FODE/L offering universities is the way it is. Through a process of iterative reflective thinking, the ontological and epistemological questions around the nature of quality and what constitutes one’s understanding of self towards the enhancement of FODE/L hopefully becomes clearer and more focussed.

This research study begins with an identification process of the researcher’s attachment to cultural, societal and indigenous space. Situated in a Melanesian society, this qualitative research aligns to the Melanesian values laid out by Narakobi (2010) and Vallance(2007) that foster and support indigenous and cultural sensitivity. Ingrained cultural values are fundamental to people living in certain social contexts. For a Melanesian, the values include land, clan, reciprocity, food, rituals, ancestors/spiritual connections and presence, leadership, education, compensation and work (Franklin, 2007). Figure 5.1 depicts these values that relate to me, an individual
Melanesian woman researcher with underlying traditional values, within a contested space of time and modernisation.

The Melanesian values depicted above have been personalised to a PNG national person’s sense of identity using Tok Pisin, which is one of the two national languages of PNG, and the researcher’s mother tongue, known as Patpatar. This language is one of the 850+ languages of PNG. For instance, the value of land is known to the researcher as land in English, graon in Tok Pisin and pise in Patpatar.

The land itself includes what is on it and within it, such as rivers, mountains, traditional sacred sites or landmarks associated with spiritual connections. For instance, the mythical expression – such is that; the land has ears, eyes and teeth suggests that it is embedded in a culture of care. This traditional myth implies connection to the land as an essential living entity that holds life and thus requires respect and care.

With underlying Melanesian values and belief systems, this research highlights the power of consciousness and sacredness in the sensory world and the
connection with the spiritual world in which Melanesian cultures thrive, even in modern PNG. Melanesian spirituality is part of any Melanesian lifestyle. From Western Christian principles to sacred traditional belief systems and practices (that are now demystified through Christianity), a spiritual presence is part of the everyday life of a Papua New Guinean Melanesian (Nongkas & Tivinarlik, 2004). Spirituality fosters power relationships and communal knowledge. Figure 5.2 illustrates the researcher’s own underlying and inner personal connections to ‘Melanesian research methodology’ (Vallance, 2008) with greater sensitivity to the contrasting ‘worlds’ of indigenous cultures and conflicting thinking (Diamond, 2012; Narakobi, 2010; Smith, 2012) within PNG in the midst of ideals and practices from the outside world. This research seeks such rooted authentic knowledge from the researched contexts.

**Figure 5.2  Critical reflective process of research**

This research therefore identifies the researcher’s space, through a reflective journey of searching, questioning and critical examination of inner belief systems and the worldview held by this 21st Century Melanesian woman researcher. One’s underlying belief system thus leads the researcher to embrace FODE/L as a living entity that has eyes, ears and teeth. Its eyes, ears and teeth are realised in FODE/L expectations. In other words, it is an entity that needs to be respected and cared for with sanctity, ethics and moral justice.
This writer’s qualification as a Melanesian researcher comes from an identity that originates within a Melanesian matrilineal society of the Patpatar language group in the Namatanai area of the New Ireland Province in PNG. In societies where traditional customs and philosophy co-exist with introduced Western belief systems, it is important to note the sacredness of being a female figure in a cultural context that affirms one’s descent through the woman. Sacredness is a valuable attribute. It defines what is precious and is manifested in living with consciousness of the realities of other human beings in societies (Dowrick, 2010). A Melanesian woman from a matrilineal society, like the Patpatar language group, owns her space in society as a landowner, a decision maker, a giver of life and one whose voice is respected by her male relatives. When a matriarch (oldest living woman in a family, clan) voices her concern or is given the opportunity to voice her thinking, she is respected as she speaks with authority. A woman in a matrilineal society in New Ireland Province is deemed sacred and thus is connected to her ancestral roots. As in other matrilineal societies, the woman fosters the sacred binding via the umbilical cords. This means that mothering is grounded through blood connection and land ownership. In a similar matrilineal society of the Minangkabau of Sumatra-Indonesia (Sanday, 2002) a woman is sacred as a bearer of life and as a landowner who co-exists with her male folk in society. The notion of connection through the umbilical code is further illustrated in the Solomon Islands where lineage is identified through the maternal connection from mother to children. The umbilical cord is compared to a sweet potato creeper bearing sweet potatoes (Scott, 2007) above and below the sacred land. It is a powerful and sacred connection to an individual’s identity and heritage in this context. A coastal Melanesian and Patpatar woman of the Namatanai District in the New Ireland Province is similar to a Minangkabu woman of Indonesia and/or an
Arosi woman of the Solomon Islands, in their roles in society, their invisible but powerful status, sacredness in life and the link to ancestral spiritualism and identity. From one’s ontological identity, as a Sosir modern woman, one’s mythical attributes and sense of sacred spirituality, nature and relationships matures over time and age. Such sacredness is deeply rooted in living harmoniously with nature, the spiritual connection and relationship (Nongkas & Tivinarlik, 2004) with other members of society. Figure 5.3 is an illustration of one’s connection with nature and the matrilineal connections in one’s line of descent.

![Figure 5.3 One's sacred matrilineal line of decent within the Sosir clan](image)

As a member of the Sosir clan, one’s roots are aligned to a clan’s totem, known as Ting-gop, a spiritual, mythical snake animal spirit. Ting-gop is the snake that gave birth to the first woman whose descendants are the members of the Sosir clan, past and present. One’s mythical literacy as such is valued and pertains to indigenous education. Ting means baby girl with reference to the female human species and gop means to cradle in one’s hands, embrace or nurture. In essence, Ting-
gop means ‘baby girl nurturing’. It signifies the value and sacredness of life through the female species. Land ownership, genealogical relationships and descent are structured around the traditional norms and values of matrilineal societies wherein one’s line of descent goes by the mother’s side through the umbilical cord connection (by blood) or adoption (where a foreigner is accepted as a clan member). It is also no coincidence that one’s clan’s totem is known as a female mother snake, the Ting-gop. So Ting-gop in a sense is a spiritual female figure that gives life, protects her babies, and has power, mothers and nurtures. She is a grounded woman who embodies these values for the benefit of her children. Through oral history in one’s clan, it is known that Ting-gop manifests herself to people (only certain people) in the form of a snake with her baby snakes clinging to her as she moves along on the ground or in full flight, gliding through nature, and even sun-bathing on coconut palm trees. Ting-gops’s mythical links with coconut trees further fosters the connection to life and sustenance. In this context, a coconut tree is a tree of life.

This research goes beyond the pursuit for qualification and is a personal journey comprising a conscious in-depth examination of the realities revealed through sensemaking, critical, interpretive and iterative constructive meaning-making in the process of knowledge building. It adds a Melanesian Sosir woman researcher’s voice to the discourse and practice of FODE/L. It becomes a sacred form of Higher Education because it is viewed through a Melanesian ‘eye’ on QA using a qualitative research paradigm. Vallance (2007) shows that the work of Melanesian researchers is under-represented in the PNG research literature. The research described here provides an insider perspective, as it is the story of a PNG woman researcher situated within PNG’s male-dominated economy that places a specific focus on FODE/L as practised in PNG. It is a confirmation of realities, co-existence of beings and
knowledge within contested spaces of traditional, cultural and modern nation-making ideals in this century.

5.2.1 Personal ontology and epistemology

One can ask what the connection is between this research and the researcher’s personal ontology and epistemology. There is significance in the connection to life and sustainability in the researcher’s origin with people living in harmony with the natural environment, its beings and life on the earth. Such significance is similar to a coconut tree as the tree of life that connects to one’s mythical being, to the totem’s spiritual and indigenous education ecologies, matriarchy and citizenship through clan/tribal affiliations. The researcher’s personal connection with nature, pursuit for enhancing life and nurturing of cultural attributes provide the basis for the personal ontology in this research. It is a conscious, sensemaking paradigm for revitalising HE in parallel systems (such as FODE/L) as well as embracing the current PNG HE system. It is a reminder, to reconnect with nature, with ideals that foster harmony in nature.

As described previously, in one’s traditional society, a snake spirit exists. The snake animal meaning is powerfully connected to life source and primary energy. In many cultures it is revered as a powerful totem representing the source of life. When the snake spirit appears in one’s life, it may mean that healing opportunities, change, important transitions and increased energy are being manifested through spiritual guidance. The researcher’s traditional knowledge provides the personal connection to the foundational philosophy of being grounded, as a snake is always close to the ‘mother’ earth/ground where life emerges. One’s traditional spirituality in Ting-gop-being a spiritual mother snake is similar to Mother Earth upon which life exists. Her baby snakes clings to her just like life that clings to Mother Earth. It is a sacred
connection wherein sacredness is a notion upon which quality can be realised. An ideal that offers sustaining opportunities for spiritual transformation in the search for greater goodness, quality practices and opportunities towards improving contemporary FODE/L.

The process of imperialism (Smith, 2012), in the Catholic faith found its place in the researcher’s world alongside her traditional spirituality. The researcher’s ontology, that is, the nature and the originality of the researcher, contains mythical essence of spirituality and western belief systems. It reveals a soul searching, critical reflection, sacredness and self-consciousness search for quality principles in life.

Figure: 5.4 shows the researcher’s reflection and her belief systems in her life. The researcher began seeing the world from a Christian faith that she was born into and grew up fully immersed into it. This Catholic faith from the Western world came through the process of imperialism. Imperialism pervades all aspects of the economy and society in developing countries like PNG. The researcher’s Catholic faith has brought her closer to a deeper connection with the creator of all that is, the universal GOD, angels and spiritual women figures/role models such as the Virgin Mary and other matriarchs. The traditional spirituality or belief system was silenced by Christianity, deemed as pagan beliefs and as on the periphery (hidden) with Christianity now being the dominant and prominent spiritual attachment. The interplaying elements of spirituality have their goodness in sustaining spiritual domains within modern PNG today. Similarly, there is a connection between the female figures in one’s spiritual worlds in the Blessed Virgin Mary through the Catholic faith from the Western world, and Ting-gop- who is one’s clan’s snake totem from the researcher’s traditional Melanesian world and space. These belief systems are complementary/parallel to sustaining one’s sacred self as a human being and thus
give meaning to one’s view of the world as it is today. Similarly, the essences of these spiritual women have some connections and thus are complementary to the researcher’s advocacy in common goodness for all.

**Figure 5.4:** The author’s belief systems research trajectory

Figure 5.4 illustrates a sacred space and manifests the researcher’s ontology and belief systems. It reflects the researcher’s identity and perceptions within a contested/complementary world of spirituality, and the significance of invisible ‘powers’ in the real world. The value of sacredness embraces one’s individuality as a Melanesian researcher. It infers that the quality of FODE/L is sacred and it matters to those who value it. Advocates for quality FODE/L advocate for care, nurturing and sustained QA for FODE/L in PNG, both now and into the future. This paradigm gives an insight into the researcher’s position as a novice researcher holding underlying belief systems and values that offer meaning to the processes of the research and the significance of the topic from a personal standpoint in relation to the wider world of FODE/L.
5.3 Research Context

Research into FODE/L in PNG has its challenges, some of which are geography, communication, security as a female researcher, and accessibility. This section begins with a description of the research journey into the context of the research sites where data collection was negotiated and eventually collected. Figure 5.5 shows the PNG universities (sites) that the researcher visited for data collection. Listed in the order in which they were visited, these are: University1, University2, University3 and University4. Throughout this section, the universities are discussed in the sequence of the researcher’s visits to each of them. For anonymity purposes, the institutions offering FODE/L have been labelled as universities 1-4.

![Map showing research sites in PNG.](image)

This research focuses on PNG universities that offer FODE/L programs and various support services. It is also an exploration of FODE/L delivery taking place in a challenging environment. Historically, formal tertiary education in PNG began with the establishment of the UPNG in 1966, followed shortly by the University of Technology in Lae. The University of Goroka and the Divine Word University were
established much later. Out of six universities now in PNG, four offer FODE/L of some sort to students situated in various parts of PNG, both urban and remote/rural.

The universities accessed for data collection are shown in Table 5.1. The different delivery options for FODE/L are also shown. A single-mode university is one that delivers FODE/L programs autonomously (i.e. independent of campus courses) whereas a dual-mode university is one where programs offered on campus are also offered in University Centres within the provinces or regions via flexible distance education. This is done through various approaches such as stand-alone print materials, face-to-face lectures blended with print, or electronic media such as multimedia or internet-based. Common features include having a dedicated instructional design team, a specialist production staff and a network of centres decentralised from the main centre (Moran & Myringer, 1999). Some courses are split between distance learning and classroom learning. The current FODE/L offerings are briefly in Table 5.1.
Table 5.1: PNG Universities providing FODE/L programs

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>PNG Universities offering FODE/L</th>
<th>Government/Private</th>
<th>Name of FODE/L Programs</th>
<th>FODE/L Programs</th>
<th>Dual or Single mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of - Port Moresby</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>UPNG Open College</td>
<td>Certificate (Pre-university), Diploma and Bachelor Degree programs.</td>
<td>Dual mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Goroka (Teacher Education)-Goroka</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Department of Flexible Learning (DFL)</td>
<td>Teacher Education for Teachers (Master level)</td>
<td>Dual mode.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNG University of Technology- Lae</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Department of Open Distance Learning (DODL)</td>
<td>Matriculation programs (pre-university)</td>
<td>Dual-mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divine Word University – Madang</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Flexible Learning Centre (FLC)</td>
<td>Professional Trainings for Teachers and public Servants programs</td>
<td>Partially Autonomous but still operates under DWU.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4 Significant gap in previous research in this particular area

The significant gap in published literature on PNG FODE/L and QA in the last decade is detrimental to progress in the QA field. Researchers tackling QA topics are encouraged to address this gap based on PNG findings (Laufa, 2009). The Garnaut and Namaliu Report (2010), shows the lack of quality control at university levels, plus a deficiency in quality research outputs and or the mechanism for a rigorous review of QA standards and frameworks in order that HE can improve. Excellent research in FODE/L is a critical aspect of ODL in any contexts. FODE/L research informs practice, contributes to successful cultures of innovation, helps academics to pursue new ideas and creatively foster positive change.

5.5 Research Methodology

Research into PNG FODE/L is meagre (Garnaut & Namaliu, 2010; ICDE, 2011; Laufa, 2009), thus a great potential for more research in this area exists. This current research adopts a qualitative case-study approach and is situated in a service delivery sector of HE. It is focused on co-created dialogue between the researcher and
the participants in the research while in their respective PNG university contexts. More so, this research can also be viewed from a continuously reflective practitioners’ perspective. The researcher is a FODE/L practitioner and an insightful source of data but endeavours to remain sensitive to issues of bias. This involves ‘looking in from the outside’ by taking a step out of the PNG FODE/L world and adopting an outsider’s perspective.

Qualitative case-study methodology provides tools for researchers to examine complex phenomena in their contexts (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The use of various data sources in this approach ensures that a topic is explored and analysed appropriately. Patton (2015,p.259) defines a case study as an “exploration of a bounded system or case over time through detailed, in-depth collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context.” As an exploratory case study, this research involved examining the PNG HE space with specific focus on universities that are currently offering FODE/L programs, courses and services within PNG. The phenomenon for research is QA for FODE/L and the case was PNG HE (universities). The strengths in Qualitative case-studies highlighted by Polenis (2015) includes; the use of a diverse of research methods (Davies, 2007), the ability to establish rapport with research subjects (Mouton, 2001), and the opportunity to collect rich data that can be used in similar situations, contexts and studies and offers deep and critical insights into a specific situation or case or cases within a case. This study harnessed these strengths to foster understanding into a contextual space of FODE/L in PNG’s HE space. There are however, weaknesses and misunderstandings that do exist around case studies. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), case-studies can be misunderstood to create bias in generalisation on individual case or cases, “selection may overstate or understate relationships, weak understanding of occurrence in population understudy
and statistical significance is often unknown or unclear” (p.314). Qualitative research methods produce rich data from the field being studied and provide meaningful insights. The processes of producing a rich, comprehensive picture fosters greater, deeper understandings and interpretations of what is being studied (Bryman, 2004; Creswell, 2007b; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Denzin, 1994; Neuman, 2000; Punch, 2005; Yin, 2011). This research attempts to harness the value of qualitative case-study methodologies (Patton, 2015) to show the realities of FODE/L within multi cases based on selected universities within PNG’s HE system.

5.5.1 Theoretical Framework - a confluence of theories approach

The use of theories in research gives the researcher explanatory powers for the phenomenon under investigation. For this research, a pluralistic theory approach is harnessed as theoretical lenses for QA in PNG’s FODE/L context. These theories are inclusive of the following: Open Systems, Self Determination and Complexity theories. Complementary to those theories, Kaizen management and the glonacal heuristic approach are also engaged. Kaizen is a Japanese word, defined as ‘change for the better’ whilst the glonacal heuristic approach brings forth thinking globally and acting locally in QA processes, practices and theories. Whilst the multiple theory approach may not be encouraged and can be said to allow ‘cherry picking’, it is essential to the reality of this topic where approaches to quality may be difficult to detect and analyse in the FODE/L practices currently on offer. Figure 5. 6 illustrate the various theories that are being borrowed to give theoretical insights into this study of QA in the PNG FODE/L. These theories flow together to allow the inclusion of the various aspects of QA in FODE/L in the local contexts. Akin to rivers and their tributaries, these selected theories originate from various sources and flow together in a QA discourse river for PNG FODE/L with their own strengths and potentials. The
Melanesian values are the landscape upon which the river meanders. FODE/L is the name of the river whilst its tributaries are the selected theories and tools. In this case the combination of systems, self-determination, complexity and the Kaizen philosophy.

**Figure 5.6 Confluence of theoretical perspectives**

According to Varghese (2015), confluence is defined as the coming together of two rivers. In the context of this research, it is the meeting or merging of theoretical insights around the issue of QA in PNG. When streams meet and converge, they bring forth changes into the content, the current and volume of the water. Such a transformation brings in new ideals and constraints that require new thinking in the now-merged stream or river. In this case, it is FODE/L in HE where QA initiatives can direct changes within its system. When FODE/L is envisaged as being surrounded by a river of theories, the framework emerges through which the dynamics of the current reality can be examined. From the crystallized findings, recommendations for a Melanesian-based system of QA in HE can then be derived.
In trying to understand the nature of QA for FODE in PNG, the chosen theories are appreciated and engaged to aid one’s thinking. The Kaizen approach emphasises the culture of quality through incremental steps toward improvement, coupled by the open-systems theory of FODE/L as a system of education that is based on the principles of open-ness, flexibility and ongoing interactions with the environment. The Kaizen tool is used for planning toward QA thinking. Similarly, the self-determination theory opens the concepts of the self-efficacy and autonomy of individuals, institutions and National ideals. Whilst the Kaizen and self-determination concepts are necessary lenses to view QA in FODE/L, the chaos-complexity theory offers tools to analyse the complexities that FODE/L faces in contemporary HE. The chaos-complexity theory can help harness the dimensions of chaos and ‘ripples of consequences’ in relation to FODE/L processes and activities. Complementary to all that, open-systems theory helps adapt the sensemaking aspects of openness to systems thinking in an environment of flexibility of learning opportunities and openness of access to HE. Thus, the multi-dimensional and theoretical foci in this research facilitate opportunities for a myriad of theoretical (and practical) perspectives for QA in FODE/L.

As stated earlier, the word ‘kaizen’ is a Japanese term that means ‘change for better’. The Kaizen tool can be used to refer to any improvement, one-time or continuous, and is usually used in relation to manufacturing processes (Singh & Singh, 2015). Based on the concept of continuous improvement, the Kaizen approach to quality is applicable to individuals within teams, day-to-day consciousness and special events. Change emerges from the personal or individual level, and expands to groups or teams within an organisation or social unit for the betterment of the whole. Kaizen thinking and practices lead to positive quality enhancement. It is a
philosophical approach for organisational change in the 21st Century through individual, group and/or management-oriented incremental steps (Suárez-Barraza, Ramis-Pujol, & Dahlgaard-Park, 2013). Kaizen heralds the destruction of the roots of corruption through a process of steps to continual improvement. Incremental changes that improve quality are both sustainable and necessary to improve FODE in PNG. Kaizen has strong implications for the possibilities of educational opportunities in the future, such as Open University initiatives and OER integrations.

Open systems theory is located within the framework of systems thinking and sensemaking within organisations where quality assurance is explored, so it is applicable to management and processes within FODE/L departments. Atkins and Wallace (2012) highlight the need for researcher impartiality and ‘the ability to step back and look at a situation differently’ from a systems approach. This act of ‘stepping back’ brings to the surface the idea of being open and conscious of reflecting on authentic realities. Open systems theory refutes ‘the law of entropy’ (Luhmann, 2013, pg., 28) that supports a closed system into which nothing can be introduced from the outside and from the inside nothing can be removed. In contrast, an open systems theory suggests why entropy does not occur and why order is created instead. Luhmann (2013) further elaborates that openness means an exchange with the environment taking place akin to natural biological, organic, social, communication and psychic systems that allow an inflow and outflow of essentials in a process of critical consciousness. The open systems theory accounts for the exchange between systems and environments in a dynamic manner to benefit other systems. In the context of FODE/L, the ideal of an open system remains a challenge but through the continuing processes of consciousness and proactivity, quality-assured FODE/L can flourish.
The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a theory proposed by Deci and Ryan (2000) that underpins a motivational framework that is appropriate to FODE/L. Pertaining as a theory of intrinsic motivation (Hartnett, 2016), SDT offers a conceptual framework towards of self-determination, competence, relatedness and autonomy. In efforts to promote an awareness of a QA culture in FODE/L, the idea of self-determination leads to intrinsic and extrinsic forms of participant motivation (Schuwer et al., 2014). The habits of self-motivation and confidence in the pursuit of positive outcomes are attracted to conceptualisations of QA in FODE/L.

The chaos-complexity theory as discussed by Kayuni & Tambulasi (2011) applies also to the complexities found in FODE/L in PNG. According to Kayuni and Tambulasi, chaos “is not a threat to organisations or systems but it provokes a peculiar self-regulating mechanism that enhances the organisation/system’s existence and transformation, also known as thriving on the edge of chaos” (p.801). The chaos theory originates in the field of mathematics but helps explain the realities of FODE/L amidst the complexities that are educational settings in PNG. In a study of Instructional Design (ID) in ODL, Murphy (2011) advocates for open systems in emerging models of ID. Murphy posits that the mathematical concept of chaos as an attractor that enables creativity and change for continuous improvement. Chaos at one level of a system can have significant consequences or ‘butterfly ripple effects’ that can spread gently but uncontrollably throughout a system. In times of great uncertainty, complexity and controversy, situations of quality failure may seem chaotic initially but may potentially be orderly and bring about positive outcomes.

The Glonacal agency heuristic (Marginson and Rhoades, 2002), offers this research a paradigm to consider in QA discourses and practices for FODE/L in PNG’s context. Marginson and Rhoades highlighted three spaces when making contextual
senses of the influences in polices and practices from the global, national and local realities. In this research, QA is thought through a process of glonacal sensemaking. It means that whilst QA situational analysis is pursued, the triad spaces are always in perspective. The glonacal heuristic approach is used in this research to embrace the realities within the growing dimensions, of global to local dynamics of QA discourse, QA agencies, QA relationships and QA intentions. QA in HE for PNG FODE/L is offered justice when treated with analytical sensitivity from the global, national realities and relevant modern synergies.

The synthesising of these theories brings forth a creative line of thinking about current FODE/L approaches in PNG.

5.6 Research Design framework

This research employs a qualitative interpretive framework to evoke the phenomena of QA and present them for analysis and evaluation. According to Duchan (2014), when researchers use an interpretive framework, the “phenomena under study are regarded as complex, interdependent and necessarily subjective” (p.4). In the process of capturing the reality of participants within their relevant place of practice, each group of practitioners in the universities offering FODE/L establishes its presence through their voices portraying their work and experiences. The study is enhanced by the participation of FODE/L professionals in leadership roles such as the vice-chancellors, pro-vice chancellors and heads of FODE/L units in the colleges or departments, in addition to the FODE/L practitioners and students, thus contributing to the richness of the data obtained. There is a need for PNG FODE/L voices in the literature, as they are seldom evidenced. This research presents voices from three main FODE/L stakeholders: 1) student questionnaire responses; 2) discourses from FODE/L practitioners obtained through group interviews; and 3) voices of leaders
from the selected universities. The richness and variety of different peoples’ perceptions provides a bottom-up approach that evokes their different understandings of QA and also highlights the participants’ voices as a valued part of this research.

5.7 Research Design/Qualitative Research Strategy

Qualitative research includes studying situations, processes and people in their natural settings with efforts to derive sensemaking and insightful interpretations of the phenomena under study (Savenye, 2005, Creswell, 2007). This qualitative research project locates QA within a holistic perspective, thus generating deep insightful meanings from selected stakeholders’ comments and observations. This approach allows a diagnostic study of the lack of quality that the universities concerned in this study currently face. As an empowerment strategy, stakeholders’ voices are heard and valued. The theoretical and practical strategies that may emerge in the future may recognise this research as a baseline study that can be drawn upon.

5.8 Justification of the choice of research methods.

The methods for data collection in this study were: 1) interviews with selected individuals and focus group discussions; 2) an open-ended questionnaire for FODE/L students; and 3) QA document analysis from FODE/L universities and the HE sector. Whilst the research instruments that were chosen may seem too unwieldy to yield useful data, these methods allow for use of triangulation in the comparison of rich data (Yin, 2011) and afford a wide perspective on QA, in alignment with the aim of this research. In pursuit of the meaning and relevance of the collected data, different levels of data sets were sought to add value to this research.
Triangulation of Methods

**Figure 5.7: Triangulation of data on QA in HE for FODE/L in PNG universities**

In Figure 5.7, triangulation is utilised to help analyse different data sets from interviews, questionnaires and QA documents. The links between these data sources show the levels and connections of the different sets. Within these, there is further triangulation of the type of participants, such as leaders, practitioners and students of FODE/L institutions. The views of leaders are important due to their roles in the institutions of which the FODE/L practitioners and students are also part. Students are at the centre of any FODE/L university as they are the drivers of the efforts made by leaders and practitioners, as well as recipients of the services and programs offered in attempts to meet their demands for HE options.

Triangulation also involves the sources (participants) from which the data was collected. These data sources emphasise the contributions made by the leadership, practitioners and students via their voices, insights, experiences, perception and value of QA from their various spaces in their FODE/L environment. The process of triangulation from various aspects of this research permits alternative interpretations,
described by Yin (2011) as “rival explanations that compete and cannot co-exist.” (p.80). In alignment with Yin’s vein of thinking, this research continues to ask questions such as; what are the realities in QA activities and programs compared with how they appear? Are the responses from the participants honest? Are assumptions about quality in FODE/L in PNG universities grounded on reality?

5.9 Data collection: Overview of the specific methods used

Yin (2011) defines a case-study as ‘studies of phenomenon’, which become a case, in the real world context. Creswell (2007) further elaborates that qualitative case-studies are known from the size of the case within certain boundaries, which can be an individual, a group or an activity. This research aims to explore the issue of QA in the context of FODE/L as practised in certain universities in PNG, thus making it a case-study. As highlighted by Creswell, such an approach aligns to a qualitative approach that requires the researcher to explore an issue within

‘…a bounded system (case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g. observation, interviews, audio visual material, and documents and reports), reports a case description and case based themes’

(Creswell,207,p.73).

This case-study (QA in PNG universities offering FODE/L) is based on research conducted from 2012 –2016, with specific data collection in 2013. That collection was done within a period of 6 weeks and involved focus groups, individual interviews, distribution of questionnaires to students, and assembly of relevant QA documents obtained from the institutions under study.
Figure 5.8  Cases in PNG FODE/L

As this research project specifically investigates QA in the universities offering FODE/L programs, the case boundaries for the materials are the PNG universities in figure 5.8. These four mini-cases when combined supply the research for the main case.

5.10 Data Collection Techniques

Data collected from the four universities were obtained through individual interviews, focus group interviews, open-ended questionnaires and QA documents for analysis. The order of data collection methods is illustrated in figure 10. This research used an array of qualitative research methodologies to reveal the realities of QA in PNG’s FODE/L context. As a baseline study, cost limitations and the timing of the project were critical to the conduct of the research. Lessons learnt from this initial baseline research provide insight for future PNG-related studies.
5.10.1 Interview Data

Interviews served as a valuable source of data collection in bringing out the realities of people’s perception of how they ensure quality in their FODE/L outputs (if they do). Interview data link this research to the intended purpose of establishing an understanding into how quality is assured. Interview data were obtained from two sources. The first source of data was obtained from senior officers within the selected FODE/L universities. This group of participants were inclusively vice-chancellors or Pro-vice chancellors and heads of the FODE/L departments, centre or college. In two cases, where vice-chancellors were unavailable, they both nominated one of their pro-vice chancellors to be interviewed. These institutional leaders were individually interviewed in sessions of about an hour each. The other source consisted of group interviews of FODE/L practitioners in the selected universities. These focus group interviews were 1-1 ½ hours long. The individual interviews focused on how various senior management and policymakers aculturate, promote and foster QA. The focus group interviews, however, sought to discover how the implementers of QA policies comprehend and foster QA practices in their various roles as FODE/L practitioners.
5.10.2 Focus Group Interviews

As this research project locates itself in PNG, it is culturally relevant to the notion of social bonding and communal activities. The use of a focus group interview as a method to collect data is, therefore, highly productive, appropriate, relevant and engaging for the participants in a PNG context. Aspects of communal group discourse resonate with PNG’s notion of working collaboratively through oral discussions. The focus group interviews drew upon how people in their work settings express their reality through a group discussion of an issue that matters to them. They provided an opportunity for PNG FODE/L practitioners to share different, conflicting and complementary feelings about, and perceptions of QA within FODE/L as practised in their institution. Yin (2011) suggests that the groups are focused according to experience or are experts in certain fields, which, in this case, was FODE/L within certain institutions. The collection of data from focus groups provides insightful perspectives on QA from ODL practitioners in their own words.

5.10.3 Open-ended questionnaires

With permission from the FODE/L universities, the researcher used open-ended questionnaires to collect the perceptions of students, as stakeholders and participants, regarding the concepts of quality assurance in PNG. Its main purpose was to gauge the learners’ general perception on the quality essence of FODE/L activities, services and products offered to them. Prior to data collection, the open-ended questionnaire was piloted with a small sample of five (5) FODE/L students and was found to need minimum revisions. Its main purpose was to gauge the learners’ general perception of the quality essence of FODE/L activities, services and products offered to them. Limitations pertaining to the piloting of the questionnaire included identifying, recruiting, selecting and communicating with the potential student participants. This
was problematic due to the contextual nature of FODE/L whereby students were geographically dispersed, and there was limited access to communication for the learners. As such, the distribution of questionnaires was done through convenience sampling of the FODE/L students. For practical reasons, the samples were identified and selected because of the geographical proximity, easy accessibility and availability of the selected participants for the researcher. The responses to the questionnaire were acceptable in that the students were able to answer the questions asked without much difficulty. This meant that understanding the questions was not an issue as the students were able to provide answers to the question asked. The questionnaire thus was considered adequate to gauge FODE/L students’ perception of the quality and nature of QA relating to their experiences as learners. Considering that FODE/L learners are important and valuable stakeholders of PNG universities that currently offer programs and services in FODE/L, the questionnaire can be improved for future research studies into learners’ insights into the quality, and quality assurance of FODE/L products, services and experiences. A wider representation of the population and further testing of the questionnaire can be done in future studies to avoid any form of bias.

During data collection, the questionnaires were distributed to students to obtain their views about QA and their perception of quality in the products and services provided for them by their universities. The questionnaire used was open-ended. Open-ended questionnaires use convenience sampling (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016) thus, for this study, convenience sampling was applied due to the nature of PNG FODE/L students. This is further elaborated in section 5.11 of this thesis.
A staff member gave student questionnaires to the participants from each FODE/L unit/department. The principles of informed consent, voluntary participation and flexibility were invoked when students were invited to complete the questionnaire.

5.10.4 Documents for analysis

QA policy documents served as a discrete data set. These were collected from the participating universities for policy analysis. The process of requesting documents was challenging due to the sensitivity of the topic within FODE/L and HE in PNG. Yin (2011) sees analysis as a research process that can be used to analyse quality assurance policies, while Saarinen (2005), and Fairclough (2010) show how ‘critical discourse analysis’ was used to analyse documents related to QA towards the Bologna QA process in Europe. Anticipated challenges in using documents for data collection, involves searching, identifying, selecting, analysing and interpreting the documents. This research focuses on the analysis of policy documents, QA policies, accreditation documents, Academic Audit Guidelines or any related documents in FODE/L universities. Where document policies were found, ‘policy analysis’ (Atkins, 2012) was the approach taken for analysis.
5.11 Research participants and settings

This section contains the nature of sampling used in this research, which included human and non-human data sources. The selection of human data sources was confined to the institutions and targeted people involved in FODE/L in universities. Other data sources were provided by QA documents selected from the institutions (universities and OHE). The research participants were situated within their organisations where they were interviewed, while students contributed their views via questionnaires. All the participants in this study were volunteers. The first data source was purposely selected from the four universities that offer FODE/L. There were two interviewees each from the selected PNG universities as shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Research interviewees from the PNG FODE/L offering Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>FODE/L practitioner</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuta</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>University1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Acting Executive Dean</td>
<td>26/07/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otto</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>University2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Vice Chancellor of FODE offering university</td>
<td>02/08/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenny</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>University2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>31/07/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>University3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Pro- Vice Chancellor (academic)</td>
<td>07/08/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>University3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>08/08/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeal</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>University4</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>14/08/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonah</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>University4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Vice Chancellor</td>
<td>15/08/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virgil</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>University1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Pro-Vice Chancellor- (Planning)</td>
<td>16/08/13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The selection of these senior leaders from the PNG FODE/L universities is important as it provides evidence of their thinking, strategies, and plans for FODE/L enhancement amidst the challenging nature of its delivery and perceived position in the country. The success of a FODE/L program serves as a mirror of its leaders’ perceptions and support for the ideals of quality-focused FODE/L. In commencing the study, the initial preference was to interview the vice-chancellors and the heads of the FODE/L department or unit of the FODE/L University. However, in two situations,
the vice-chancellors nominated their pro-vice chancellors to participate in the interview, due to their own prior commitments.

The second group of participants included FODE/L practitioners from each institution in focus groups of 4-10 people. These participants were professionals, such as instructional designers, lecturers, content experts or course writers, QA officers, administration and student support officers, bursary staff and ICT staff. Interestingly, the focus groups’ composition was very diverse in terms of roles, responsibilities and status within each of the FODE/L units of the institutions.

![Focus Group Participants](image)

**Figure 5.11  Focus group participants according to various FODE/L roles**

With their permission the subjects for the interviews (executive officers) and the FODE/L practitioners were audiotaped during the interviews. FODE/L practitioners provided rich discourse of their experiences in their different roles within their various FODE/L settings. A total of 27 practitioners were selected from the four PNG universities. The enthusiasm was great whereby the participants willingly wanted to part of the research and were actively involved in the discussion. Please
refer to the Appendix 10 for more insights into the individuals from the four universities.

Open-ended questionnaires served as another source of data. These came from samples of ODL learners of the four universities. Given the importance of sourcing multiple data, an open-ended questionnaire was distributed to students in order to evince their views and experiences with FODE/L QA and their perception of quality. Ten questionnaires were distributed to each of the selected FODE/L offering universities. This made a total of 40 questionnaires, which were grouped into four different samples groups as per the universities. The response rate was encouraging. University1’s response was 90%, University2 was 10%, University3 was 50% and University4’s response rate was 100%. The rationale for these responses is that University1, University3 and University4 had students on campus for residential workshops and tutorial sessions when they were invited to participate. By contrast, University2 did not students in residence when the researcher was on site and the response was also reflective of other factors such as the demographic, availability, and accessibility of its learners. University2’s target audiences are rural-based teachers, and did not have organised workshops during the time of data collection by the researcher and were not easily accessible by the researcher. Students were not readily available on campus and thus it was impossible for the researcher to interact with them. Remaining questionnaires were left with the gatekeeper of University2 to be administered and returned to the researcher but did not happen.

Sampling was purposive, strategic and convenient. The purposive and strategic nature meant that the questionnaire was specifically for FODE/L learners of the selected FODE/L offering universities. The questionnaires were strategically given to gatekeepers of the selected universities when the researcher visited the
respective sites. Similarly, convenience sampling was used because of the nature of ODL whereby students are distance learners thus not always on campus. However, in PNG’s context of FODE/L, face-to-face tutorials or workshops are provided and so students still do visit their University Centres or campuses for scheduled face-to-face interaction. Aspects of convenience sampling inclusive of accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at the given time and the students’ willingness to participate (Etikan et al., 2016) fostered the choice of convenience sampling. Though likely to create bias, purposive, strategic and convenience sampling were appropriate for the collection of data from learners. The FODE/L learner participants’ insights are applicable to the research problem and remain a valuable source of data representing the student voice on QA.

This research gained strength from the triangulation of data where semi-structured interviews were conducted. This study resulted in the formation of some generalisations but also benefited from the richness of the thick data collected from this small-scale study of QA in HE/ FODE/L in PNG.

5.11.1 Nature of samples

This study used two non-probable sampling methods that served the intended aim of this study in obtaining rich sources information about QA in FODE/L from PNG universities. Purposive and convenience sampling methods were strategically used to explore the nature of QA in FODE/L offering universities. The convenience nature of these samples included accessibility, cost, and time saved in gathering rich discourse on quality and QA from the perspectives of FODE/L practitioners. The research population was homogenous as it included FODE/L stakeholders (FODE/L practitioners, senior leaders of FODE/L and students) within dual-mode universities in PNG. However, differences existed in the contextual representations of the various
FODE/L stakeholders. The stakeholders were different in their roles, responses, perceptions and insights on the phenomena of QA in their various roles, experiences, knowledge and institutional contexts. Purposive sampling was used to explore the nature of QA in FODE/L offering universities. Its purpose was to find “people who were willing to provide information by virtues of knowledge or experience” (Etikan et al., 2016, p.3). As highlighted by Etikan et al (2016), purposive sampling pertains to identification and selection of individuals or groups of individuals who are proficient, well informed with a phenomenon of interest, and available with willingness to participate. The selected participants had the ability to communicate their experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive and reflective manner. In this research, purposive sampling was essential and served the intended aim to obtain rich sources of information about QA in FODE/L from PNG universities.

The criteria used for the purposive and convenience sampling included the following conditions for the different data sets.

1. The selection of samples started with a purpose in the mind of the researcher. The researcher’s purpose was to explore the nature of QA in PNG’s FODE/L within the HE context. This meant that the selected participants were proficient, well informed about QA in PNG’s universities that offer FODE/L programs and services, were available, and had the willingness to participate.

2. The selected participants had the ability to communicate their experiences, knowledge and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner.

3. Participants and documents selected were of interest to the researcher’s aim and research questions.

4. Samples excluded participants and documents that did not relate to the researcher’s aim and research intention.
The purposive nature of the samples varied according to the different data sets. For the interviews, expert sampling was used. This meant that the samples consisted of experts in FODE/L who were purposively identified, invited and recruited as subjects. As highlighted by Etikan et al. (2016), expert sampling is a tool used to investigate new areas of research. Pertaining to this research, the engagement of PNG based FODE/L practitioners established the need for further study into the area of QA and other critical gaps in the PNG FODE/L arena.

For the interviews, those included were;

Senior officers within the University in the positions of Vice Chancellor and Deans of the FODE/L departments, colleges or centres. The number of participants from each university was two, i.e. the Vice Chancellor and the Dean of the FODE/L department.

The purposive selection of the participants for the focus groups included FODE/L practitioners in either academic roles or non-academic roles within the selected universities who were thus accessible to the researcher.

For the students’ open-ended questionnaires, the criteria used for the inclusion of the participants were;

1. The participants were FODE/L learners irrespective of gender, age and the programs that they were enrolled in.
2. Students were currently enrolled at the selected PNG universities.

Ten (10) questionnaires were given to the selected universities with flexibility to reproduce and give out to more interested students. The questionnaire was distributed to interested students who visited the main University centres of the selected universities. These criteria fostered the convenience and accessibility of those FODE/L officers who were responsible for the distribution of questionnaires and recruitment FODE/L student participants. Most of the questionnaires were completed.
and returned to the researcher during the researcher’s visits to the research sites. Only University4’s questionnaires were posted to the researcher’s postal address. The FODE/L learner participants’ insights were applicable to the research problem and remain a valuable source of data representing the student voice on QA.

QA documents were purposively selected to include only those relating to FODE/L and QA policies to be considered for policy analysis. Through convenience sampling, these QA documents were obtained during the data collection phase when the researcher was at the various research sites and via numerous email requests to both the universities and the PNG OHE.

Various FODE/L practitioners that were invited for the focus group interviews due to their roles and responsibilities. These included academic staff such as lectures and instructional designers as well as non-academics such as QA officers, student support staff, bursary staff, and admissions officers. Purposive sampling was used to invite only those who were engaged in FODE/L related duties. The student sample (refer to table 5.3) was derived from 40 questionnaires sent out to the four universities. Each of the universities was given 10 questionnaires to distribute to any 10 students who visited the campus. The response rate was 37/40 questionnaires returned. Due to the nature of FODE/L in PNG universities whereby students do visit the FODE/L units within the Universities, it was convenient to offer the questionnaires to students when they visited their various campuses. The senior management were all stakeholders within their various university contexts. Institutional QA cultures also varied from institution to institutions.

As per the research method for data collection, sample sizes varied in the different data sets. Voluntary participation was exercised right throughout the data collection process in recruitment of interviewees as well as in the requests for QA-
related documents. Meanwhile, the purposive sampling used served as the ideal sampling approach to this qualitative research with the aim of establishing the current status of QA in FODE/L, the obstacles that are faced with relation to quality and the possibility of using OERs to improve quality in FODE/L.

Table 5.3: Sample of Data Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Individual interviews</th>
<th>Questionnaires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any policy document on QA</td>
<td>FODE/L Practitioners from PNG Universities offering FODL -Senior FODE/L management officers- administration -Instructional designers Lecturer/content experts</td>
<td>Senior Management officers of Universities (VCs, Deans and Executive Directors) of FODE/L institution.</td>
<td>Students of FODE/L institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Four Universities</td>
<td>A focus group consisting of 6-8 people</td>
<td>2 individuals per institution, a total of 10 Executive Officers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Framing</td>
<td>Policies documents relating to QA</td>
<td>Policy makers (FODE/L institutions), Management teams of 4 PNG FODE/L offering institutions, Instructional designers and Lecturers and content experts.</td>
<td>Executives or Senior Management Officers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample type</td>
<td>Purposive sampling</td>
<td>Purposive sampling per institutions</td>
<td>Purposive sampling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data collected from this matrix pertained to the means and sample of the above pre-designed framing. The data sources collected from the research sites areas are illustrated Table 5.3.
Table 5.4: Data sources, quantity and description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Individual interviews</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused Group Interviews</td>
<td>4 focus groups with a total of 27 participants altogether.</td>
<td>4 focus group interviews of FODE/L practitioners from selected PNG universities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>Student Questionnaires</td>
<td>37/40 were received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Assurance Documents Collected from FODE/L institutions</td>
<td>10 were sought out of which 3 were purposely used.</td>
<td>Documents requested from institution inclusive of QA policies, Strategic plans, procedure manuals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The composition of the individual interviewees included eight senior officers from the selected universities. Of these eight officers, two were Vice Chancellors (VCs), two were Pro-VCs and four were deans or Heads of FODE/L departments in each of the selected universities. Out of eight interviewees, there was only one female officer who at the time of the interview was acting as head of her FODE/L department. Three of these senior officers were expatriates but all had vast professional experiences in PNG. Another insight pertaining to the cohort of interviewees include their status of their positions. At the time of the interview, 3 of the officers were in an acting capacity, two Pro-VCs were acting VCs whilst the only female in the cohort was acting Dean. There is gender imbalance in the representation of FODE/L leadership whereby female participation in leadership position still lags.
The focus groups varied from size to gender representations from the different universities. A total of twenty-seven (27) FODE/L practitioners voluntarily participated in the interview. Appendix 10 offers more insights into the gender representation of each of the focus groups. Eleven of the participants were females whilst 16 were males. All of the females were nationals, whilst out of the 16 males who participated, four were non-nationals. In University1 female representation was 20%, University2 was 50%, University3 was 33% and University4 had 71%. In terms of gender representation there was more female representation in University4 whilst University1 had the least representation of females. In terms of FODE/L roles, 16 of the focus group participants were academics whilst 11 were non-academic staff. By university, University1 had 50% representation of academics and 50% of non-academics. University2 had 50% academics and 50% non-academic representation, University3 had 67% academic and 33% non-academic representation and University4 had 57% academic and 43% non-academic representation. University3’s academic representation was all expatriate males whilst the female representation was non-academic PNG women.

In reference to student open-ended questionnaires, 39 questionnaires were returned. Two of the questionnaires were invalid in that they were not completed but returned as blank. From the 37 questionnaires received; University1 had student of 33% female representation, University2 had no female representation, and University3 had 40% and University4 70% female representation. University4 and University2 cohorts of students were mainly matured professional students. University1 and University3 students were mainly young school leavers enrolled as upgraders to upgrade their Grade 12 results with the hope of scoring the required GPA for university entry. In University1 33% were students enrolled in Diploma programs.
A limitation in the questionnaire was that it did not give the opportunity for students to specify their age group. This can be improved for future research.

5.12 Research and the data collection

Accessing the data sources was through an ongoing process of consultation and prior arrangement through emails via several access points. Prior to entering the research sites, the first protocol sought approval to research in PNG’s universities. Permission for access to the selected universities was made through to the Officer of Higher Education’s Director General. An approval was given (see appendix) and a copy of the approval was sent out to the universities. As a follow-up, the researcher communicated with the selected universities requesting permission, for clearance from the institutional gatekeepers. All the universities selected responded positively through the various offices of the Vice Chancellors Two universities referred the researcher to their respective Departments of Research to be given further institutional ethical clearance to conduct research in their universities. University 4 required a complete ethics application, despite the comprehensive Ethics clearance from the University of Sydney (see Appendix.3).

This research did involve several gatekeepers, namely:

1. Director General OHE: The Director General of the Office of PNG Higher Education gave approval which enabled the researcher to have access to the four PNG universities involved in FODE/L in PNG.

2. Vice Chancellors of the selected PNG universities who referred the researcher to their Research Office Deans or directly to the FODE/L units of their universities.

3. Contact person from each of the Universities FODE/L department. This person assisted the researcher in setting the interview times for the focus group
interviews as well as assisting to distribute student questionnaires to the FODE/L students.

Access to the research sites was all by plane from Sydney to Port Moresby, to Goroka, to Lae, then to Madang where all these universities were located. Communication remained a vital aspect of the research journey throughout the data collection phase. The length of time spent in doing interviews and collecting QA documents in the field was four to five weeks altogether. The researcher spent a week in each of the research sites; however, the student questionnaires were all received a month later. The time allocation for data collection was achieved as anticipated.

5.13 Approaches to data analysis

According to O'Tool and Beckett (2010), open methodologies are used in determining criteria for qualitative data analysis and thus were applied in this study. Open methodologies involve working with no predetermined criteria, which enables the researcher to work through the data to establish the emergent criteria from the data. This process involves the ongoing scrutiny of the data through ‘a process of intellectual classification, analysis and synthesis’ (O'Toole & Beckett, 2010,p.170) whilst being mindful of the research questions and sifting through the data sets in an ongoing process. The reality of being engaged and immersed with one’s data prevailed as a means for mining emerging themes, patterns and demystifying insights throughout. The following approaches were used to aid the data analysis.

First, thematic analysis was used as a ‘foundational method’ as a flexible approach (Braun & Clark, 2006) for this qualitative research. Thematic analysis is a qualitative methodology of analysing data. According to Braun and Clark (2006), its flexible, constructionist approach to data analysis offers the capacity to produce rich
data from embedded themes through a tactful conscious focus of identifying and analysing themes within the data. Thematic analysis posited appropriately for this research in establishing the nature of QA in FODE offering universities in PNG. The constructionist thematic analysis was used to unravel the sociocultural context and structural conditions upon which themes were derived from the in-depth, semi-structured interviews – forming a data set for this research.

Second, policy analysis was appropriated with the aim to diagnose, contextualise, evaluate and make sense of such QA policies that were in existence for the purpose of assuring FODE/L in the context of PNG. Harnessing the works of Ball (2006) and (Bacchi, 2009), PNG FODE/L QA policies in HE from universities were analysed from the perspective of scope, trajectory, meaning and the complexities under which QA policies are being treated. Sensitising and critically looking through PNG QA FODE/L policy documents enabled the researcher to gain insights through the approach of critically questioning QA policies (Bacchi, 2009; Ball, 2015 ). Policy analysis approach –‘what’s the Problem represented to be? (WPR) by Bacchi offers six (6) main questions: “What is the problem? What are the presumptions or assumptions of the problem? How has this representation of the problem come about? What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the problem be thought about differently? What effects are produced by this representation of the problem? How/Where is this representation of the problem produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?’(p.2). These policy analysis questions were used as a sensemaking approach to understanding the nature of QA in PNG FODE/L contexts.

Third, Abductive Analysis (AA) offered analysis to creatively identify the ‘surprises’ evident from this research. According to Tavory & Timmermans, (2014),
A focus on creative meaning-making in a process of data evolution and unfolding in practice. This means moving beyond the context of discovery and justification to creativity. It is a process from the data collection, through to data familiarisation in tasks of transcribing, note taking, memo writing and going through a de-familiarising of data to bring about new meanings and conceptualisations. As highlighted by Tavory and Timmermans, the process of abduction allows creative surprises through a de-familiarisation stage in simple interaction with the data.

Finally, in terms of software used in this qualitative research, NVivo is the software used to organised and classify data sets for in-depth interpretation and analysis. NVivo offers a variety of organisational and analytical tools to assist the qualitative researcher in managing, questioning, visualising and reporting the data (Bazeley, 2007). It is therefore valuable that such a tool for qualitative data analysis was harnessed for the methods used in this research. The NVivo software was used mainly to manage and code the individual interviews, the focus group interview data and the open-ended student questionnaires. The data that was coded using NVivo included 12 semi-structured interviews, four focus group interviews and 25 student questionnaires. Working with NVivo was also an exploratory task for the researcher that took much time and effort in entering data coding whilst thinking through the data. More discussions on the use of NVivo are presented in Section 6.3-6.5 of this thesis.

5.14 Ethical Consideration

This research embraced ethical considerations as a major aspect throughout the research. Ethics approval for this study was a requirement to foster trust, transparency, and confidentiality for the collection of reliable, relevant and usable data (O'Toole & Beckett, 2010). The ethics procedure was as follows. First, the
researcher sought approval for access to specific PNG universities, which are currently offering FODE/L opportunities (Refer to Appendix 1). This request was approved through the PNG OHE Office. Next, Human Ethics approval was sought prior to data collection through the Sydney University Research Unit. Upon approval from the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC), the researcher sent out letters (access requests) to the four PNG Vice Chancellors of the selected universities. The four universities permitted access upon consideration of the documents that the researcher provided. Those documents were:

1. PNG OHE Authority to access Universities,
2. University of Sydney Human Research Committee (HREC) ethics approval

An ethics approval application (refer to Appendix 3) process was also requested from one of the four selected universities.

With regards to attrition in participation, few issues surfaced. The first one was with the individual interviews where two vice-chancellors were not available due to other official duties. In both instances, Pro-Vice-chancellors were recruited to participate in place of their VCs. The second case of attrition involved one focus group, where initially there were 10 FODE/L practitioners who consented to participate. Two of the participants had to abandon the interview as they had other meetings to attend. This did not affect the focus group interview and representation of participants in the group nor the data from that university. In two separate universities, two focus group participants were invited based upon their qualifications and experience with FODE/L in various key roles but they did not participate for personal reasons.
All the participants consented to their participation and thus were given sufficient information about the research prior to their participation. The participants had the option to withdraw at anytime, which none of them did. Anonymity is a core element of this research and aliases were used in reference to people and, in some cases, to the institutions concerned. This research remains accountable to the University of Sydney Ethics Committee to provide annual progress report of ethical issues of this research. With regard to the research participants, who have requested to be informed of the research findings, efforts will be made to disseminate these findings in national conferences, seminars and publications in relevant journals.

5.15 Limitations and challenges

The limitations encountered in this research are numerous. They are inclusive of some bias from the researcher's perspective, duration of fieldwork, limitation in responses from student questionnaires, methods of data collection and literature on FODE/L in PNG. First, as a researcher working in a known professional space, the researcher needed to assume an outsider’s role to be a researcher in familiar professional contexts. As a researcher, one had an insider’s perspective into the FODE/L scenario in PNG as one had been an employee of one the universities as well as an executive to the PNG Association for Distance Education. With the interviews, the Hawthorn effect (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007) may have prevailed from the answers offered by the participants. Hawthorn effect In dealing with that, the limited time spent in the different universities enabled the researcher to maintain an outsider’s role.

Second, due to the high cost of travelling and living within PNG, this research was confined to limited time duration for data collection. Funding for the research was a known limitation thus activities were planned within budgetary constraints. If,
perhaps, funding for accommodation, travel and living expenses were readily available, a longer period of time may have been spent in the field. This was not possible as cost was a delimiting factor. The duration of the fieldwork was confined to four weeks in the field whereby the researcher spent a week each in the selected university. In the duration of a week, one focus group interview was conducted, two individual interviews were done and student questionnaires were distributed to students and collected. For future research, duration of fieldwork may be extended to include other stakeholders of QA in HE such as the OHE. Interviews with QA key personnel at the OHE were not possible given the limited time. Access to QA documents from the OHE was unavailable during the data collection period, which also posed a limitation to this research endeavour. The main reason is that QA documents were not easily accessible and revisions were currently done. The inclusion of the OHE may be considered in future QA HE research design and data collection.

An additional limitation in this research was encountered in students’ responses from the questionnaires. In terms of return rates, University3’s response was limited to only one questionnaire. As the questionnaires were left to the various gatekeepers in each of the universities, the researcher had no control over their administration. In University2, unlike Universities1, 3 and 4, the task of administering the questionnaire seemed like extra work for the gatekeeper. A motivational incentive may have encouraged participation from both the gatekeepers and the students but the researcher was cautious to avoid coercive (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007) tendencies and thus opted against offering compensatory gifts. With the linguistic constraints of some students, a limitation also prevailed wherein those students may have had difficulty in answering some of the questions asked. This was expected; with English
being their second or third language, a linguistic barrier does exist for most PNG FODE/L learners (Haihuie, 2011). Further to that, the limitation to a general understanding of QA by all stakeholders remains a challenge to be promoted for greater conceptual understanding.

Methods of data collection used had some limitations. In the focus group interviews, a limitation noted relates to the recruitment and composition of the participants. The intention was to seek FODE/L practitioners’ insights into QA. The four focus groups consisted of a mixture of academics and non-academic officers. Academic officers were lecturers, course writers, and instructional designers whilst non-academic staff included QA officers (if they were available), student administrative staff from student support, accounts and admission divisions. An obvious limitation encountered in most of the focus groups pertained to lack of confidence. Some of the non-academic staff did not speak out confidently in the presence of academic staff. As such, there was a sense of power intimidation, a factor that the researcher had not foreseen. More so, there was a sense of insecurity whereby participants were cautious in what they were saying for fear of being reported by other members of the focus groups to higher authorities within the university. Future researchers may opt to have separate focus groups specific to academics and non-academics. A research potential might investigate the power domain of academics and non-academics within the PNG FODE/L.

Availability of senior officers of the FODE/L offering universities, was a limitation of those interviews. Out of four universities, only two Vice Chancellors were available. The other two universities nominated the Pro Vice Chancellors to be interviewed instead. The inclusion of all four Vice Chancellors’ insights on QA for FODE/L for their universities would have been useful and thus future research may
have an awareness of this. With the student questionnaires, interviews with the students to cross check their responses could have been executed but was not due to time limitations. This may have been an oversight by the researcher but could be undertaken in future research.

Another confronting issue that was very pertinent from the researcher’s consciousness as a Papua New Guinean was safety. As a female researcher, precautions had to be taken due to law and order problems and the prevalence of anti-social and violent attitudes to females. One’s personal security remained a high priority and required being vigilant at all times. PNG is grappling with law and order problems, such as violence toward women in general, and there is poor security in both public and private places. The research sites were, in some instances, unpredictably unsafe environments for data collection. A further challenge for the researcher was conducting research amidst student unrest, riots and protests. Student unrest occurred in two of the public universities visited, with heavy police presence on campus at the time of the research. Neither of these incidents impacted the data collection process.

5.16 Conclusion

This research methodology chapter describes the vantage points considered with consistent reference to the research questions, the research aims and the value/significance that this research advocates. It is noteworthy that this chapter brings forth the underlying paradigms from the researcher’s personal ontology and epistemological thinking to the qualitative methodology within which Melanesian methodologies are integrated. The methodology chapter journeys through the research contexts where PNG participants within the universities offering FODE/L are represented and their valuable contributions to the data justify this research. Research methods, positions of participants, ethical issues and study limitations are the
elements of this Methodology chapter that were purposively presented to establish an understanding and appreciation of how the researcher’s thinking and underlying values relate to qualitative research paradigms and application. This chapter also provided an opportunity for the researcher to share her personal ontological attributes with an attempt to connect her research interest and the essence of her identity.

The next chapter of this thesis discusses the data analysis processes engaged in this research. It is a separate chapter that focuses on qualitative data analysis.
CHAPTER 6: QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

6.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the research methodology was presented. This chapter elaborates on the data analysis methods used and the treatment of data. Being qualitative in nature, the data collected was analysed using qualitative analysis strategies on the insights emerging within the data sets and also using a qualitative analysis software tool. Braun & Clark, (2006) discuss the processes of sense-making and describe the main analytical tool used in the triangulation of different data sets in different ways. This was complemented with the use of Abductive Analysis (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014) for emerging codes and themes. Abductive Analysis (AA) is neither inductive nor deductive but is an approach that seeks surprises and creativity within the data with the aim of discovering new theories and/or insights. Abduction refers to a creative inferential process aimed at producing new hypotheses and theories, based on unexpected research findings. In the process of data analysis, although the researcher accepts theory verification as a tool to aid thinking through the data, multiple theories were employed to aid the understanding of QA procedures as a phenomenon within the PNG context of this study. Although this study appreciates the ideals of AA for creativity, flexibility and surprises, it does not aim to develop a new hypothesis using the grounded theory perspective but looks for a QA framework that could be specifically relevant to the PNG context of FODE/L.
6.1 Data preparation and analysis

Qualitative data analysis uses different approaches, either through the application of pre-selected criteria or heightened sensitivity to emerging criteria or themes. The notion of emerging themes is attained through a process whereby the researcher actively seeks, refines and mines for themes in an iterative process of reflective interpretations to uncover underlying meanings. O’Toole and Beckett (2010) define criteria as those factors or aspects which form the basis of the analysis process such that one identifies, clarifies and groups the data appropriate to the research questions. This research included pre-selected criteria under each of the research questions as initial guides with the intention of maintaining a flexible attitude toward the emergence of added elements or criteria. It is useful to note that the initial criteria were renamed in some instances across the data in relation to newly emerged themes. The initial criteria were defined within the three main research questions as shown in Table.6.1 below.

**Table 6.1: Research questions and initial criteria**

Research Question 1: What is the nature of Quality Assurance in PNG’s Universities that provide Open and Distance Learning programs and Services?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Criteria</th>
<th>Sub Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaning, nature, purpose of Quality and Quality Assurance</td>
<td>• What is your definition of Quality?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How can you describe the nature of quality as a culture fostered in FODE/L in your institution or in FODE/L in PNG?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What does Quality Assurance mean to you personally as a leader of your institution?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What does QA mean to your FODE/L institution?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What is the purpose of QA in your institution?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Assurance Culture</td>
<td>• How does your institution <strong>foster QA culture</strong> in your FODE/L activities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Assurance Regulatory Framework</td>
<td>• Describe <strong>the systems or procedures of QA</strong> that guide your QA activities in your FODE/L institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If you were to describe the stages of QA in your</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FODE/L initiatives, what stage would you say your institution was at from an *embryonic, evolving and matured FODE/L QA stage*? And why?

- How do you assure quality in your FODE/L activities from your university?
- How would you describe the nature of QA of FODE/L in your institution?
- What is the *significance of QA for FODE/L in your institution* and for PNG as a whole?
- Explain how you as a leader advocate for QA in your organisation and especially for FODE/L.
- What incentives should the government give to institutions that are proactive in their efforts to QA for FODE/L?

Research Question 2: What are the major obstacles facing Universities offering FODE/L in their attempt to ensure quality standards and practices in PNG?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Criteria</th>
<th>Sub Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major challenges for QA</td>
<td>What are the major challenges for QA in your FODE/L institution?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main sources of factors or obstacles</td>
<td>What do you see as the main source or factors of these obstacles?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means to address challenges</td>
<td>What means can you suggest for improving or addressing the challenges?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 3: To what extent do the existing institutional quality assurance guidelines, process and support meet the demands of Open Educational Resource users in FODE/L?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial criteria</th>
<th>Sub Question guides</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation to OER</td>
<td>• What does the term <em>OER mean</em> to you as a leader of FODE/L in your institution?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What are the <em>advantages and disadvantages of OER</em> in education?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What are the <em>opportunities and challenges</em> that OER creates?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How can PNG FODE/L-offering universities <em>effectively harness the use of OER</em> in their learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Explain if <em>OER has potential</em> in PNG’s FODE/L or not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How can FODE/L offering institutions <em>embrace OER</em> in their FODE/L learning programs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA and OER</td>
<td>Support and Capacity Building of OER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do we need OER in PNG’s FODE/L?</td>
<td>How can OER be quality assured in PNG’s context?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can OER be quality assured in PNG’s context?</td>
<td>What QA policies are in place to support the use of OER?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What QA policies are in place to support the use of OER?</td>
<td>Explain in detail the specific QA guidelines currently in place for OER integration in FODEL in PNG.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain in detail the specific QA guidelines currently in place for OER integration in FODEL in PNG.</td>
<td>What considerations should policy makers recommend in the development of criteria for assessing the effectiveness of OER integration into institutional practices?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What considerations should policy makers recommend in the development of criteria for assessing the effectiveness of OER integration into institutional practices?</td>
<td>To what extent does existing QA processes support the demand of OER in PNG’s educational context?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does existing QA processes support the demand of OER in PNG’s educational context?</td>
<td>What are the challenges of sustaining a culture of quality for OER in PNG’s FODEL/contexts?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
number of data collection methods, the triangulation of the different data sets was used to gauge the various insights into the nature of QA for FODE/L in PNG universities.

**Figure 6.1: Triangulated Data sets**

There were four data sets subjected to triangulation. Three consisted of human data, namely focus group interviews, individual interviews and student questionnaires. Those data sets were complemented by QA policy documents, classified as a non-human data set. The QA policy documents provided the understanding of the existing QA policies, their existence, rationale and how they contribute (or not) to QA for FODE/L in PNG universities.

The QA policy documents selected for analysis are examples of natural data according to Silverman (2014, p.316) who suggests, “naturally-occurring data are derived independently and can include observations or analyses of written texts, audiotapes or visual images”. The importance of the QA policy documents was that they enabled the researcher to compare the practices described by the human sources with the written policy guidelines. In essence, the combination of data from the interview data (focus groups and semi-structured) plus the student questionnaires with the natural data from the QA policies added welcome value to the different data sets.
6.2 Data handling process

From the raw data collection stage and throughout all phases of this research, safekeeping of the data remains ethically important. This means being sensitive to the declared ethical guidelines by which this study was conducted and adhering to them at all times. Prior to data collection in the selected sites in PNG, the researcher was already analysing the different research sites by way of establishing rapport with the research participants, the protocols and logistics for access into the different sites. This included research into the practices of QA in FODE/L programs, their delivery, and provision of services. This effort was not to generate any personal biases from one’s perspective but to be versed with and connected to the research sites, the institutional cultures, and the myriad of academics and other staff in the current FODE/L systems. The data analysis prior to the actual data collection began with a conceptualised phase, continued through the choice of, and connection to, the research sites (selected PNG universities), then to the actual data collection and emersion phase, and finished with an exit phase whereby the researcher left the research site. Figure 6.2 shows the actual process of data treatment from the collection of raw data through to the process of establishing the themes from the data.
The process of searching for insights into QA in FODE/L universities was an iterative process of construction/familiarisation and then deconstruction/de-familiarisation, which started prior to the data collection stage.

**6.2.1 Familiarisation of the Data Sets during and after data collection phase**

The process of data analysis involves five phases from compiling a database, to disassembling, reassembling, interpreting and finally drawing conclusions on the data (Yin, 2011). Whilst a researcher may want to stay as close to the data as possible, the data analysis phase is one of assembling, dis-assemblying, reassembling and thus is an iterative and ongoing process that can be both time-consuming and challenging.
Figure 6.3  

Stages of Data Analysis adapted from Yin (2011,p.178)

Through the process of data analysis, the tendency to go in and out of the data sets persisted, as assembly and fragmentation paved the way for the emergence of themes and making valuable findings. This was done through continued efforts to refine the emerging themes in the different data sets. The whole process eventually integrated the data sets under the different emerged themes. Continual reference to the research questions assisted to identify what had surfaced in meaning, and the patterned line of discourse. In the initial stages of the data analysis, the researcher engaged in the process of getting to know the data. During and after the data collection phase, the researcher remained as close to the data as possible. This was done through a process of listening to the audio recordings of the interviews, reading and annotating the student questionnaires, scanning through the QA documents and transcribing the interview data sets. Therefore, the interview data was personally transcribed in a bid for the researcher to stay connected and engaged with the research participants. Braun and Clark (2006) identified six phases of thematic analysis used to harness the potential and benefit of such an approach. The use of thematic analysis
fosters flexible approaches and thus is a handy analysis tool for a novice qualitative researcher to use. Table 6.2 shows the six phases of thematic analysis used as a guide into the immersion and interaction with the different data sets.

**Table 6.2: Thematic phases of analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006, p.87)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Description of the process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:</td>
<td>Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Generating initial codes:</td>
<td>Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Searching for themes:</td>
<td>Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reviewing themes:</td>
<td>Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Defining and naming themes:</td>
<td>Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Producing the report:</td>
<td>The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is in the researcher’s best interest to remain engaged with the data sets for deeper appreciation and ownership of the emerging meanings from the data, especially with the intention of going through a process of data mining. Table 6.3 further illustrate data sources, the number of transcripts and documents mined, and data treatment that each of these data sets underwent.
Table 6.3: The data sets, quantity and treatment for each

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source/sets</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Interviews (semi-structured)</td>
<td>8 transcripts of Semi-Structured Interviews of Senior Executive Management officers from FODE/L universities</td>
<td>Thematic coding through manual and Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Focus Group interviews</td>
<td>4 Focus Groups of FODE/L Practitioners</td>
<td>Thematic coding through manual and CAQDAS analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Student Questionnaires</td>
<td>39 transcripts</td>
<td>Thematic coding through manual and CAQDAS analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Divine Word University QA statement  
4. DWU Teaching and Learning Plan | Policy analysis (J. Ball, S, 2006)- What is the Problem represented to be? (Bacchi, 2009) |

6.2.2 Interview data sets: Focus groups and individual semi-structured interviews

Data analyses of the interview data sets, being the focus groups and semi-structured interviews, were treated similarly. Steps 1-5 were adapted from Nockles (2009) for focus group data treatment. After the transcribing stage, the researcher approached the interview data in the following manner:

Step 1: Reading through the transcripts to verify the transcripts for accuracy. In this stage there was no effort to make meaning.

Step 2: Reading through each script to isolate specific statements and phrases to point to an aspect that was revealing about the experience, moments of experience, highlighted to generate themes.
Step 3: Reading the transcripts more closely and creating a column to place the initial meaning of identified themes in close proximity to the research questions.

Step 4: Refining and thinking through emerged themes for further interpretation.

Step 5: Combining the different refined themes and classifying them into different categories.

Step 6: Reflective writing was done to capture one’s thinking and ideas about the emerged themes.

Hennink (2007) notes that the process of moving through the raw interview data to evidence-based interpretations using focus groups can be an overwhelming task with so much textual data. However, there is much more value in focus group data derived from the discussions of situated groups of people compared with interview data from individuals. The analysis of the focus group data occurred within an ongoing process of going backwards and forward through the data with continuing reflections in alignment with reflective memo writing about the data in focus. Informal processes of analysis of the focus group data as highlighted by occur during the collection stage, whilst the formal processes occur when data from the transcripts phase is compiled and analysed. In this research, the data preparation revolved in a spiral manner with instances of lessons learnt from the initial focus group data collection applied to improve the processes of the search.

The process of data preparation of the focus groups and the semi-structured interview data involved transcribing the discussions, editing, cleaning, re-editing, and labelling while also maintaining the anonymity of participants within the data. Verbatim transcripts of the transcribed interview data were kept. A verbatim
transcript is needed for data analysis because it presents the exact words spoken by participants, including colloquialisms and the style(s) they used during the discussion (Hennink, 2007). This was extremely important as it captured the feelings, emphasis and perspectives expressed by the participants. For example, there were often times when the interviewees, being multilingual and knowing that the researcher was n, switched from English to Tok Pisin, another of PNG’s national languages. In essence, the verbatim transcripts contain the richness and quality of each group’s conversational discussions with the researcher. The detailed transcription of the focus group data included the researcher’s comments as well as those of the participants. Different categories emerged from the data of the four focus groups. Using eight different categories, the following themes emerged:

- Leadership and management,
- Policy deficiency realities,
- Innovation, creativity through research,
- Institutional competency and capability,
- Relevant literacy scale-up, the virtues of an enterprising QA approach for FODE/L,
- Sustainable FODE/L practice and Social Security.

Social security included the realities in which FODE/L exists in PNG within the wider social problems of law and order, which can be threatening when lack of quality prevails.

In reference to the interviews of senior management officers from the selected universities, the assumption was made that those officers would be well versed with goals, vision and strategic plans for FODE/L within their universities. They were considered as a valuable group of participants based on their knowledge and ideals of
QA for their FODE/L programs and services. A number of themes emerged from eight (8) semi-structured interviews with two (2) Vice Chancellors, two (2) Pro-Vice Chancellors and four (4) Deans of FODE/L units within the selected universities. FODE/L issues highlighted were:

- Evolving perception of QA as an organisational culture,
- Lack of national evaluation,
- QA policy guideline deficiencies,
- Ethics, moral values and conscience,
- FODE/L’s security and acceptance,
- Glo-calisation,
- Open University concept through autonomy,
- Systemic change and innovation for PNG FODE/L, and a
- Sustainability agenda.

6.2.3 Student Questionnaires analysis process

The student open-ended questionnaires were grouped initially in relation to the various institutions. From that phase, they were further grouped into different themes according to the initial criteria within the questionnaires. Through the process of critical reflective analysis and interpretation, the responses were then aligned with the emerged themes that constituted the initial findings pertaining to the student questionnaires. First, linked to research question one, four (4) main themes emerged: QA practice, perception, frameworks and policies. Second, under research question 2, the themes were: lack of resources, competency and academic qualifications, inconsistent student support, monitoring and evaluation, and lack of QA culture. Third, the research question on OER QA guidelines resulted in themes like: lack of
QA guidelines for OER in FODE/L, the need for quality OER integration and the lack of OER realisation as a means to improve quality in learning resources.

In summary, the themes that emerged from the student questionnaires were in the area of QA practice:

- QA policy frameworks,
- Leadership and management,
- Students silenced voices.

From both manual and CAQDAS coding, and data analysis through the use of NVivo, evidence of similarities as well as differences appeared through these themes.

### 6.2.4 Policy Document analysis

Following the purposeful collection of QA policies, these were treated under the analysis procedure espoused by Bacchi (2009), who asks ‘what is the problem represented to be? (WPR).’ This policy analysis question was complemented with a trajectory analysis as suggested in Ball (1998, 2015) in making sense of the origins of the QA policies that are currently in place. Bacchi’s ‘What’s The Problem represented to be?’ (WTP) approach (2009) involves six questions for policy analysis, which are:

1. What is the problem represented to be in a specific policy?
2. What presuppositions of assumption underlie this representation of the problem?
3. How has this representation of the problem come about?
4. What is left unproblematic in this representation? Where are the silences? Can the problem be thought differently?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?
6. How/where has this representation of the problem been produced, disseminated and defended? How could the questions be disrupted and replaced? (p.2)

The process of policy analysis using Bacchi’s WTP approach was done through a matrix whereby the selected documents were analysed within the lens of the six questions above and critically reflected upon through further interpretation with respect to the emerged themes.

6.3 Re-assembling, dis-assembling and re-assembling of data

After the data was individually analysed within the different data sets, it was brought together for triangulation. Through the use of thematic analysis, combined themes from the different data sets were established. In manual data approach analysis, the emergent themes were combined and then categorised under the different labels or categories. Within the NVivo project for this study, the emerged themes from each of the data sets were combined into a folder titled ‘combined themes for further categorisation and labelling’. The CAQDAS approach of data analysis was done through the use of NVivo software, which is beneficial and purposeful, based on its capabilities and relevance to the work at hand. NVivo data analysis was used mainly for the interview data sets and the student questionnaires. Similar to the manual treatment of data, NVivo was used to store and organise data, through the setting up of this research, titled ‘QA for PNG FODE/L’ project. NVivo was also used for creating documents through the process of memo-writing, creating annotations, coding, searching, structuring categories (Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2004), and linking analytical memos to nodes. The software has the potential for many other data transforming activities, which were not pursued due to the researcher’s novice use of NVivo. Nevertheless, such software is highly
recommended for qualitative data analysis in areas where manual approaches are less useful, such as searching for nodes, memos and annotation within a mass of data and keeping an electronic audit trail of data analysis. Critics of NVivo state that it "transforms data into rigid automated analysis of text" (Bringer et al., 2004). Whatever the negative stances are for NVivo, researchers know that interpretation remains a human activity that the software does not do. This means that, although NVivo is a computer tool embedded with facilities to analyse data, the researcher still has the option of choosing and using the tools that are necessary for their research. According to Bringer et al (2004), CAQDAS in NVivo has the potential to enhance rigour, hence aiding systemic analysis through human interpretations.

6.4 Annotation and analytic memo-writing

Reflective analytical writing was done throughout the research process through different means such as journaling, annotation and memo writing. All these reflective writing activities were done in Word documents and in the NVivo project titled PNG QA for FODE/L. Annotations are useful for keeping words or phrases with analytical ideas based on selected texts, from raw data, and a memo is a separate document that is created to capture comments about the data which can then be linked with ideas or coded texts (Bazeley, 2007; Markauskaite, 2015). Data annotation was completed in the familiarisation stage when the researcher engaged in labelling and initial analysis of the transcribed interview data, the student questionnaires and the selected policy documents.

Though memo writing is commonly used for data analysis within the grounded theory approach, it is also applicable to other qualitative applications (Silverman, 2014). The process of memo writing during the data analysis phase of coding was useful to allow progressive analysis throughout the research. One of the
ways in which it became very handy was with the refining and iterative nature of the directions that surfaced through constant reflection and critical analysis of the different codes under each of the categories. The memos were kept both as critical reflections for manual data analysis and also when using the NVivo software. The memos were then aligned with the different categories to aid critical thinking and compilation of results towards the discussion chapter of this thesis.

6.5 Coding and thematising of data

Coding was selected as a means for analysing the qualitative data in this research. Manual coding was used in conjunction with NVivo coding throughout after further practice with NVivo allowed familiarity with its ability to code and organise the collected data. The justification for using both manual coding and computer software was to check if there were many differences between both methods and to become familiar with both approaches for data analysis, appreciation and sensemaking.

A code can be a word or short phrase that represents an attribute for parts of spoken language, text-based or visual data. Coding is not just an act of labelling the various parts of the data nor a one-off process, but an ongoing cyclical process. Coding can be a process of discovery, a problem-solving technique, or for demonstrating the links between data and ideas (Saldaña, 2013). Coding can take place in different stages of data comparison as further highlighted by Saldaña (p.58) “from data to data, data to code, code to code, code to category, category to category and category back to data”. There are two main coding cycles that can be used, the first being cycle-coding methods for simple classification and naming of themes. The second cycle is focused on analytical skills used to classify, prioritise, build theory, and examines meta coding for pattern and underlying themes. The data can be
inclusive of interviews, documents, images, video, blogs, memos and many more but, in this research, the data sets were semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, student open-ended questionnaires and documents.

With the semi-structured interviews and focus groups, the process began with listening to the audio recordings of the interactions and making initial reflective notes on what had been recorded. The process continued with transcribing the data manually and then developing thematic coding. The individual semi-structured interviews and group interviews were listened to for the purpose of establishing the quality and fulfilling one’s curiosity of what the content covered. This process was very exciting to listen to, as already some level of judgement existed about the participants and their conversations that the researcher formed while the interviews were being conducted. As an exploratory research technique, the use of semi-structured interviews for exploring the perceptions and thinking of senior management officers within the PNG universities was considered appropriate.

Similarly, the focus group is a useful qualitative approach that was purposely aimed at inclusiveness of relevant FODE/L stakeholders. Within the requirements of the study, participants were predetermined through a purposive survey of practitioners working within a FODE/L college, centre, or department. These chosen group members were inclusive of both academic and non-academic staff such as lecturers, facilitators, tutors, instructional designers, course writers, QA officers, student support staff, audio-visual designers, IT staff and bursary officers.

6.4.1 Data-Mining Process

Data mining involves the constant going back and forth through the data to locate the ‘gold nuggets’ or most valuable items in the data. Gold nuggets can rise to the surface of the data through a process of continually sifting through the raw data.
(‘raw’ meaning the data originally collected) until reaching the stage of initial interpretation. With further reflections and thoughts, the initial interpretations are refined until aspects leading to new insights emerge. After that gold nugget is identified, it is then critically analysed until it can be classified in a refined state. Data mining has been used in HE research (Luan, 2002) and serves as a tool for data analysis via sophisticated software applications. In this research, data mining was used to search for meaning through an iterative process of meaning making and interpretation. Lang and Baehr (2012) note that data mining applied to textual data can produce exploratory, descriptive and even predictive tendencies, which support the constant interplay to and from the research questions and the data sets.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the data analysis phases of this research project and provided insight into how the collected data sets were compiled, assembled, disassembled, reassembled, interpreted and then given conclusion. The data analysis trajectory did not permit a linear approach but one that consisted of going forward, coming backward, going up, coming down and then arriving at some analytical thinking. These activities led to the ability to draw conclusions following the synthesising of emerged themes and ideas.

The next chapter focuses on the results/research findings and discussions with an overview of research implications.
CHAPTER 7: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

7.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, different approaches were used to identify the key findings that emerged in this study. This chapter reports on the findings from the coded data narratives obtained in interviews and focus groups, student questionnaires and QA policy documents. It also provides discussions of the results and implications for QA in PNG’s FODE/L. The chapter, like the previous chapters, aligns with the significance of the three main research questions. First, what is the nature of QA in PNG universities that provide FODE/L programs and services? Second, what are the major obstacles facing FODE/L universities in their attempts to ensure quality standards and practices in PNG? Third, to what extent, do the existing institutional QA guidelines, processes and support meet the demands of users of OER in FODE/L? These research questions uncover the systems that could help build the culture of continuous quality improvement in PNG FODE/L universities. This chapter presents the key findings and discussions from the different data sets based on the research questions. By using the research questions as the basis, the findings from the different data sets are clustered together. The findings from the policy analysis of selected QA policy documents is also presented. That is followed by the description of the different datasets. An integrated focus on the findings is presented in the last part of this chapter whereby meanings and the significance of this research are discussed.

Quality Indicators

The findings from this study reveal four main areas of quality discourse. These areas are practice, policy, leadership and sustainability of QA for FODE/L in PNG.
These four quality discourses are embedded within a number of quality indicators to assess the status of QA for PNG FODE/L. The quality indicators pursued in this study include:

1. Total QA systemic approach that is inclusive of products, processes, production, delivery systems and philosophy (Belawati & Zuhari, 2007) of PNG FODE/L. This indicator is inclusive of institutional QA nature, culture, meaning and contextual PNG realities.

2. Development of a Sustainable QA Policy Framework to pursue the quality outcomes of PNG FODE/L in the HE space. This QA policy framework offers guidelines at national, institutional and individual levels to assure quality outcomes.

3. QA Implementation with continuous Evaluation or Improvement.
   This quality indicator is inclusive with QA good practices of academic and institutional audits, capacity building and monitoring and evaluations of implementation based on QA guides, manuals and toolkits.

4. QA leadership and management for FODE/L to champion change for an improved FODE/L with sustainable innovative approaches. This indicator aligns to research question 3 for OER integration in PNG.

5. Melanesian Cultural QA indicators to foster indigenous norms, practices and values into contemporary FODE/L outcomes.

According to Fesser (2009), the essence of something is what makes a thing known as the sort of thing it is. Hence, the essence of QA in the context of PNG’s HE FODE/L, brings forth knowledge of what ideally constitutes QA processes.
7.1 Findings linking to Research Question 1

The findings in this section are integrated from the three different data sets based on the responses from the research participants. The findings are clustered under the five (5) quality indicators from the interview questions, and the student questionnaires.

Research question 1: What is the nature of QA in PNG’s Universities that provide Open and Distance Learning programs and Services?

This research question had sub-questions. These included the systemic nature, meaning and culture of quality and QA, QA regulatory frameworks and a probe into what was missing for QA in FODE/L’s institutional contexts.

7.1.1 Quality Indicator 1: Systemic Change and innovations for PNG FODE/L

An emergent aspiration for FODE/L expressed by leaders of PNG universities relates to systemic change and innovation. Lee, a pro-vice-chancellor, sees QA as a systems-based approach.

*A system is defined as something having terms of input, process and output.*

(Lee)

From Lee's perception of QA, he embraces the notion of university as a system, where inputs include the programs, curriculum/syllabus, educational resources and teaching staff whilst system outputs are the university graduates.

*Our inputs include the curriculum, the students, teaching and the educational resources, adequate resources. We define the outputs in terms of the attributes of the students after they finish the process* (Lee)

Similarly, Virgil comments on the importance of quality in a dual mode university system. He highlights that quality is an inclusive responsibility. Virgil, a Pro-Vice-Chancellor in one of the FODE/L universities, made the following remarks when
affirming QA becoming an institutional reality. Virgil is one of the longest serving senior officers interviewed. He has wide experiences as an academic, institutional leader and an advocator of FODE/L in University1.

Quality in an ODL system of learning requires good effective learning materials that are delivered on time. In University1, quality must be everybody’s business to bother about everyone in the system so that students’ learning is adequately addressed (Virgil)

**Nature of Quality and QA**

Virgil describes how the nature of QA becomes a reality in his dual mode university.

There will be a unit, academic, financial and the system audit. So, that function is now being taken up seriously. It is basically a management tool to identify those things quickly and address it and think of the system (Virgil).

An Audit unit has been activated since its approval. A QA Director currently performs responsibilities and functions for institution-wide quality initiatives. Though a positive evidence of QA presence, the above statement reveals delays in implementation as an underlying tendency. Quality Audit unit establishment, according to Virgil, serves as a management tool to identify issues and inform management. A proactive, established QA system safeguards the university. This is a positive initiative for the university. Even so, FODE/L QA remains a hindsight consideration.

Professor2 from University3, stresses the nature of quality and competency of students who are currently enrolling into FODE/L programs. Professor2 is the Head of a Department and a FODE/L course writer in his university.

...the quality of the students, if (sic) student is not very good (Professor2)
University2 has a newly established FODE/L department compared to other three universities in this study. The participants discuss the nature of quality in FODE/L through its developmental stages from its embryonic state to maturity. The following is a remark on the various QA stages. Gail is an instructional designer in University2 describes quality from the embryonic stage to the matured stage in the areas of documentation and in the practice of quality.

*In terms of documentation it is still in the embryonic stage but when it comes to practices we are over the 3, above 3, because our books when lecturers come and see them, they want use them for their on campus teaching, even they want to use our own assessment as well and our own criteria.* (Gail)

Morris who is a lecturer and course writer expresses his understanding of quality as he states that,

*My understanding of quality is to make sure that the materials that you produce and the units that you have put together to formulate a booklet is of high standard and of good quality. Quality meaning, it is at the international standard. And this booklet that you give to students, must measure up to that benchmark, that standard that we are talking about. That is my understanding of quality.* (Morris)

Betty is University2’s newly appointed QA officer. Being passionate about QA, her definition is about the different perspectives of a system-wide assessment process for customer satisfaction, and the management of market demands for continuous improvement. She links quality to international standards as a reference point or benchmark.

*QA is a self-assessment process. I would see QA in terms of how we as an institution . . . looking at ODL-looking at the system and seeing what ways
are you producing an outcome or producing your service, that suits your students. Not just your students but I guess the market demand as well. That is how I see it – looking at the systems for continuous improvement (Betty)

From University3, the discussion of quality reveals a picture of quality messiness within a fragmented system with so much rhetoric amidst quality dilemmas. There is an urgent need for focused attention on the realities thus produced. In contrast, quality in University4 aligns with the National OHE’s QA and Accreditation guidelines.

**Meaning of quality and QA**

Focus group participants were asked to explain what *quality* in FODE/L, means to them as practitioners? Hence, the meaning of quality and QA included themes such as appreciation, purposefulness, meeting market demand, inclusiveness, excellence and authentic learning. Some FODE/L practitioners offered insight into how they perceived quality FODE/L. Their perceptions relate to the abstract nature of quality, its idealistic view, systems view and practical realisations from institutional, national, regional and international perspectives. Quality is defined as meeting people’s expectations, timely services, appropriate provision of FODE/L products and services that reflect the current learners’ needs. The FODE/L system exists to serve learners’ aims and aspirations. The quality of FODE/L also links people’s values, appreciation, enjoyment and satisfaction of what is offered to them. Ali is a Centre Director and a course writer of FODE/L in University1. His remarks below reflect his perception of quality.

*My understanding of quality is that it has to meet the expectations of the people who are benefiting from the service and done in a timely fashion,*
as expected. That is what I believe of quality in distance education (Ali)

As stated, FODE/L stakeholders’ confidence and comfort are essential to foster enjoyment and engaging learning experiences. Quality attracts customers. Alluding to attractiveness, Valery -a young, female Instructional Designer, shares her ideals on quality in the excerpt below;

*I think, quality is about being presentable, in a way that it gets the message across… for our students, …what we produce is something that will attract them* (Valery)

Quality attracts clients through the presentation of learning resources and services, backed by the overall system of QA. Löfgren, Witell and Gustafsson (2011) suggest in the theory of attractiveness that quality processes foster customer appeal and satisfaction nurtured through a process of ongoing evaluations.

**QA insights**

Jonah is a VC, with QA contextual expertise in PNG HE. Jonah embraces QA passionately. He explains that there is no perfection to QA, innovations bring forth change and QA is evolutionary.

*Quality is something that is never perfect. We have to be open minded for improvement and we should never reach the level of complacency.* (Jonah)

Jonah explains his thought that there is no perfection in QA by referring to innovations or practices that bring about change. For example, new practices in teaching/learning may develop new dimensions such as e-learning (online) learning for FODE/L. Jonah also speculates about mindsets that management and FODE/L staff need to stay open to improvements consistent with belief systems about quality and best practice. He states further that QA should not reach any level of maturity. He
cautions that complacency creates a ‘status quo’ attitude that produces compromised quality outcomes. He acknowledges maturity but asserts that continuous improvement remains the essence of a QA culture. Jonah confirms that his University has matured in QA when he says that –

... and yes we have reached the level of maturity (Jonah)

QA as security is a definition that surfaced from students’ understanding of QA. One particular student explained that QA means security of learning.

*QA is security of learning (Student10)*

Another spoke of QA as a marker whereby QA serves to define progress or status quo.

*QA define the status quo and ranking of subject modules compared to international standards (Student11)*

Student11 thinks that QA can be used to determine the status quo or program rank. It also recognises the global presence within local realities and the possibility for alignment of local to international standards.

Student voices contribute in mapping out QA research discourse as “valuable partners, producers and change agents” (Seale, 2016). Their inclusion in any FODE/L QA research contributes offer valuable stakeholders’ insights. Under the emerged themes of Costs and Funding of QA, students highlighted the affordability of FODE/L and getting value for money from FODE/L delivery programs and services.

Furthermore, they suggested solutions for improvement in the area of governance and inclusive participation on quality issues for FODE/L. With students, the accessibility to educational resources is central to their appreciation of the value of FODE/L. Optimal learning environments earn the students’ satisfaction regarding their expectations of a FODE/L university.
Students from University4 expressed great satisfaction for QA as an institutional culture, although areas of improvement were also highlighted. The quality aspects of their learning are well managed and supported, for example, in the lectures given and the assignment marking. A critic, though, relates that academics try to condense too much of their content. The question asked was; how can you describe the nature of quality as a culture fostered in FODE/L in your institution or in other FODE/L programs or institutions in PNG?

*The units and materials are not studied in-depth. Lecturers condense units subjects to a point where theories/concepts/techniques are left out. No quality* (Student12)

The students reveal that academics sometimes condense much in their subject area. Students thirst for knowledge. Their learning materials are important. Where blended learning is practised, complementary and accessible learning resources are necessary for students. Students highlighted the need for ‘contemporary curriculum’, whereby course or program offerings are reflective of the realities that face society. Five areas of need emerged: 1) professionally-developed learning resources, 2) updated relevant curriculum through continuous improvement, 3) diversified programs and courses, 4) the flexibility of technology enhanced courses and programs and 5) quality ODL learners prerequisites and outcomes whereby learning meets learners’ needs.

Contemporary curriculum is an area that students highlighted. Contemporary realities embedded in the curriculum add value to students’ learning. This means sensemaking and keeping in touch with reality. Students expect professionally developed learning resources. Three statements below from different students relate to their appreciation of learning materials that are of good quality.

*Materials are of quality* (Student4)
Very good and quality materials (Student9)

Quality matters greatly. Materials presented must be of great quality value (Student10)

The fee-paying students want to see value in their learning materials. Student11 appreciates materials that are developed by competent professors or learned academics in the field. Learners aspire to see richness in their learning products.

The study materials have been organized by professors who make sure that things are very well understood (Student11)

Another quality attribute is having qualified teaching staff. As a challenge for FODE/L, both academics and students require sound academic skills and competence for effective learning occur. The following are some students’ insights into the qualifications, competence and capability of academic staff engaged in FODE/L facilitation.

Facilitators, lecturers and tutors must be subject matter experts. (Student4).

. . . mentoring with my experience starts on the 5th week of the semester. Not quality because some times there is no mentoring at all (Student5).

The process of assessment on feedback is very slow –sometimes no feedback at all (Student6).

Some try to cover a whole unit book per tutorial class. This is bad, at least they should allow 3 tutorial classes to cover one unit book. Otherwise all are skilled personnel (Student7).

These students’ remarks show that qualifications and competency in the facilitation of learning are important to students. Minaar (2013) states that FODE/L brings forth changes that require continuous up-skilling of staff. That ‘reskilling’ remains part of any QA initiative.
**Digital literacy skills**

Professor1 highlights the issue in reference to FODE/L students in his university in the statement below. His comment pertains to digital illiteracy in the context of the discussion and not about illiteracy in general. With reference to students’ digital illiteracy Professor1 said:

*They (students) are completely illiterate especially those coming from the remote villages of Papua New Guinea where they have not seen a laptop*

(Professor1)

Prerequisite digital literacy skills of learners are necessary for FODE/L learners. To make FODE/L an attractive option for learners, these skill-sets, plus other literacy skills, are vital for all PNG students, whether campus- or home-based.

**QA culture**

QA as a culture is yet to be a reality in the context of PNG FODE/L universities. Whilst QA is described in stages from embryonic to evolving and matured QA systems, Jonah sees it differently. Jonah is an experienced Vice Chancellor who is very passionate about the quality essence being emitted from his university. Jonah is very proactive in driving QA from his leadership position.

*QA is a culture which is never perfect. There is no perfect stage; there is no mature stage of QA* (Jonah)

Jonah sees QA as perpetually unfinished and ongoing. QA as a culture is lived, practised and proclaimed in words and actions. The culture of QA is neither perfect nor matured. In his line of thinking, QA is progressive, ongoing and continues through a process of quality improvement. An inclusive attitude comes from Jonah as he indicates that,

*We see it.* (Jonah)
He refers to himself as the leader of his university and his organisation. Jonah’s thoughts around QA link with Kenny’s in that QA embodies a conscious, progressive improvement in the services and products from a systems perspective. Kenny is the youngest of the FODE/L deans who were interviewed. His FODE/L experience in two PNG dual universities and his qualifications in ODL is a bonus to his current university.

*"I think at every stage of the kind of work that we do, ... we are very conscious of quality. Whether it’s in course production or student support service, we develop a culture of quality consciousness."* (Kenny)

Kenny affirms a culture of quality consciousness. This implies a reflective approach to the quality of FODE/L where mindfulness is evident. Kenny asserts the importance of QA for his FODE/L organisation. He advocates for continuous QA improvement. Further to that, he believes in QA actions, rather than rhetoric.

One question probed into students’ perception about the fostering of QA cultures within the various FODE/L activities. The question asked was, *how does your institution foster QA culture in your FODE/L activities?* Student9 remarked:

*QA cannot be assessed right now. We as students do not know the standard QA requirements to moderate and assess the institution.* (Student9)

This student lacked knowledge about QA standards and procedures, so could not ascertain a QA culture.

An emergent QA culture exists in PNG universities and this fosters a positive QA culture. The establishment of QA departments, units or hubs within current FODE/L offering universities serves as a new and interesting initiative. These physical establishments can promote the practice of academic quality audits and other processes. Of the four (4) universities visited, three (3) revealed the establishment of
QA units or departments, with QA directors or QA auditors and/or a team of evolving QA specialists. Kanwar (2013) notes that the QA varies from institution to institution and thus there is no ‘one size fits all’, since they depend on institutional priorities. For example, a Quality Audit Office implies regulatory controls and power whilst a Quality Hub monitors and crafts procedures and activities relating to quality. Whatever the branding, these 'quality entities' imply the role of quality enhancement. It encourages sustained motivation and energy in establishing quality cultures. Whilst there was no physical presence of QA units specifically for FODE/L, there is an obvious assumption that QA in dual-mode universities includes FODE/L activities. The treatment of quality is for all and thus ongoing QA for FODE/L requires rigorous proactive quality discourses and actions. Kenny, dean of a dual-mode university, remarks that

*Now they have a hub and hopefully in the very near future it should have a QA policy also reflecting National QA policies, ..., at the moment is not there yet in the formal sense. (Kenny)*

This FODE/L dean (Kenny) confirms the lack of QA policy for FODE/L. He also isolates himself from the university by using the pronoun ‘they’ rather than choosing neutrality by stating ‘the University’ or an inclusive term such as ‘our university’ or ‘we’. The choice of words in this context shows a sense of disconnection and demonstrates disharmony.

**QA weak links**

In this study, weak links were identified within the various QA discourses. The weak links that the focus groups described occur within institutional FODE/L programs, services, learning materials development and learning support. These weak links result from current systemic institutional QA practices. Academics’ workloads
surfaced as a weakness. Academics are overworked due to a shortage of teaching staff. According to Tomasi who is a young and hardworking FODE/L lecturer,

...for me personally, right now we are short of staff. That is one thing I feel should be improved in the area of quality. (Tomasi)

Linked to the issue of workload and staffing, academics feel that they are alienated from the staff recruitment process. Such a claim leads to misunderstandings between the staff and their Human Resource (HR) Management units. Stephan is a lecturer. Stephan’s excerpt below is on staff recruitment in University4.

We do not actually contribute to the recruitment of staff. HR think that we have staff here and are under loaded. These are issues that contribute to quality going down in terms of staff be (ing) overloaded (sic). (Stephan)

A mismatch often surfaces between what the administration envisions and the reality experienced in FODE/L contexts. In another institutional context, the same sentiment was expressed with reference to staff overload, working in stressful environments, and the increased likelihood of human error. Quality is compromised. Felix is an academic and has over 10 years of experience in PNG FODE/L. Felix affirms such a systemic weakness:

...in terms of lecturers, we want to make sure that what we produce has no error in it. Obviously, we all know that QA is a nightmare at the moment because we are always under pressure. So Quality Assurance is – the optimum level of performance has to be just right (Felix)

Felix refers to error-free academic work. If a lecturer makes an error such as misplacing students’ assignments, it affects the students’ motivation and interest in learning. This causes frustration and can result in negative outcomes for both the student and the institution. The student may withdraw from that university; thus, the
university loses not only money but also credibility. Felix highlights that when
lecturers are under pressure they are bound to make mistakes. He postulates that
optimum levels of performance result when workload is fairly distributed.

From University 1, where there is a QA policy in place, a missing link is highlighted:

Yes we have a quality assurance policy. The only thing missing now is work
action statements. Making that statement into an action is basically the
problem- from my observation. (Pita)

Pita is an instructional designer who points out that the problem relates to lack of
policy implementation. Whilst an obvious strength is that a QA policy exists, it is a
window-dressing policy (International Council of Distance Education, 2011). Bob is
a technical multimedia specialist. He offers his explanation for the QA policy problem
in University1 in the excerpt below.

When you ask (sic) this question about the QA policy- you can hear
that there is a silence here. There is a need for us to advocate more on the
policy, we need to advocate more to reach out to the schools also, the content
experts and so people . . . really understand the QA policy. Advocacy is
missing. (Bob)

Bob takes a reflective consciousness to QA policy implementation. He calls for
QA policy sensitivity to contextual realities and a QA implementation plan. QA
deficiency at the institutional level is a major weakness and threatening issue. Whilst
Bob and Pita addressed QA policy at an institutional level, Tomasi expressed his
concern about QA at the national level. Tomasi, is an academic from University4.

His remarks on the national QA directives are:

Looking at the industrial level, from the education itself, OHE does set those
standards but then those standards need to be quantified and broken down to
organisational level then, we can clearly identify or translate that to real personal key indicators. Institutions can use to measure quality standards that bridges from the national level to - organisational to individual levels. That is not really happening, I have not seen that working in this university... as my personal observations (Tomasi)

An underlying missing link is identified. Whilst it is evident that national standards have been established, their realisation at lower levels still lags. Policy enablers are often not heard nor are they consulted in the policy development process. Sense making aids the translation of national QA policies to the level of the HE institutions. Institutions need to express these policies in terms of their values and goals before individual key processes are clarified for academics and non-academics to reflect upon and then implement. When those requirements are satisfied, individual roles and responsibilities for QA become clear.

Focus group participants were asked to identify what was missing in their FODE/L QA practices. From a comparative analysis stance, the responses from two universities provided much insight. As public, government-funded universities, University2 has a newly established FODE/L department while University1 is a pioneer, well experienced in PNG FODE/L. The responses from University2 on missing aspects were: support, finance, QA policy, consultation and self-reliance. With regards to consultation, one of the focus group participants said:

More consultation and more collaborative support from the top management, involving the divisional heads/ involve the people on the ground/ in decision making and policy making (Betty)

Max works in the Accounts Division of his FODE/L department. His comments pertain to how practitioners are guided to QA in their various roles.
I think Quality Assurance should be guided by the principal dates and deadlines ... scheduled in the annual periodic calendar of our institution.

(Max)

Max points out that QA requires FODE/L delivery by set principal dates and deadlines. He affirms the value of preparedness, planning and time management. In a systems approach strategy, course materials, enrolment of students, delivery learning materials, assessment and other important academic activities are well planned and executed within specified time frames alongside proactive evaluation and monitoring processes.

7.1.2 QA Policy Framework

Pertaining to quality indicator 2 on QA Policy Frameworks, this section offers contextual insights from the national to institutional scenes. The research participants of this study claim that PNG FODE/L universities need a QA policy to guide their different approaches to learning and delivery. QA policy deficiencies at the institutional level exist in fragmented styles and disharmony thus the lack of a national policy for FODE/L has negative consequences. Whilst contemporary FODE/L in PNG admires global best practice, sense making and appropriate procedures remain a local struggle. Kenny from Universty2 in his leadership role, remarks that;

Not everything that floods into the country, not everything that we bring in will be of quality. So there should be some kind of QA guidelines giving directions and providing guide as to what should be acceptable what should be utilised in this country. (Kenny)

Ozga (2000) observes that policies and guidelines derived from other contexts require careful analysis in determining their local relevance. ‘Borrowing’ requires the
policymakers to critically assess where the policy came from and how it was used. Policy borrowing and learning is complementary thus learning from research helps to “apply knowledge to the borrowed system with consideration of national and local histories, cultures and realities” (Lingard, 2010, p.132). There is high demand for QA policy development, implementation and policy sense making.

**National HE standards**

The revision of 9 National Standards since 2002 has resulted in the current 13 standards. The revision was undertaken by the OHE and supported by the Australian Government in response to addressing the failing nature of PNG universities as highlighted in the Garnaut and Namaliu Report of 2010. Jonah affirms that:

> ... we have 13 standards and all institutions and universities, which develop programs, have to submit their programs through their own academic senate or academic board. Once...approved, it then has to go to the university council for endorsement. ....then it has to be submitted to the office of Higher Education, ....to the National Accreditation and QA committee for critical review and comments. Once this is done and the committee is happy, it forwards this proposed program to The Commission of Higher Education to formally accredit. If the committee is not satisfied then this program is referred back to the institution." (Jonah)

The culture of accreditation has its process in place. QA as a continuous improvement culture is evident at the National Level of HE where policies are examined and reviewed for the purposes and needs of PNG’s contemporary and face-to-face HE.

PNG FODE/L currently exists without a specific FODE/L QA policy. Jonah affirms this when he says that:
In regard to QA flexible learning in our country, we do not have any specific definition. (Jonah)

Tomasi also alludes to PNG’s lack of FODE/L QA policy.

The OHE has specific standards for the conventional mode of delivery and not the FODE/L (Tomasi)

**QA policy and practice**

University1 has a long-established FODE/L system of instructional design mechanisms using toolkits such as QA policies, manuals, and student evaluations. In spite of these, it still suffers from systemic QA problems such as poor-quality delivery and inadequate quality student support. QA remains a fragmented culture in most of the dual-mode FODE/L universities. University2 maintains their system within a strong face-to-face culture but has tension over autonomy. Similarly, University1 and 3 struggle with many quality issues such as having out-dated learning materials. In contrast, University4 uses QA initiatives dictated by the national standards, within a robust QA consciousness culture. There are also levels of contradiction evident in actual practice and what is proclaimed in terms of QA policies, plans and manuals. From University4, though, a positive reflection of inclusive quality responsibility is expressed. Sally is an experienced senior academic and a QA officer in her university. She remarks:

*All of us are quality conscious. We look at our Organisations as a system.*

*And to have a total quality, every single person, wherever they are, whatever functions they play, have their bit to contribute to the whole system functioning.* (Sally)

She confirms that her University is quality conscious and thus QA is a thriving culture. Here, quality is an inclusive responsibility for all. Carey agrees:
A lot of what we do in our program, we engage a lot of other International benchmarking too. We also search across the globe on all our programs to see where we are at different levels. (Carey)

Carey, like Sally is an experienced and senior FODE/L academic in the same institution. Encouraging micro-level efforts highlighted by Sally and Carey pertains to a culture of quality consciousness, continuous improvement and meaning making.

The ideals of a QA National FODE/L system foster notions of security for FODE/L and societal security. Tuta is dean of a FODE/L unit. She indicates that a QA policy exists in her FODE/L unit but suffers from an implementation issue.

We have a QA policy of course and then we need to implement it. So I get my divisional heads to ensure that they have their plans, according to that, umbrella. (Tuta)

**Policy implementation**

As a dean, demonstrates how she encourages QA policy implementation. Disharmony exists in this scenario because, whilst practitioners in Tuta’s institution are yearning for more understanding of the policy, Tuta’s leadership team advocates for its implementation. The level of disharmony shows a lack of collaborative effort in making sense of a QA policy. The practitioners reveal their desire to learn more about it before they can act. The leadership team’s effort to understand the underlying policy issues is vital to translate it into practical procedures. Bob offers his opinion that,

*I think the only problem is the implementation* (Bob)

Policy implementation lags. Bob thinks that the policy lacks understanding and contends that current advocacy is the problem. He suggests that advocacy fosters understanding of the QA policy and individual work statements do not exist. Bob
senses that the problem surfaces at the micro level and concerns policy enactment realities (Ball, 2015).

**FODE/L QA policy enactment**

Zeal (another FODE/L dean) had this to say in reference to creating a QA policy for FODE/L and the Quality Unit within the University.  

*We are talking about the way, to have this policy, to have a written policy since we are in the process- and (names the person in charge) is still composing something and working on it* (Zeal)

In this instance, Zeal is harmoniously expressing how the institution is being conscious of QA whilst at the same he is being sensitive to channels of communication and responsibilities as to who does what. As he refers to the specific actions needed for a QA policy he uses 'inclusive and collective' pronouns. For instance:

*We are talking about a written policy and thus in a process.*  (Zeal)

This dean (Zeal) implies that a QA policy rests with the QA office and he awaits its written documentation. From an outsider’s perspective, traces of doubt and lack of direction are obvious. Zeal, as a dean, indirectly but courteously shifts the formulation of the QA policy from other stakeholders (such as himself) to the QA Office. Simultaneously, Zeal seems modest in his claim that a QA policy discourse prevails and thus is being worked on. Such is yet to become a reality. In a similar manner, Kenny also awaits QA guidelines, directives and specifications from the top management. Kenny says:

*Like I said because there is no QA policy in the formal sense as yet in the university now they are trying to work on.*  (Kenny)
This section offers some valuable insights into the current QA policy scenario within PNG’s dual mode universities’ spaces.

7.1.3 Continuous Improvement

This quality indicator concerns QA good practices in academic and institutional audits, capacity building and monitoring and evaluations. FODE/L credibility and standards may be harmonised with conventional on-campus, face-to-face learning, through effective systemic QA processes.

Quality materials

Students express the demand for updated learning materials.

*Update version of curriculum and materials with changing times* (Student5)

Quality learning materials pertain to the culture of improvement and relevancy in contemporary times.

*Updated version of curriculum with current version* (Student6)

*Curriculum not been updated over time with the changing times.* (Student7)

As seen from the statements given above, students value updated curriculum as stakeholders of FODE/L. Thus they give FODE/L offering universities the signal that quality is needed in the curriculum. More so, that curriculum is reflective of quality and remains updated regularly. Quality means the continuous process of improvement, refining and enhancing towards excellence. In the statement below, a student suggests the need to strive, aim and work towards improvement of education qualification. This relates to the notion of relevant curriculum, with consistent efforts for improvement. The response was to a question posed as, **what does quality mean to you in your learning as an Open Distance Learner?**

*Strive to improve level of education qualification to meet changing challenges.*

(Student2)
A question was asked about sustaining factors for FODE/L. The question was, what would be essential factors that you think would contribute to sustaining the quality of FODE/L? Student5 from University1 responded:

Include more life skills courses as it will equip participants with skills that will be implemented for betterment of theirs or others lives or living.

(Student5)

Whilst ideas of quality, professionally developed curriculum materials emerged through students’ insights, the issue of quality also applies to the planning for courses and programs to cater for increased number of students. Proper planning of FODE/L requires comprehensive target audience sensitivity.

**QA audits**

The possibility of establishing a QA culture through academic audits is realised by current senior management officers of the universities. Jonah emphasised that sustainable QA cultures start from within an organisation. This is done through a dynamic systems approach of self-assessment. Internal QA activities are complemented by the involvement of auditors from external QA agencies. The purpose of having external academic audits aligns with transparency and accountability. It is another means for identifying areas for improvement.

Jonah expresses his thinking on internal and external QA:

There are two aspects to it. First, the university has to have an internal system of QA that we have, our division of QA is totally separate from the university and directly answerable to the council. The external QA has to be done by the Office of HE, which we hope, will develop into the Department of HE Research and Technology. That should be external within the country.

(Jonah)
Internal and external QA audits occur only when individual universities aspire for QA-positive outputs.

**Staff competencies**

The competency and capability of staff and students within the FODE/L system contributes to the quality outcomes of FODE/L (Littlejohn & Hood, 2016; Littlejohn & McGill, 2016). This key finding relates to the need for competency of both staff and students through training in FODE/L pedagogies, study skill strategies and relevant literacy skills. Recent research (Latchem, 2016, Thistoll & Yates, 2016) also highlight the lack of competent and qualified academics in FODE/L. In this research the challenge of coping with poor academic qualifications was openly discussed. Novice academics lacking postgraduate qualifications may become learning facilitators in dual-mode universities due to staff shortages and a lack of research skills and knowledge-development. Professional development, when strategically planned and focused (Modesto & Gregoriose, 2016), has the potential of retaining staff. FODE/L academics are motivated if attractive incentives are offered to them (Evans, Jordan & Wolfenden, 2016). It prevents staff from leaving the HE sector. Professional development programs tailored contextually may provide the knowledge and skills the participants seek for their own improvement, and also raise the quality of their offerings (Latchem, 2016). FODE/L universities can ensure that their academics are knowledgeable, experienced and skilful in delivering the teaching; thus, qualified academics are needed as facilitators of their FODE/L programs. Second, academics require complete toolkits to enable them to impart knowledge and create authentic student learning experiences, as FODE/L learners require interactive learning environments.
In the excerpt below, Pita makes a statement relating to the notion of being equipped thus and capable of producing quality outcome. His response was to the question, **how are you guided to performing QA in your various roles within your institution?**

*So basically for us Instructional Designers, we have our tools there, our ID tools QA boxes, we have the course review. So basically what we do is more guided by time, we have the standards of QA.* (Pita)

Third, academics are role models for students whether they intend this result or not. Therefore, Jung and Latchem (2012) advocate that learner-centeredness helps learners to develop competency at doing the learning. They list the competencies essential for facilitators of FODE/L as: 1) the promotion of transformative learning; 2) encouragement of fully engaged learners as co-creative partners in learning processes; 3) provision of options that promote collaborative learning; and 4) responsiveness to the needs of learners. Learners are a university’s most valuable stakeholders (Ali, 2010; Haihuie, 2011), though many staff tend to disregard this reality. One of the strengths that surfaced from the focus groups is the sensitivity of FODE/L academics to their student demography, an attribute highlighted by Jung and Collin (2012) where facilitators value learners’ needs. Loretta is a facilitator who demonstrated this in the following remarks. Loretta’s response comes from question; **‘How can you describe the Culture of quality’.**

*We try to pitch at that level where we are meeting the academic requirements and we are also meeting the industry requirements because of the nature of the participants that come into the training environment* (Loretta)

This is an example whereby academic requirements are aligned to the industrial requirements thus the market demands are met. Industry requirements mean that
teaching programs are relevant to professional development in meeting market
demands in various industrial sectors. The qualification and the competency levels of
some current FODE/L academics remain critical to the quality essence of FODE/L.

Professor1, a Departmental Head, puts his concern as:

*We have around 40-50% teachers, who do not have even a postgraduate
degree- the lack of quality teaching resource, is telling on the quality of the system.* (Professor1)

Professor1 affirms that qualifications matter in sustaining the quality essence of HE
teaching and learning. Professor1 continues in his remarks as follows:

*The teachers who teach, they are not up there, because they are not qualified enough. They do not have any research program and despite ...absence of research we have to renew their contract. This is a generic issue - because we do not have much options, if I drive away one teacher, tomorrow I’ll not get his replacement - Because this is a market, where it’s a seller’s market*

(Professor1)

Felix, on the other hand, comments on quality by pointing to several points of
reference ignored at the micro-level. Felix is a passionate and committed academic in
his role and responsibilities. Felix perceives QA through a process of self-assessment,
consciousness of reality and doing what one is said to be doing, with values of
honesty, integrity and commitment.

*From my own perspective, the first thing is that, when I am given this job, I know the requirements, of a (X) lecturer, that I have to do certain things. So that is a way of guiding me to achieve what I have to achieve. And also I am guided to achieve what I have to by (X institution) providing the teaching aids to make sure that there is a computer, there is a printer, and ink is there, the*
paper is there. We are guided by all the things around us and from our own knowledge of what should we be achieving or what we are to be doing (Felix)

Felix refers to his job performance as his initial point of reference; in essence, being honest in his role. Resource availability enhances performance for all employees. Likewise, effective feedback mechanism remains a vital requirement.

7.1.4 QA leadership and management

In reference to the focus group findings, three (3) main themes emerged pertaining to leadership: 1) quality FODE/L leadership; 2) passionate leadership and 3) management-driven QA. A key finding showed that the lack of good leadership and management of QA is a troubling issue. QA leadership is a responsibility for all in each respective FODE/L unit. Paul (1990) sees a difference between leadership toward QA and management of its realities in FODE/L. In PNG, we can ask ourselves if we are over-managing and leading less or vice versa, or perhaps lacking in both areas?

FODE/L leaders are potential change agents who advocate for changes that matter and are of significance to the institution as a whole. QA has to be driven by management. QA enhancement initiatives need support from leaders and managers. Such support embraces QA from the initiation stage to mature, evolving stages of progress. Betty shares her insights into a scenario of QA initiative driven by the University management.

When the idea of QA was established...we came as officers to facilitate the process. At the beginning...It was driven by the Top Management. We knew they were in it and we knew that they would support the process when we first embarked on the journey. Now that we are on the writing process and we are collecting data, I felt that, the support is not there (Betty)
Such is an example of a weakness in fostering QA initiatives. Betty believes in the QA initiatives being continually sustained by the university management. QA initiatives driven and sustained within a management plan/strategy brings fruition. The process of QA establishment, as described by Betty, is like a fire being lit and then slowly burning out. The great excitement experienced in the launching of any QA initiative needs sustainable efforts throughout.

*There has to be sustainability in the process and top management has to support it right through from the start.* (Betty)

The establishment of QA brings attitudes of innovation and creativity. It is not only about establishing standards for quality but also thinking creatively about systemic FODE/L improvements. Whilst FODE/L is considered as a means for national development, there are still many systemic shortcomings. Leaders are change-makers. Where there is a culture of change resistance, leaders must demonstrate persuasion, vision and passion. Morris stresses such thinking as he suggests that:

*Someone from the top management to influence the culture then we can expect some changes.* (Morris)

Morris is an academic. He thinks that QA reality in FODE/L leadership requires proactive leadership. Quality leadership is an indicator to pursue quality outcomes so that quality culture becomes second nature to all concerned under such leadership.

**OER**

With the ideals of OER integration as an innovative practice, the following are comments from the participants. Tuta seemed very interested in the ideals and culture of OER to enhancing the quality of FODE/L resources.
We haven’t done it. We can learn from other models that are working, …but we still have to come up with our PNG model that is workable for us and that answers effectively to the needs of our students and our contexts. (Tuta)

Tuta’s insight above poses a thought for a PNG based model amidst current challenges. PNG HE greatly needs a good-quality FODE/L system in its dual-mode universities. OERs can be shared and can augment the collaborative sharing of many existing learning resources. Similarly, Kenny reiterates that OER is an innovation for quality improvement. Kenny is an emerging ODL leader who embraces the potential of OER in PNG’s ODL context.

OER is an innovative idea, it’s an innovative technology which... reflects quality, improvement....it reflects some element of quality approach as compared to print material and other older mode of service, providing service to our students. (Kenny)

QA guidelines for OER integration lag behind in PNG FODE/L in comparison to other developing countries in Asia and Africa. As highlighted by Jonah, in order for OERs to become fully accepted as an innovative practice, accessibility to such electronic resources maybe fostered nationally in PNG to benefit all HEIs.

Knowledge should not be restricted to one only institution. I think it is a matter of time before universities will start to talk and recognise each other’s programs. (Jonah)

OERs comprise an innovation that can add quality to selected FODE/L programs. Guidelines pertaining to OERs require strategic planning and QA sense making. Also, the QA framework for FODE/L requires inclusion of the OER culture of sharing, using, re-using and adopting OERs. At present, there is minimal use of OERs in PNG FODE/L universities, thus demonstrating the need for greater advocacy about their
uses, combined with the provision of practitioner training and awareness of strategic OER use. PNG FODE/L institutions are encouraged to assess how OERs can be of great benefit to all stakeholders. The OER philosophy and culture offer opportunities to create OERs and help equip academics and students with skills of open scholarship. Such an innovative approach to knowledge creation is vital. Since there is not much of an OER culture in PNG FODE/L yet, an integrated OER National Framework requires comprehensive understanding for the benefit of all stakeholders. National Internet accessibility in HE will foster OER integration and e-learning ideals. Currently, Internet accessibility is limited and costly for ordinary students and citizens.

Sustainability surfaced as a key finding from the narratives of vice-chancellors, pro-vice-chancellors and deans of FODE/L universities. Latchem (2016) reports in his study that institutional QA was designed to foster a quality culture hence a mindset that becomes second nature for all. Whilst it is imperative to advocate and pursue good practice for FODE/L through improved quality systems and quality culture, their sustainable traits are equally relevant. In the interview excerpt below, Kenny conveys his thoughts on the challenges of a quality sustaining culture in FODE/L.

*I think from an individual’s point of view, attitude is one challenge,*

*We need to look inward and look at the attitude factor. So the first challenge will be the attitude factor* (Kenny)

As a leader, Kenny stresses that attitude matters within an organisation. He points out the reflective approach to being conscious of what individuals do and poses questions about how to change if people are willing. In light of QA, are individuals committed to embracing continuous improvement as a means for sustaining quality? Policy
guidelines are sustainable when supported with positive attitude factors. Kenny’s thoughts travel from change within an individual and their intrinsic mindset and beyond the confines of their practices and institutional territory through to learning from good practice in global contexts. He points out the ideals of examining global good practices with preferences to what is workable, relevant and appropriate within local contexts. In consideration of PNG’s indigenous diversity, peoples’ minds require liberation to avoid being culturally trapped within negative thoughts and behaviour. Kenny's reference to sustainability relates to empowering the individual, touching on the aspect that starts from the source (individuals) from what is within, that is seen only in behavioural outcomes. The attitude factor fosters positive thinking for the betterment of self, others and the services provided to stakeholders.

Tuta affirms the idea of sustainability in her definition of quality. Sustainability, according to Tuta, encapsulates the quality of plans or objectives for perpetual improvement within the life cycle of policies, courses or related action plans.

"... from my own teaching experience and also being an administrator.

Quality, to me is a plan, that you have in place ... I see quality as two things, first you want to put it in theory, in principle but then you want to implement it. Implementation and sustainability is important. (Tuta)

Being in a leadership role, Tuta's vein of thinking relates sustainability to quality. In a contrasting perspective, Kenny links sustainability with positive attitudes. Lee is also an institutional leader from University 3. He sees sustainability towards continuous improvement systems.

So we have what is called, the continuous improvement systems in place. (Lee)
Lee expresses the idea of being proactive to improvement. This is interpreted as a means of fostering sustainable practices for all activities within a system. Tony is a newly appointed Dean of University. Tony expresses the idea of sharing resources in FODE/L delivery in PNG.

*To share resources would be ideal for the expansion of our Distance mode programs. Sharing resources for FODE/L is the way forward to expansion of quality HE through FODE/L.* (Tony)

Tony thinks that FODE/L can expand through the sharing of resources in the spirit of educational provision over profit making. Yet within the current reality of FODE/L, there is a tendency for competition through ambitious expansion rather than collaboration by sharing quality resources in FODE/L. Interestingly, Tony identifies competition as a barrier to FODE/L in PNG.

Tuta expresses her insights on systemic QA that are sustainable, require training and enables the feeling of ownership.

*Mechanisms and sustaining systems... in order for someone to carry out, quality- I think we need to own it. You need to train people that feel that they own the program* (Tuta)

Whilst advocates for QA can speak loudly, the culture entails being self-sustaining and fitting within a contemporary harmonious, ethical, moral and enterprising QA model. Such a model fosters trust, credibility and integrity for the FODE/L system. This study revealed strengths pertaining to QA that are inclusive of:

- QA offices,
- Quality consciousness-raising and
- Gradual QA approaches.
The QA weaknesses are identified as deficiencies at the micro-level. The themes include: QA institutional challenges, missing QA aspects, reality mismatch, chaos and sloppy national infrastructure, lack of reviews, piecemeal approach and non-adherence to QA responsibilities.

7.1.5 Melanesian Cultural QA

This research reveals abstract cultural thinking from some of the participants. The quality of what an institution offers to students tells stories of appreciation, enjoyment, meeting challenges and achieving its purpose of learning and knowledge building. Felix is a current administrator and is one of the longest serving FODE/L academic in his FODE/L university. Quality according to Felix is such that-

... it tells me a story (Felix)

For Felix, quality is beyond what is seen and contains a story. A quality FODE/L story reveals human activities connected to required norms, underlying belief systems and energy levels exerted. Pertaining to PNG oral-based culture, storytelling is an important value in Melanesia (Narakobi, 1989; Vallance, 2007). Storytelling enables social norms and values to be learnt and shared. It is an important part of a communal discourse culture. Quality relates to building connections on learning and collaborating with other learners through shared learning experiences. Part of the quality of learning occurs when there is a formation of a community of learners working together to reach their goals through FODE/L. Felix’s expression invokes implied meanings. His reference to quality is that it be a good, bad, sad and/or an unhappy story. Quality is also a reflection of practitioners’ abstract thinking about aspects of nature, beauty, appreciation, attractiveness, and inclusiveness, thus enabling transparent communication between the FODE/L institution and its stakeholders.
Jonah’s thoughts on a ‘sharing culture’ and ‘recognition of each others’ programs’ resonate to the need for HEIs to be focused on education as a PNG citizen’s human right for personal and national development. Melanesians values are inclusive of sharing, mutual cooperation, consensus, reciprocity, and the value of obligations where people are obliged to return others the good deeds done for them. In a sense, the sharing of OERs fits PNG Melanesian values as it is closely related to what people do in PNG societies during past generations as well as contemporary ones.

_So in PNG, there is no system, which encourages universities to recognise each other’s system_ (Jonah)

Such vein of thoughts, resides in the culture of communal sharing for common good. PNG thrives in a collective and communal networks and systems.

Bruno is student support officer who has served the university for over ten years. He speaks about inclusiveness:

_It’s about inclusiveness, right? So everybody is a part of it, a product must be part of something that everybody enjoys and its compatible and it includes everybody in the street and everything else and it involves nature. Everybody appreciates it... it’s the inclusiveness._ (Bruno)

Bruno assimilates quality as inclusive like nature. A worldview of quality surfaces as it is seen like nature, the universe and its inclusive norms. Felix also refers to quality pertaining to nature’s system of evolution when he says:

_We have to evolve to survive. See, that is the whole history of the survival of the human race of the physical/social environment. It was through the evolution process._(Felix)

Virgil attests his cultural identity when he explains his notion of quality.
I am a New Irelader. New Ireladers complain because they have standards in mind (Virgil)

Virgil is from the New Ireland province of PNG. That tells a lot about his cultural connections. He instantly connects with the researcher in the quality discourse by aligning his thinking within his cultural domain logic. A common understanding happens since the researcher is also a New Irelader. In the New Ireland context, a cultural logic is in the social expectation that when standards are not met, proactive discourse pertaining to standards is pursued for the better through common understanding, communication and actions to correct the situation.

QA practices safeguard FODE/L from unethical and moral practices. In a context where citizens lack social security, issues regarding equity and social justice are often denied. FODE/L is an enabler for development and requires QA to foster and pursue good practices. QA research reveals the need for FODE/L to combat the high tendency towards corruption and broken management systems. Suvorov and Suvorova (2015a) advocate for harmony within models/systems that prioritise high ethics and moral norms. For systemic QA, this means that harmony is vital for assessing quality and for aspiring to perfection, ethics and moral for the common good of humanity. According to Suvorov and Suvorova, “it is fair to say that harmony is the basis of holistic sustainable development of nations and civilisations”(p.232).

Embracing ideals from high ethical and moral standards requires all concerned to take conscious responsibility for HE (Watson, 2014). QA culture in FODE/L can evoke manifestations of honesty, stakeholder loyalty and moral harmony. QA culture based on harmony and moral ethics offers inner reflective and mindful assessment of FODE/L activities.
### 7.2 Findings linking to Research Question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 2: What are the major obstacles facing Universities offering FODE/L in their attempt to ensure quality standards and practices in PNG? Sub-questions were asked also relating to major challenges for QA, main sources of factors or obstacles and means to addressing those major obstacles.</th>
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<td>The findings were clustered under the four different quality themes of practice, policy, leadership and sustainability of QA.</td>
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**Lack of government support:** QA as culture is viewed as being very low due to obstacles such as minimal government support and the geographical locations of the FODE/L centres in the challenging terrain of PNG. One student had this to say when asked the following question. **How can you describe the nature of quality as a culture fostered in Flexible Open Distance Education/learning (FODE/L) in your institution or in other FODE/L programs, service or institutions in PNG?**

> The nature of quality is not to its capacity because of other obstacles like government full support, geographical locations and others (Student1)

As a consequence of low funding and high student numbers, HEIs rely on alternative income-generating activities. FODE/L delivery became one of these avenues for income-generation, perhaps as a cash cow for the institution. Where compensation is paid, the scheme has to fit within the dimensions of ethics and morality so that staff realise their responsibilities to the university and to their students. Chapman and Lindnerb (2016) assert that improved organisational structures and a code of practice are needed as well as the expenditure of more energy to address specific problems and establish a harmonious framework.
Professor2, being an academic, highlights another persisting limitation in FODE/L observations. His comments are to do with the struggling nature of funding scarcity.

There is a perpetual crunch in the cash flow situation and our resources. For example, updating of the equipment is the major thing to keep abreast with the technological advances, which we are unable to do.(Professor2)

Professor2’s comments reveal ongoing cash flow problems in dual-mode universities. The sources of poor quality in available resources are linked to lack of funds to ensure the upgrading of needed teaching equipment. This is an important aspect for educational programs in all FODE/L PNG universities. Funding remains a challenge for HE and FODE/L delivery (Kanwar, 2013), which forces institutions to impose rising fees to generate funds.

Sanctity of FODE/L exams: Another theme points out a QA deficiency at the micro level relating to the examination system. Robin, an academic and course writer for a FODE/L program, asserts that the quality of examination systems needs strengthening.

Strictness in the exam resource system (Robin)

This reference means ensuring that exam papers are protected and secured from fraudulent practices such as leaking of ‘exam questions’ through unethical practices. Dishonesty remains a threat to FODE/L’s integrity and ethical essence (Minnaar, 2012).

Out-dated learning materials: Another deficient practice is the use of poor quality learning materials that are in critical need of updating and revision.

Materials that we have, especially here at University3, were prepared in 1990.

(Robin)
Some of the ODL materials are out-dated by over a decade or more. The realisation that updates are badly needed is clearly understood by academics but it is seldom that anything is done to improve such deficiencies. It may be assumed that the academics lack the competency to address the deficiencies or are overloaded and unable to prioritise their tasks. Consequently, the quality of the study materials is continually compromised with the result that what is deemed unethical and deficient, slowly becomes the accepted norm.

**Lack of mentoring:** From the perspective of students, a student exhorts the lack of mentoring when asked to describe the quality of learning facilitators, tutors and lecturers. The student response is:

\[
\text{... mentoring with my experience starts on the 5th week of the semester. Not quality because some times there is no mentoring at all} \text{ (Student5)}
\]

**Poor feedback culture:** The above statement implies that academic capability of mentoring is treated with complacency and to some extent non-existent. In terms of the quality of assessment and feedback, students were asked to describe the quality given to their assessments and feedback.

\[
\text{The process of assessment on feedback is very slow –sometimes not feedback at all} \text{ (Student6)}
\]

**Incompetent academics and insensitivity to learners:** The above student implies the incompetency of ODL academics in the provision of immediate feedback to students. Student7 further states that:

\[
\text{Some try to cover a whole unit book per tutorial class. This is bad, at least they should allow 3 tutorial class to cover one unit book. Otherwise all are skilled personnel} \text{ (Student7)}
\]
The above student signals that some ODL academics are insensitive to learners. It reflects of lack of qualification, competence and capability for ODL teaching and learning.

**Poor quality managed programs:** Students were also asked a question about the main sources or factors to major obstacles in quality faced by their universities. In response, Student8 highlighted that poor quality programs are reflective of internal institutional embedded problems such as lethargic attitudes from academics and unethical behaviour or corruption of institutional resources.

\[...\text{ laziness in people producing materials, misuse of funds to build proper facilities, teachers double their work and work is hurriedly done.} \text{ (Student8)}\]

**Attitude of FODE/L personnel-resources & strategic planning of FODE/L:** The underlying attitudes of academics, leaders and administrative staff of FODE/L universities are described and thus paint a negative picture. Students realise that unethical practices result in poor quality. Students live in the real world and require relevant and contextualised materials. Diversified programs and courses give students options to choose from in alignment with the demand of the labour markets and the realities of the societies where they live. The data shows that when students are equipped with life skills courses they naturally improve their lives. Student9 response below was to a question that asked, **what do you see as the main sources of factors to obstacles for ensuring quality?**

*The FODE/L institution does not have extra space for expansion, leaving out some programs, courses that should be run* (Student9)

This student points out the resource and planning implications of catering for the increased intake of learners.
Lack of QA understanding: In this study, quality matters to students; however they lack understanding of QA and its processes. In the excerpt below, a student states that the understanding of QA processes is missing. Stakeholders know what it means to be provided with quality-enhanced learning materials but may lack understanding of the systemic QA for FODE/L. The statement reveals that quality initiatives need attention at the institutional level even in the midst of national HE ambitions to scale-up. A reminder surfaces that there is a level of consciousness in students who wish to receive what they ought to be given.

The nature of quality at this FODE/L institution is slowly increasing but not in full scale. Only few and I mean few FODE/L centres offer quality education, the rest are not even (Student2)

Student2 gives a perception of quality being present but not in full scale. Another student gives more detail:

As for the nature of quality, for University1, the materials were of quality that is easy to understand. But lack of quality service of tutorials and slackness or late distribution of materials is a concern (Student3)

Late delivery of learning materials to students: Quality is evident in the materials produced but their delivery is late and the tutorials are poor and slack. This response corresponds with issues the lecturer Felix raised (in his interview) regarding the sloppy infrastructure upon which FODE/L institutions rely for materials delivery:

The way we conduct our program, I think we have so many problems, we encounter so many problems because the way we mount our programs ..., does not reflect the natural surrounding the social surroundings of the whole operation. We do not take into consideration the anticipation of our
clients/students. We do not accommodate the sloppiness of the transport systems that we have in the country (Felix)

**QA policy guidelines deficiencies:** Policy deficiencies limit accessibility to HE.

Jonah demonstrates his vision on how modern PNG needs to provide accessibility to university through each institution’s recognition of university programs across institutional boundaries, belief systems and cultures.

> First of all, what will be needed in terms of policies in our country, would be recognition of each other’s programs. So in PNG, there is no system, which encourages universities to recognise each other’s system. This has to be addressed by the policy. Because when people move they can enrol at different universities. Currently it is impossible in PNG. There is no policy that will guide that. Secondly, there has to be clear policy, in terms of the use of ICT technology. Thirdly policies that includes open sources. (Jonah)

As Jonah remarks, there are policy deficiencies in that universities do not accept each other's programs, ICT needs widespread integration and OER adoption. In addition, FODE/L lacks a national QA policy. There is therefore a need for the creation of a national QA group to guide and foster good practices. Tuta echoes Jonah’s remark on policy deficiency and state that;

> I would like us to have an umbrella QA policy ... from the national level. (Tuta)

A sense of policy direction for the current status of FODE/L remains as a gap.

**Ethics, moral values and conscience in FODE/L:** National systemic corruption hinders national progress and requires active denouncement (Walton & Peiffer, 2015). This study reveals that collective advocacy means that issues of corruption, especially where they weaken government educational systems are revealed. The excerpt below
shows how Jonah (a research participant) highlights that the monopoly of telecommunications by certain telecommunication providers is monetary-driven more than by service provision. Internet accessibility is an expensive commodity for the already-marginalised students vying for tertiary education through FODE/L. The accessibility to Internet in PNG could actually be the answer to solving many issues of connectivity for learners enrolled in FODE/L institutions.

*If we could, access Internet like people in Australia, PNG are intelligent people, it will take no more than one generation for them to be highly educated. So X Communication Company is not thinking what is best for the country but is trying to make big money from non-profit organisations, which does not make any sense. If there are some government regulations to put pressure on (such companies) to allow Papua New Guineans to access.*

...they manipulate other people. This is unethical. That’s the poor performance of X Company and we need to challenge it. (Jonah)

Jonah is convinced that what is being experienced at the institutional level is the result of exploitation or corruption (Walton, 2015). In PNG, the government calls for access to HE and for universities to open up options for more students, yet its own profit-making organisations sets out limitations. Internet accessibility is poor for the HE sector and very expensive. Students who have access to education in the current universities are privileged but the critical mass of PNG students is economically disadvantaged. Jonah feels that the silent acceptance of national unethical practices is a hindrance and citizens must be willing to challenge them.

Similarly, Lee expresses his suggestions about the current challenges facing the nation (Walton, 2015). Lee senses a critical problem in society from the local level of government right up to the national government level. He believes that negative
attitudes are inadequately addressed and thinks they could be replaced with positive, ethical and virtuous mindsets. The narrative below illustrates Lee’s thinking.

*It’s certain structure…not the fault of any particular government. What’s happening is that we have a system, we are trying to work in localised areas, but not based within a system. Somebody needs to sit down and think about it and come up with a plan, on how we can culturally change the mindsets of people on what we can do.* (Lee)

Lee points out that the structural systems of government affect PNG societies. Transformed societies need leaders that drive good ideas and practice. It is a systemic problem that needs healing, harmonizing and balancing with our national guiding principles. The mindsets and attitudes of people are demonstrated in their actions.

. . . if you ask people of this country, they will say. we are 90% Christian, but activities don’t confirm or match those belief systems. So that is something, and social habits, maybe economy has a part to play also so – in distributions of wealth and income, there is a lot not said about these, it is very important because everybody want to survive (Lee)

A great pall of hypocrisy and deception prevails in the country. PNG claims to be a Christian country but that is only by name. Lee explains that a systemic problem prevails when broken social mechanisms exist within hypocritical belief systems.

Desperation triumphs and affects the people. Students entering FODE/L are desperate for education as their means of survival. FODE/L HEIs may recognise this but may develop poor responses as they have funding problems of their own. Some people within FODE/L are already known to cheat, to leak exam questions to others and to allow some to bribe their way into passing the exams. These are incidents that, as Chapman and Lindner (2016) reveal, occur in other countries as well. FODE/L
practitioners, as change agents, can foster good practice or can opt to be part of the ‘black’ system by accepting bribes and other rewards from students.

Until you address those, people in flexible distance learning, how can they assure quality, they can’t? They will still try to cheat the exams, they will leak the exam questions, they will bribe … I mean a lot of things can happen. (Lee)

Both Jonah and Lee highlight two different but related issues where the veins of corruption are deeply rooted within the hidden policies and the practices of big national companies. Where Jonah addresses corruption and deceitful effects from national systems, Lee affirms such thinking from the societal domain as a whole. It illustrates a sad scenario of attitudes vested in personal greed and fragmented societal structures.

**FODE/L reality in PNG:** PNG FODE/L has the potential of maturing into a set of good practices that could nurture institutional competencies and capabilities. Felix offers his insights into the reality of FODE/L from his university as follows:

The way we conduct our program. I think we have so many problems, we encounter so many problems. Because the way we mount our programs does not reflect the natural surrounding the social surroundings of the whole operation. We do not take into consideration the anticipation of our clients/students. We do not accommodate the sloppiness of the transport systems that we have in the country. And also the sloppiness that goes on in the centres and put all these things together, they all add up to one big problem. We do not seem to conduct the right program, we do not seem to start on time, and we do not seem to produce the required number of materials. We don’t seem to get the assessment done on time. So with all these little problems adding up to the whole thing that we call Quality assurance in
terms of Course design in terms of teaching, assessment in terms of productivity. So how we have managed the system, is totally outside the normal surrounding social/physical surrounding of the university. (Felix)

Felix’s comments reveal a struggling FODE/L system that needs careful attention paid to lasting solutions to persisting problems and issues. It is a revelation of systemic failure. FODE/L practitioners highlighted themes such as staff loading, shortages, job security (maintained through silence) and remuneration models for course writers as factors affecting FODE/L quality. These factors are classified as weaknesses and obstacles affecting quality. Staff overloads results from a shortage of qualified staff. When there is a shortage of staff and a high workload, performance suffers in terms of quality output in teaching, marking students assessments, giving good feedback and often very poor turn-around time for students’ work.

Leadership and management of QA in FODE/L: Whilst QA discourse and energy are evident in the conventional delivery of HE, FODE/L delivery lags behind hence the sad part of this QA story for PNG FODE/L. Leaders need to show passion, courage and initiative when setting QA as the priority of an FODE/L university. Morris is an academic and course writer for FODE/L. He speaks his mind about leadership. Leadership of QA has to be driven by passionate leaders who are about the credibility and significance of quality in FODE/L.

At the moment, there is nobody up there who is so passionate about DE and it is good that Gail and Orim are looking at what other countries are doing and they are trying to incorporate that and make it a home-grown one (Morris)

Morris implies that leadership for FODE/L is lacking within the top management team at his university. He acknowledges the efforts demonstrated by Gail and Orim,
who are already reflecting on ways to translate QA from global perspectives to local adoption. As observed by Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld (2005), it is possible that the ideals of a home-grown PNG FODE/L QA framework is potentially realised through a process of understanding the transition from global to local realities. This line of discourse evokes the values of taking ownership and being sensitive to local needs within one's area of practice. Not only does it require practitioners to work through their priorities with regard to quality issues but needs collaboration with the top management team to promote and enable relevant processes pertaining to FODE/L good practice. The culture of working collaboratively to create a discourse about QA needs to start within the various operational levels within the FODE/L organisations. Such discourses prevail through a series of QA advocacy phases relevant to the various university management teams.

Tension was evident among FODE/L participants in this focus group as they expressed their disagreement on decision-making in the university, especially towards the Top Management Team, from the staff of University2. The staff indicated that decision-making and leadership are authority-based, which are intimidating and demotivating for staff. Under such circumstances, implementers and practitioners may opt to remain motivated or become silenced or be rebellious.

*For an institution to have quality, one thing that I believe is criticism of the whole system because through criticism we can fix the system. I am zipping my mouth because that might affect my daily bread.* (Orim)

What is being implied is that quality in learning programs in a dual-mode university improves when decision-makers are receptive to criticisms aimed at improvement. Orim expresses a sense of fear for job security as he offers his critical views of management. Other staff, unlike Orim, prefers being silent amidst systemic quality
failures for the sake of job security, leading to unethical disharmony traits and weakness in QA practices.

Policy actors or implementers need to pursue a bottom-up approach to good QA practices whilst, at the same time, demonstrating what people can do for themselves as individuals within their organisation. Weick et al. (2005) propose the effectiveness of skills in sense making gained through collaborative efforts, resilience, taking ownership and accepting responsibility for micro-level improvements. Such small actions lead greater impacts.

Orim manages the student support and administrative aspect of FODE/L in the same university as Morris. He suggests that leadership of FODE/L is similar to business managers.

*We need people with business-oriented skill to drive DE. You spend money to make money, so we need people like that.* (Orim)

This line of thinking resonates with the contemporary HE business approach. Orim suggests that business-oriented leaders are said to drive distance education. Such thinking has both positive and negative connotations. From the positive viewpoint, this means being sensitive to customers’ perspectives, needs and demands and giving clients value for money. The negative view sees that a focus on profit making could dilute the academic quality of the offerings. Orim also implies the misappropriation of FODE/L money or diversion of money generated by FODE/L to other aspects of the university system.

*The university is taking so much money out of this office, and it is becoming internal revenue for the university.* (Orim)

May, who is a bursary staff within University3’s FODE/L unit made similar remarks.
Currently, like here at University3. We are a source of revenue for the university, if only we have autonomy over our account, our current trust account, we’ll be able to meet our financial obligations on time. So we need money to operate and we are currently hopeless. (May)

Tomasi points out that FODE/L is still being considered second priority in terms of policy discourse and enactment for HE. Sally affirms this reality:

*I think that is an area (FODE/L) that they have not looked into yet. They (Office of HE) have made some progress on that by appointing the committee that will be responsible for drafting the policies and guidelines in that area.*

**ODL... . . . the draft of the PNG Open University (Sally)**

**FODE/L autonomy:** Paradoxes thrive within the realities of struggle in PNG’s HE FODE/L. Whilst FODE/L is enshrined in HE plans and university strategic plans, the enabling environment upon which it can flourish shrivels up within the ‘closed’ system of a conventional university. Some practitioners of FODE/L in dual-mode universities point to a lack of autonomy as the factor that cripples it as an alternative form of HE. Financial autonomy is the main issue openly raised by practitioners. Morris, an academic of University2, points out that the factors of self-reliance and sustainability can enable FODE/L to bloom. Morris thinks that University2 needs to allow FODE/L autonomy to generate and manage its internal revenue independently from the main university. This autonomy could ensure that FODE/L's financial system would meet and satisfy stakeholders’ demands. Morris thinks that a functional financial system is effective and imperative for efficient service delivery.

*Self reliant, to generate their own internal revenue and that understanding that policy/understanding is missing here* (Morris)
From University1, Gerard is a FODE/L practitioner who manages production and delivery of student learning materials. Gerard must rely on sloppy national transportation, communication and postal services for the delivery of student learning materials. He expressed his sentiments on autonomy by saying that:

*We should be given the autonomy, the autonomy to produce things. The financial autonomy should be given so we can produce quality stuff.* (Gerard)

One of the practitioners from University3, remarks:

*Currently, like here at University3, the department is expanding its program to other provinces, but we are unable to cope because... we do not have autonomy over our accounts* (Sheilla)

What is being implied is that, although there is an increase in demand for FODE/L, it is expanding amidst some obvious contradictions. The ambitious expansion for FODE/L becomes a reality only if requirements for quality are met. When the university controls funds that are generated, there are severe limitations on the sustainability FODE/L partnership with service providers. Consequently, FODE/L often suffers in terms of being able to pay its bills for services rendered by suppliers. Chaos becomes the trait towards quality failures lead when stakeholders are not satisfied.

*... and we are a sort of a source of revenue for the university, if only we have autonomy over our account, our current trust account, we’ll be able to meet our financial obligations on time* (Sheilla)

The revealed disharmony and unethical issues result in FODE/L stakeholders suffering from destructive institutional bureaucracies and unethical tendencies by providers. When payments are not made on time to service-providing partners of the
FODE/L system, negative tensions build up, and the FODE/L image is tarnished even more.

*Lack of consistent remuneration schemes for FODE/L academics:* Currently, the remuneration schemes for staff engaged in FODE/L programs cause disharmony and frustration. Marshall (2016) finds this to be ‘a wicked problem’ in current universities employing academics working in dual mode. Potentially, a wicked problem has a solution to it; however, when a solution is found, it can be challenging to convince all participants that it is the best one. Tony, a dean, highlights a situation that presents a wicked problem in FODE/L.

*The other impediment is how we compensate the academic staff. We have guidelines, on how to remunerate them for the materials that they produce, which can be offered in distance mode.* (Tony)

Tony knows of an issue that needs a solution. The problem is working out a remuneration scheme to reward staff for the FODE/L tasks that they do. Tony says that his institution has guidelines on the matter but it seems that they are not either paying the FODE/L staff accordingly or that the staff are not in agreement with the guidelines.

*Some academic staff feel that the materials they produce for distance mode education program, the money that we pay them for producing that material is not enough, they still would like to continue to get some money from the number of copies of the materials that we develop* (Tony)

Such revelations suggest that academic staff hope to receive continuing royalties for their work. Because this issue has not been resolved satisfactorily, some staff look on ODL students as second priority and tangle up their educational needs in unethical, immoral disharmony.
**FODE/L’s security and acceptance:** Security and acceptance of FODE/L pertain to existing institutional bureaucracies. Institutional bureaucracies can agree to, or dampen, initiatives by FODE/L leaders to promote QA initiatives in their units, departments or colleges. PNG FODE/L programs thrive or struggle, depending on the kind of leaders and management teams in their host universities. Findings indicate that leadership include FODE/L initiatives to keep institutional goals and purposes intact. However, leaders can also reduce creative and pro-active responses to immediate needs and thus affect the overall outcome of the initiatives. An example includes institutional QA practices such as QA units or departments dedicated for QA where FODE/L deans often await higher orders or instructions from QA units or the Vice Chancellors with regards to anything that is related to QA frameworks or policies. An example below is highlighted by one of the FODE/L deans:

*I am still thinking on how to do and how to do it or to compose something has to be done about it, you know, this bureaucracy is also important.* (Zeal)

In essence, FODE/L leaders are conscious that QA frameworks specific to FODE/L operations are a sub-system of the university and the bureaucracy of the main institution is a culture they have to cope with. As revealed in Zeal’s remarks, the top management of universities drive QA as a systemic approach and engage all their sub-systems. The QA agenda is an active and sensitive issue to the aspirations and needs of the institution. From the research, Divisional heads require encouragement to think about it and offer ideas for quality improvement where possible. Also bureaucracies may opt to be more open and flexible while engaging in collective endeavours leading to progressive quality outcomes.
Lack of support for the Open University concept and the autonomy discourse

The Open University proposition emerged as a theme from practitioners and FODE/L leaders’ discourse on FODE/L QA. Their thinking revolved around the notion of resources and their argument returned to the needs of the current universities in terms of funding. Whilst new and innovative ways foster the improvement in the quality of FODE/L, scaling-up of current universities is also needed (Garnaut & Namaliu, 2010). It is human nature to resist any proposal that threatens the norms of a society, organisation, a sector or an entity. For this reason, the Open University concept provokes resistance as well as support in PNG. Vice-chancellors think that funding allocation improves the current status and nature of dual-mode universities. They also see a threat posed by the power aspects of the Open University concept and suspect it is supported by the vested personal interests of some government advisors. Jonah remarked on this:

The people who are behind the government who try to push their own agenda.
Like the Open University, which will be a disaster. The way it is proposed, it should not go ahead. (Jonah)

He is against the concept of a National Open University, claiming that it is an idea adopted from India. He favours the consortium model currently practised in Australia.

I am against the agenda pushed currently to have PNG Open University. It has to be one independent unit and we are trying to copy what has happened in India. What I strongly recommend is that we learn from the Australians and do what they did. So what they did, they recognise each other’s programs and formed a consortium of universities, and these universities are offering open flexible learning. This is the best model. (Jonah)
Jonah points to learning from international contexts and searches for referenced societies (Lingard, 2010) in terms of borrowing ideas from other countries. He prefers models that are already well referenced, rather than those from a developing country, which may not yet have been critically examined. Whilst Jonah’s approach is valid to some extent, PNG’s FODE/L context is not on par with Australian FODE/L resources and systems. India’s model has some relevance to how FODE/L operates in developing country contexts. Otto, another Vice Chancellor also had the following to say about the concept.

So this new university, this Open University ol i toktok lo em, (they are talking about it) VCs are not supporting it. That is the issue. And so we are getting defeated here. (Otto)

Otto affirms Jonah's resistance to the idea of an Open University. The Open University is a government initiative destined to change the PNG FODE/L sector so it poses a threat and an opportunity for the current FODE/L universities. The threats mean less income and more competition for current universities. The opportunities include more accessibility to HE, thus reducing the pressures on current FODE/L universities so they can focus on their cohort of students more effectively. Therefore, it is a way forward for PNG FODE/L. Otto further questions the government support to existing universities:

It means another university to be. Another university and we are saying (the VCs who speak out more on this)- what about your six other universities? Our government is only talking about Open University. We cannot accept that, where are they going to get the manpower to mount those courses so we have an issue here, so we are remaining silent. (Otto)
Otto opposes the idea of an Open University and knows that the government does not understand the vice-chancellors' resistance to the concept. Thus, there is disharmony around the discourse regarding an Open University. Otto affirms that the government strongly advocates for such an innovation and claims that the financial assurance from the government to the Open University is very impressive.

*I think it depends on the mechanism you put in place. The government talks about big fund. When we were hearing those financial gurus talking about it so that is what it’s going to do? Make available funds for DE, and what about QA issues?* (Otto)

The deans and practitioners offered completely different perceptions of the concept, compared to the vice-chancellors. Accordingly, here are Tuta’s remarks:

*I think the government is very serious with the vision 2050 on the Open University concept. But again we need to come together to ensure that we have a QA framework in place* (Tuta)

Like Otto, Tuta affirms the government’s idea for an Open University. She argues that it comes from the Vision 2050 National Strategic Plan (Department of Personnel Management, 2009). Whilst the idea is good, Tuta thinks that a QA framework remains a prerequisite to have in place before the anything else. Tuta goes on to express her own thoughts about the Open University concept.

. . . *there are two options, collaboration of all DE institutions, come together and try to put together a framework that is going to work using the DE systems. They want to have that line of thinking for full autonomy, one university with a full autonomy.* (Tuta)

Tuta clearly highlights the government's thinking concerning the Open University and clarifies the negotiations and advocacy. She points out that the government is aware
of the universities’ current problematic QA statuses. Tuta actually opens up a new dimension for the Open University concept of having full autonomy rather being within the consortium approach reflective of the Australian Open University.

Government interest is effective quality and delivery for the students, to answer to the needs of the majority. So I would like to see collaboration because we want to tap onto our structure but if that cannot work then my option would then go for the full autonomy (Tuta)

Tuta understands the discussions and deliberations on fraught issues and expresses mixed feelings of resistance, reluctance and problems in accepting the suggested consortium. Tuta acknowledges a reality in that collaboration is yet to be fully fostered among the existing universities. The full autonomy approach is an obvious one for PNG National Open University.

And I am planning of something, like a seminar- on the Open University concept. (Tuta)

In the above excerpt, Tuta affirms being a supporter of the concept and aims to open up the discourse on the Open University. The discourse of a PNG Open University is vital to policy and planning of ODL initiatives. Minnaar (2013) asserts in a general sense, that a national policy developed links to all other policies thus requires greater sensemaking. Pertaining to PNG FODE/L policy discourses Abrioux (2008, Guy, (1992) and Mannan (2008) have also echoed similar sentiments for effective FODE/L support systems in the PNG national context. Virgil, who is from the same university as Tuta, made the following comments, reckoning that the advocates for the proposed university are dreamers.

They are dreamers. NEC has considered for further considerations and for CHE to go back with a recommendation. Those three models are; to establish
an Open University, which is independent from everything else. It has its own staff, everything. They want to form a consortium of six universities and a consortium body in the middle. It is a model that our university reported it to council (Virgil)

Basically, Virgil indicates that the OHE needs to think more about the model the Open University will be built upon and shows both resistance to, and acceptance of, the concept. He labels the advocates as dreamers in proposing a new dimension to a system that is already struggling. Despite that, he hopes the government initiative for an open university pertains to a culture of improvement. However, such ideas need to be fairly supported within workable frameworks akin to QA system ideas. Virgil supports the ‘open’ concept within his university interests. He senses the tensions and the need to come up with solutions to move forward. Whilst Virgil calls the OHE dreamers, he also is supportive of the idea but, like Tuta, Otto and Jonah, suggests that there is a lot more work to be done in scaling-up QA within the current universities in PNG. Along with the policy establishments and frameworks for QA as highlighted by Tuta, infrastructure and policies for Internet connectivity and ICT-enabled learning platforms need to be fully developed.

There is definitely room for improvement and an opportunity for FODE/L to be revitalised through the design and enactment of a national QA framework for FODE/L. Alternative options for FODE/L such as PNG Open University are being pursued at the conceptual stage. Whilst such an innovation is positively accepted, QA frameworks must build in sustainability features to harmonise with ideals of efficient and effective systemic FODE/L services. As Minaar (2013) asserts, a successful and well-designed FODE/L entity demands systemic prior, careful planning before it is implemented. Tomasi notes that it is
I think the university strives to make sure that it should be abreast with the changing environment and the need in the industry. These are some of the indicators that we can use to identify our quality standards (Tomasi).

7.2.1 Major obstacles to ensuring quality

According to the findings, and linked to research question 2, major obstacles in ensuring QA in PNG FODE/L were revealed. Contextual challenges remain at the forefront of the major obstacles to assuring quality for FODE/L in PNG universities. These are inclusive of the evolving stage of QA within the PNG HE context of developing country. From the findings, the major obstacles were clustered under four main themes of practice, policy, leadership and sustainability of QA. The evidence remains that QA for FODE/L is yet to be fully conceptually understood, framed, designed and developed.

Pertaining to FODE/L QA practice, themes were grouped into products, processes, production, attitude and culture of QA.

Products: Existing products of FODE/L that are major obstacles to ensuring FODE/L quality include:

- PNG’s FODE/L reality.
- The current dual mode system of FODE/L. It is a hindrance as FODE/L is always perceived and treated as second priority to face-to-face delivery thus quality suffers.
- Limited infrastructure for students.
- Poor quality managed programs.
- The quality of academics and non-academic staff involve in the delivery and management of FODE/L programs, products and service.
- Lack of resources and updated learning materials.
Process of FODE/L QA: The practices pertaining to the processes of teaching and learning included:

- The lack of quality mentoring,
- Poor feedback culture
- Insensitivity to learners
- Lack of remuneration
- Lack of monitoring and evaluation and rigorous research initiatives to inform practices of areas of improvement and sanctity of examinations.

Production: Under the notion of practice in the area of production, the production of learning materials continue to struggle with negative consequences where materials have not been revised and lack quality. Both students and staff highlighted the urgent need for updated and relevant learning resources for FODE/L. In addition, professional development or writing of course materials for learners is vital.

- Programs are left incomplete as course writers struggle to write and design and development of learning packaged for learners in the FODE/L arena.
- Staff and management need updating in this area in order to provide appropriate and timely teaching/learning activities and resources to the students.

Another major obstacle relates to the delivery mechanism of learning materials. As materials are produced late, late delivery of learning materials to learners tells of a sloppy aspect of FODE/L in some of the universities visited. FODE/L currently struggles within the realities of the HE sector. Its legality, security and acceptance are often questioned thus are major obstacles to its quality outcomes.

Attitude and culture of QA was also identified as a major obstacle to QA in FODE/L. Underlying FODE/L hindrances pertaining to attitude and culture are:
• The chaos culture persists along with systemic corruption throughout as students pay their way into programs, marks are falsified and good practices compromised.
• Poor ethics, moral values and conscience.
• The culture of silent acceptance of unethical practices.
• The culture of complacency.

Furthermore, tendency to reject change or new innovation to FODE/L ideals is a major obstacle to quality enhancement. The findings reveal the resistance to the Open University concept as a good example. Disharmony is also a major obstacle because of the existing misconception that FODE/L is of low quality than face-to-face learning.

**QA policies:** In PNG’s case, major obstacles for QA policies include:

• The lack of an authentic PNG QA philosophy for FODE/L.
• The absence of a National QA policy framework for FODE/L. This policy framework provides direction and guidelines towards the development of institutional QA policies.
• The lack of robust strategic planning of QA initiatives is obvious and also revealed from the findings in the data. Ethics, moral and conscience of people and institutions offering FODE/L remain a major obstacle in ensuring the quality outcomes.
• The lack of systemic policies for QA in FODE/L. Greater efforts in advocacy, design, development and implementation of such policies are obviously required. Meagre QA policies result in meagre QA practices and procedures. These are obvious policy deficiencies.
• QA policy implementation whereby institutions with QA policies continue to struggle with implementation.

Other deficiencies include lack of HE policy in recognising each other’s programs as well as a national policy for HE ICT integration.

**Leadership of QA:** Leadership of QA is major obstacle to ensuring quality. The findings relating to this aspect include:

• Lack of proactive leadership.
• Poor decision-making.
• Lack of passion for QA in FODE/L.
• Poor governance of QA initiatives.

This study revealed that where there are QA policies, implementation plans and leadership remains a challenge. A major obstacle is situated in the space of FODE/L leaders pursuing QA initiatives in inclusive sustainable strategies and lack of comprehensive FODE/L understanding for systemic quality enhancement.

**Sustainability of QA:** The findings reveal that lack of government funding and autonomy issues are major sustainability issues. First, lack of funding contributes to the failing student support system for rural based students. More so, the discourses from this study reveal the lack of government support for an already struggling FODE/L system. Secondly, linked with funding, the lack of autonomy issue poses a major challenge to quality outcomes. The sustainability of current FODE/L requires more autonomy in finances, administrative and academic matters. In the current dual mode system, FODE/L autonomy remains a major obstacle in PNG’s situation. A solution to that obstacle, is giving more autonomy to FODE/L departments or better still pursing the ideals of a PNG Open University. The lack of
sustainable practices, policies, processes, and programs for quality enhancement innovations such as the ideals of flexible open learning remains.

7.3 Findings linking to Research Question 3

Research Question 3: To what extent does the existing institutional quality assurance guidelines, process and support meet the demands of Open Educational Resource users in FODE/L? The sub-questions focused on; orientation to OER, QA and OER, support and capacity building of OER and networking for OER.

As highlighted in the findings, there is vague mention of OER QA guidelines in the QA policies that were analysed. The interview and student questionnaires also showed the lack of QA guidelines for OER integration thus it is an area that will require policy attention.

There has to be clear policy, in terms of the use of ICT technology. Thirdly policies that includes open sources, all these things, to have those policies in place if we don’t have them (Jonah)

Digital literacy surfaced in the data pertaining to FODE/L cultures such as e learning, OER competencies and educational technology sense making. Bob highlights the need for training and understanding of OER.

So with OER we need to advocate more, most of the course writers also they don’t know what OER is (Bob)

OER development/use and digital literacy are necessary skills in this era for both learners and educators (Johnson, Adams, Estrada, & Freeman, 2015; Jung & Collin, 2012; 2015; Prensky, 2001). Whilst it is not the only answer to the FODE/L problems currently being faced, it equates with the global competencies and skills to which PNG aspires. Whether universities that offer FODE/L can prioritise digital literacy is an option that depends on the availability of needed technologies and equipment.
Literature reveals the need for appropriate technology adoption for PNG learners, non-academic staff and academics of PNG Universities (Woruba & Abedin, 2015).

Prior to students being empowered through relevant literacies, their facilitators are also encouraged to acquire relevant digital literacies. Digital literacy is a required learning culture for all that is driven by visionary leadership and guided by sustainable ICT policies from the national level to the villages. Another group that was identified are information technology (IT) specialists. Betty highlights her concern in the following excerpt:

Those who are drivers of change . . . I will pick on the IT department. If IT department understands the work that FODE/L academic are trying to do they should support them if they want to put courses online then IT has to have the know how to try and support. . . . (Betty)

As with lecturers, IT specialists are change agents, and are said to be professionally skilful and capable of performing their jobs if and when demanded. Professional staff training becomes a weakness in the institution when academics lack competency and fail to benefit from programs designed to aid their teaching. Digital literacy for both staff and students demands attention in contemporary FODE/L settings. Betty highlights this issue:

There should be a lot of training with people on the ground that is going to drive projects. We have to work with them and there have to be measures of sustainability as well . . . to make it flourish. (Betty)

Virgil connects OER sensitivity to the global village for best practices.

We are now in a global village. In other words, whatever best international best practices that they are also doing, we need to adopt that (Virgil)
Virgil links global perspectives with local realities in an insightful comment. The global village offers good practices, innovations and creative ideas and strategies to improve FODE/L in local settings.

7.4 PNG QA policy discourse findings

Few QA policies exist in PNG universities offering FODE/L HE programs and services. Currently, four PNG universities offer FODE/L programs of some sort. Of these, three (3) provided QA policy documents pertaining to their systems. Two of the universities had specific QA policy documents for FODE/L whilst the other university, though being very active in their version of QA culture, provided information about Institutional QA and a corresponding document on Teaching and Learning Plan for the university-wide perspective (conventional campus delivery and flexible learning mode delivery). The QA policy documents were treated to policy analysis informed by Bacchi’s (2008) “What is the problem represented to be?” approach, as previously described in Chapter 6. The first of Bacchi’s questions required looking beyond the statement of the problem. The results emerging from this question revealed themes pertaining to harmonious FODE/L, fitness for purpose through QA, evolutionary QA approach, QA responsibilities, an institutional QA framework, international partnerships and academic audit culture practice. First, QA is recognised as an important essence of FODE/L from within the university. Second, QA advocacy remains a responsibility for all. An inclusive approach requires each individual and stakeholder to make QA practice a reality as per its institutional mission and goals.

The selected universities’ orientations to QA as represented in their QA policies revealed interesting insights. The QA policy from University3 reveals critical attitudes held by conventional staff to HE via FODE/L within that university. The
hostility faced by the FODE/L staff is the main rationale for enacting a QA policy. A bottom-up approach consolidates the crafting of a pertinent QA policy document. Its main purpose addresses the systemic issue of quality within a dual-mode setting. Intentionally, an underlying conviction remains that when done well, FODE/L can be successful or even more successful than traditional campus universities. This suggests that QA can be a means to pacify the existing institutional tension toward FODE/L. University3’s QA policy document presents a positive FODE/L image on the surface. It was intended to create a harmonious FODE/L through reflexive development of quality consciousness from the departmental level of FODE/L. As such, it serves as a means to improve FODE/L. The QA policy document reveals a conscious, reflective QA-cultured ODL department within a dual-mode institution.

Similarly, the problem at University1 is one linked to the justification of FODE/L. The problem resonates with University3’s issue of hostility. It addresses the current hostility but aims more towards self-determination or autonomy. Its QA policy document justifies the need for more self-determining powers and points towards being autonomous. The emerged themes presented issues of FODE/L justification. These are inclusive of a self-sustaining division of the University with ideals pertaining to fitness for purpose, evolutionary QA approach and inclusive QA responsibilities. Similar to University3, University1’s QA policy document emerges as a bottom-up approach. As a bottom-up approach, the crafting of QA policies is pursued from the departmental level through a process of consultation. This consultation process involves a series of workshops for different stakeholders within the FODE/L system. It speaks indirectly of moving towards self-sufficiency and release from its current dual-mode arrangements. University4’s QA documents
revealed that the institutional priorities and QA culture are linked to international
benchmarks and marketability.

The underlying QA logic in the discourse revealed issues of governance,
power and reflectivity. In University3’s case, the logic is seen through the lens of
governance and reflection whereby the QA policy brings forth QA responses from
FODE/L within a dual-mode system. A university systems approach for FODE/L QA
demonstrates harmony and responsibility. Henceforth, the QA policy document
aligns QA strategies and the university’s overall intentions. In the context of
University3, the QA policy document was intended to dissolve the myths about ODL,
reveal its current realities and thus recommits QA aspirations.

University1’s QA policy document’s logic meshes with the need for QA
enculturation within the dual-mode university. With leadership being at the forefront
of QA initiatives, issues such as decentralization, dialogue, and democratic style of
management serve as security, guaranteeing practice for the leadership within. The
logic of the QA policy at University1 exists within the domain of leadership
challenges, security and power contestations. The logic of the QA document from the
University4 portrays QA as management-led and thus is established with a QA Unit.
QA is a priority in alignment with the University and the National Strategic QA Plan
Framework. The main conclusion is that QA exists as an institutional management
priority in alignment with the National Quality-related policy directives. It can also be
linked with contestations, irony and paradoxes for authority, power and control for
quality outcomes in sustaining leadership regimes.

Pertaining to Bacchi’s questions of policy analysis, one of the questions asks,
how has this representation of the problem come about? In the context of the QA
policies from the PNG universities offering FODE/L, there are contextual variations.
These variations are inclusive of QA cultures, QA practices and the QA policies. There is no ‘one size fits all’ (Kanwar, 2013) approach. Therefore, the representation of the problem cannot be seen from the same angle for all PNG FODE/L dual mode universities. It is one that has come about as results of subsequent events experienced either at institutional or national levels. From the contexts of both University3 and University1, the problem shared by both universities comes from the hostility to FODE/L from the campus-teaching traditionalists. Such hostility has been in existence over time and has caused quality issues within FODE/L to be ignored.

Given the current issue of limited communications of ODL learners and staff, the QA policies are intended to address the issues and thus bring out an improved function and image of FODE/L. From University1, the QA policy represents justification of FODE/L existence as a result of continued tensions between FODE/L and conventional HE. This relates to power and controlling effects on FODE/L within this dual-mode university. The presentation of the problem from University4 is quite different as it reveals QA as a priority within the university’s vision for quality enhancement.

The lack of sensitiveness and pro-activeness of FODE/L remains problematic over time. Pertaining to University3, the need to review and revise the policy document requires commitment and passion. The QA policy dates back to 2004 and is in need of revision by the current management. The scenario at University1 relates to negative attitudes towards FODE/L. Furthermore, the QA policy exists independently of the whole university’s QA system. Thus, the QA systems are fragmented and beset by power tensions and the drive for autonomy. For University4, the specifics of QA towards Flexible Learning lack a FODE/L QA policy that is inclusive of innovative approaches according to the University’s priorities.
In reference to Bacchi’s (2009) policy analysis questions, the question often asked refers to the silences within any policies. Where are the silences? In the context of the QA policies analysed from University1, University3 and University4, the silences are contextual in nature. In University3’s QA policy, the missing link relates to the national Standards with reference to the whole university. Employer demands require sensitivity to its employees and specific QA guidelines are necessary for different stakeholders. These are linked with an established authority on FODE/L. QA is therefore imperative. The silences associated with University3’s QA document relate to linkages to the university and National Directive Plans. For University1, the silence remains in the strategic approach for QA as an institutional culture.

Successful QA for FODE/L in dual-mode universities can serve as models for University1 to learn from. Furthermore, creativity brings forth new dimensions and change for QA in FODE/L. In dual-mode contexts, creativity remains silent. Where FODE/L delivery copes with dwindling quality outputs, alternative approaches are needed through creative thinking and sense making. This ensures good-quality FODE/L.

Another silence in the QA policy problem is represented by the notion of a contemporary curriculum. This is curriculum that is reflective of market demands and stakeholders’ priorities. With reference to University4’s QA policy documents, the missing aspects include guidelines for FODE/L. As well, QA guidelines for OER are missing in all the FODE/L QA policies analysed. The current FODE/L QA policies require diversifications and sustainable QA approaches and the need to specify the means for achievement of these.

The problem representations in the QA policies are quite different when seen in their respective contexts. University3’s QA policy can be thought of in terms of a
functional incentive model, requiring QA evidence and results. QA plans require clarity for implementation. The graphical representation of QA guidelines can potentially demonstrate the proposed incentive QA model. Within University1’s setting, the problem can be seen differently through an institutionally driven QA master plan. Such a plan cuts through all sectors and divisions of the university. A master Plan for QA improvement drives quality as an institutional priority. University4’s QA problem can be activated through a bottom-up QA improvement plan as it is with the cases in University1 and University3.

The effects of this representation of the problem in the different QA policies are presumed to bring about changes and improvement in the problem identified. In University3, the effects result in QA monitoring and the location of quality emphasis within a responsible framework. The QA policy document has existed since 2004 and requires further attention and the need to reactivate it. Generational issues such as leadership changes occur due to the realities of time.

In University1, QA policy advocacy and implementation requires leadership that can drive its QA intentions. Mannan (2008) highlights the risk for ODL institutions lacking a comprehensive QA policy where leadership is not committed to guide and pursue QA with vigour. Its current QA policy lacks collective responsibility to accept and act on its ideal of an institutionalised quality consciousness culture. Furthermore, ownership of its QA policy still lags behind in sustaining an authentic QA institutional culture as second nature in actual practice. Amidst University1’s QA policy weaknesses, in policy implementation FODE/L leadership for QA remains a challenge that is yet to be truly realised.

For University4, the established culture for QA enhancement remains a bonus to its QA policy document. The effects result in QA being prioritised and thus
promote institutional branding, professionalism and credibility. Institutional credibility becomes a norm and an attribute that is cultivated and nurtured. Implementation of QA policies enables constant improvement. The presentation of the problem from University3 was produced through a bottom-up approach to the management level in 2004.

Produced as a bottom-up strategy, the QA policy can be reviewed through a consultative process to address contemporary issues of quality. It highlights a starting point to an improved QA framework for FODE/L within the university. From University1’s QA policy, its problem representation emerged from a proactive management and developed through a consultative approach. A question to ask is if there has been change as result of that policy being in place. A comparative analysis pertaining quality issues is needed to identify room for improvement. With University4, the presentation of the problem through the QA documents impacts on an established QA culture. However, questions about its persistence prevail. The existence of an evolving QA culture over time presents lessons learnt for future improvement.

7.5 Focus groups Data set

The key findings pertaining to the four focus groups from selected PNG Universities revealed seven (7) main themes: 1) Professional training for both staff and students; 2) Improved practice of QA in PNG FODE/L universities; 3) Insightful policies; 4) Leadership; 5) Innovations leading the way forward; 6) the nature of PNG FODE/L’s realities; and 7) QA culture. These emerged themes are discussed within the four main categories of Practice, Policy, Leadership and Sustainability. In the process of establishing understanding, the emerged seven themes are examined for
sense making as well as the analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

The selection of participants in the focus groups was derived from the institutional FODE/L approaches that are utilised. For instance, instructional designers (IDs) were from universities that produced and delivered well-designed and packaged learning materials, as their role is vital in the analysis, design and creation of such materials. Similarly, where flexible learning through blended learning strategies thrive, the lecturers’ presence is obvious. The academics in this study teach in both modes of delivery, that is the conventional face-to-face lecture room teaching and the FODE/L delivery. They meet the academic challenge of offering equal treatment to the different cohorts of students. In this study, it appears that often FODE/L students form the lower-priority cohorts. In the cases where QA is an established culture, QA officers are evident and can discuss their roles with regard to the establishment of priorities. In this study, two QA officers participated in two different focus groups. A sense of harmony was evident as reflected in the statement below, from one of the QA officers:

*It was good that we were able to mix and mingle to know that we are all one.*

*It is an opportunity for us all that we do not always do this* (Betty)

This statement expresses the values Betty held of appreciation, harmony and inclusive participation in a reflective narrative space that focussed on QA. It was a rare opportunity to exchange ideas and to think and learn collaboratively about the realities of QA practices within the various systems.

In Figure 7.1, University3 and University4 had more academic representation whilst University1 had instructional designers as their FODE/L strength for their respective focus groups.
The larger number of academics in the focus groups taught in blended learning programs as opposed to the live tutorials and home study/print materials approach for distance learning. Focus group insights were valuable. However, in some instances, participants were cautious in what they said whereas, in other cases, they freely expressed their opinions.

7.6. Semi-Structured Interview Data Set

This group of participants posed interesting insights into their demographics and leadership roles. An interesting feature of leadership in PNG universities relates to differences in the leadership position titles. For uniformity, this research refers to leaders of universities as vice-chancellors although, in reality, other titles are used like president or rector, according to the appropriate institution’s specification. Likewise, the heads of FODE/L units are referred to as deans despite the various actual position titles, for example Head of department (HOD) or Executive Director (ED). In circumstances where Vice-Chancellors were unavailable, Pro-Vice-Chancellors were
invited to be participants in the research interviews. The following are some of the key findings based on the interview data.
### Table 7.1: Emerged findings from the semi-structured interview data sets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Findings</th>
<th>Result Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evolving QA as an Organisational Culture</td>
<td>FODE/L universities are at different levels of conceptualisation and practice of QA as an organisational culture from embryonic to evolving and matured QA cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of National Evaluation Framework and Practice for FODE/L</td>
<td>Within the need for the evaluation and monitoring of PNG FODE/L, the country lacks an enabling mechanism similar to that currently operating within the practices and domains of conventional universities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA policy guidelines deficiency</td>
<td>FODE/L leaders agreed that QA policy guidelines, framework and mechanisms are lacking in PNG HEIs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics, moral values and conscience of FODE/L</td>
<td>The question of conscience, ethics, moral values and virtues remains a challenge for harmonising current FODE/L in PNG despite its national declaration as a Christian country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FODE/L’s security and acceptance</td>
<td>A vibrant QA culture gives FODE/L security and acceptance and thus offers the potent to bloom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glo-calisation</td>
<td>It was commonly highlighted that global sense making of good practices and strategies for improvement of FODE/L in national contexts is needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open University and autonomy discourses</td>
<td>The PNG Open University concept is currently resisted by the vice-chancellors but strongly supported by the deans and FODE/L practitioners. Autonomy for FODE/L within universities was strongly supported by the deans as well as the practitioners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic change and innovations for PNG FODE/L</td>
<td>Systemic change and innovations for PNG through ICT is a requirement for modernising FODE/L within the QA culture. The human attitude for sustaining the passion of FODE/L is essential so that a responsible FODE/L can produce positive outcomes for PNG universities and their students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability Agenda</td>
<td>FODE/L has its value in PNG and merits co-existence with traditional HE. Therefore its sustainability plans and strategies have to be crafted within the ideals of QA philosophy, practice and culture in their true sense.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gender disparity is an obvious finding within the leadership domain of the PNG FODE/L universities. From the eight interviewees, only one female officer holds an acting position as dean. A concluding statement could be that FODE/L management and leadership is mainly Papua New Guinean, as evidenced with 63% over 37% being expatriates. As FODE/L deans, 75% are Papua New Guinean over 25% expatriate. Localisation of FODE/L leadership thrives but could improve with continued external support from international expertise through mentorship programs. Could FODE/L leadership be improved with more participation of women in leadership positions? Is there a need to have leadership-mentoring programs for current leaders for FODE/L to scale-up its current realities? Likewise, should the recruitment of FODE/L leadership be sourced internationally or should Papua New Guineans work with leadership mentoring programs to become effective leaders? These questions offer insights that can be probed further in seeking improved FODE/L leaders and managers.
7.7 Student Questionnaires emerged themes

The themes that emerged from the student questionnaires were grouped into seven (7) main categories. These were: 1) QA practice, 2) policy frameworks, 3) leadership and management, 4) contemporary curriculum, 5) student voices on QA, 6) QA sustainability, and 7) obstacles and challenges. Under the category of QA practice, the students listed their needs for qualified and competent staff, QA solutions to challenges, National Regulatory mechanisms for QA, QA audit and research, a remedy for the lack of institutional OER use, inclusive QA collaboration, focus on quality, global realisation of QA at local levels, the need for QA advocacy, filtering systems for FODE/L, QA culture and critical issues in FODE/L practices. A table illustrating these themes and students responses on each theme is provided in Appendix 11 located at the end of this thesis.

7.8 Discussions and implications

The situational terrain of specific PNG FODE/L participants offered valuable insights for this study. A situational terrain (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009) includes narratives from audiences for accountability purposes. Gubrium and Holstein describe such a terrain of discourse as “a landscape of meaning making preferences where moral horizons of stories and story telling are paramount” (p.33). The value of such stories within this research is representative of the traditional, contemporary, geographical and ethnicity facets of Melanesia. The situational terrain of this research exists within contested territories of FODE/L departments within existing structures of established conventional universities. Tensions, disharmony and lack of QA cultures are obvious problems that have resulted in the mixed energies of resilience and resistance as murky underlying forces. The emerged key findings from the combined data sets revealed the following four main categories of QA discourses in
this study. These areas are: Practice, Policy, Leadership/management and Sustainability. In the process of analysis and meaning making, the SWOT analysis lens (Shahijan, Rezaei, & Preece, 2016) was applied.

SWOT analysis considers the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of QA within the emerged findings. In doing so, one hopes to illuminate the current nature of QA in FODE/L. According to (Shahijan et al., 2016) SWOT analysis provides an insightful lens into the statuses of organisations like HEIs and aids understanding through sense making. They used the SWOT analysis to illustrate the internal and external factors with long-term strategy potentials that positively or negatively impacted HEIs. Weick et al., (2005) state that sense making aids thinking through messiness, helps to categorise or label abstract reflections and offers critical insights into phenomena. For this study, sense making complements SWOT to establish the PNG FODE/L QA story with the potential for future possibilities.

Figure 7.3 Key thematic findings
7.8.1 QA Practice

With QA Practice, the strengths identified included, first, the establishment of institutional QA units and staff dedicated to QA outcomes. This denotes FODE/L QA as a budding institutional culture. Second, there is the determination for QA from the National HE domain (Department of Higher Education Research Science & Technology, 2015; DPM. 2009). Third, QA is pivotal towards scaling-up the current FODE/L initiatives as the country embarks on complementary approaches, such as the establishment of its first National Open University and OER integration for quality improvement.

The weaknesses of QA practices showed grey areas yet to be improved. Insights gained from the interview and focus group data and student questionnaire revealed that QA practice for FODE/L is yet to be realised both nationally and institutionally. Implementation of comprehensive FODE/L QA policies lags. A national FODE/L system is lacking and current QA practices in FODE/L exist only in fragmented approaches. An opportunity surfaces, through for the establishment of integrated institutional frameworks at university levels. The threats for FODE/L reveal a wicked problem that pertains to the continued disharmony of FODE/L whereby FODE/L is treated as a cash-generating entity for dual-mode universities, which have to survive with reduced government funding.

A myriad of cultures exist needing QA applications; these are the culture of FODE/L itself, the culture of QA and the culture of OER. First, PNG FODE/L has evolved within the diverse cultural context of PNG. Whilst it is treated as a contributor to HE’s expansion, it is often branded as a second-rate form of HE within paradoxical realities. An example relates to FODE/L as a source of money. However, for FODE/L to bloom within ethical and moral values, its honesty policies
have to be lived up to. Otherwise, FODE/L’s quality subsides and goes down the pathway of neglect, chaos, ad hoc tendencies, corruptions and other negatives.

Second, a quality consciousness culture is fostered through ongoing communication processes, and the promotion of better attitudes that lead to behaviours which add quality. Ideally, quality as a culture should persist as the institutional norm. QA involves mindfulness, consciousness and appreciation of the quality standards of FODE/L products and service. Open and constructive communications promote quality awareness through effective dialogue and actions.

Figure 7.4 shows how QA as a culture pertains to quality consciousness or mindfulness through processes of discourse, actions, reflections and continuity. The QA situational terrain is treated with a conscious culture of proactive QA activities. From the data and literature findings, such an approach is aligned to quality QA as a means for continuous improvement. Kenny who is a FODE/L dean, highlighted such as practical conscious approach when he responded to a question asked about how he, as a leader, advocates for quality. The question is – ‘Explain how you, as a leader advocates for QA in your organisation and especially for FODE/L.’

Through continuous staff meetings, through checks and balance, in the processes of what we do, and also through with feedback with our clients we advocate QA in that manner (Kenny)
A reflexive approach to Quality Consciousness Culture

The rights of FODE/L stakeholders are critically important and valuable through natural communications built on trust, transparency and truthfulness. The culture of FODE/L thrives in sharing opportunities that lead toward integral holistic human development.

The OER culture lacks in PNG universities. OER development and practices were supported by all participants in the study but with the caveat that Internet connections are too poor to allow the sharing and re-use of OERs to occur. OER's biggest advantage resides within the notion of sharing of quality learning resources. In PNG FODE/L universities, a justification emerges for such a culture to be fostered because good-quality OERs can raise the level of the resources currently in use. Data from the interviews and questionnaires offers great insights into how quality is sensed and practised. As revealed in this study, a quality culture can drive the integrity and the essence of FODE/L. The concept of a quality culture in HEIs is not something new but is spoken within the very fabric of these FODE/L institutions. However, the realities that emerged from the reflective narratives of practitioners pertaining to what they perceived as QA culture show mismatching and dilemmas in policy and practice whereby the quality is rhetorical and the ‘quality’ systems are fragmented. On a positive note, there is evidence of authentic quality culture based
on global, national, local (glonacal) and engaged quality initiatives achieved in piecemeal approaches (Rooney, 2015).

Human Resources through Capacity Building in FODE/L is a critical need. The training needs highlighted were: mentoring of QA for practitioners, QA mentoring for FODE/L leadership and management, QA discourse for pro-activeness, QA policy ownership, research for quality improvement trainings and research for OER development and use. The nature of QA in PNG’s HE for FODE/L is experiencing a vigorous push from the OHE to actively establish and enforce QA within the revised thirteen (13) HE standards. Therefore, QA in HE is on the National Agenda, beginning with the establishment of the Accreditation and QA Committee in 2010. In terms of distance learning, no specific National QA framework dedicated to FODE/L was revealed. A conclusion drawn from this is that FODE/L QA guidelines are currently the same as the conventional mode of delivery. This is a starting point for future opportunities to improve quality.

QA policies serve as DNA blueprints for FODE/L institution. Pertaining to the systems within which they exist, QA policies relate to other factors like core belief systems, environmental factors and the ethical and moral responsibilities for its sustainability. FODE/L quality is compromised when there are a systemic failure of functional QA core values and purposes. QA policy comments emerged from all the data sets.

One idea about QA policies centred on having a national umbrella QA policy that is adapted from global best practice and crafted to suit local realities. Such an approach is essential to direct theory and practices at institutional levels right down to individual levels of performance. The strengths identified include QA efforts in integrating QA policies in the National level with room for further improvement. QA
policies specifically for FODE/L were evident in two universities and HE QA is now a prioritised policy agenda at national and institutional levels. QA policies evident in the two universities emerged as bottom-up approaches. The weaknesses of QA policies include lack of implementation, a need to revise current QA policies to include guidelines for ICT, OERs and the recognition of other FODE/L initiatives within the country. Whilst there are increased calls for QA policies, much effort in learning and understanding of such policies is needed and requires both sensitivity and effort. Monitoring and evaluation of QA policies demand that much-needed guidelines serve the purposes for which they were crafted. The lack of policy enactment is often a challenge. ‘Goldbrick’ is a term that refers to anything that is deemed valuable but turns out to be worthless (www.dictionary.com). University1’s QA policy document is goldbrick in that it is deemed valuable but turns out to be of no effect in the prevailing quality crisis. Though it is appreciated, its intentions are yet to be realised. Understanding and passion are needed to translate action plans into real actions. The tyranny of issues and bad practice has to be confronted and proactively redressed in accordance with the best values for FODE/L in PNG.

Leadership for QA remains a challenge for PNG. FODE/L leadership often suffers from poor governance, political interference and corruption (Jung, 2012). In contemporary FODE/L realities, QA leadership calls for sensitivity to chaos, complexity and leadership (Vanderslice, 2014). QA has to be driven by passionate leaders who are empowered to lead within functioning, resource-based FODE/L systems. Whilst the hype remains, FODE/L needs leaders having the passion, the heart and the capability to lead and bring FODE/L to the next level of improvement and scaling.
Leadership and I repeat it again, good leadership drives change, and change just does not happen, positive change. (Virgil)

Purposeful leadership with the capability to bring about changes comes with being proactive in ensuring that QA ideals thrive and are driven for the purpose they serve. FODE/L leadership in PNG can be no exception especially where QA is demanded.

Sustainability covers all aspects of QA practice, policy, leadership and FODE/L itself. In sensing QA sustainability from the four main areas identified, one is led to think within the lines of sustaining beliefs, attitudes and guidelines to foster FODE/L’s abundance and quality. An ideal approach is required, one that encompasses virtues, ethics, moral values, positive spiritual power, harmony and abundance in seeking the sacredness of what is aspired for FODE/L as a common good. A sustainable option for quality-enhanced FODE/L involves the ideas of OERs. OER integration for FODE/L can lead to growth in quality and satisfaction for all. PNG FODE/L should pursue working collaboratively to develop procedures for equitable sharing of all learning resources.

The sharing culture and philosophy of OER resonates with Melanesian cultural values. As highlighted in Chapter 2, Melanesians values are inclusive of sharing, mutual cooperation and consensus, reciprocity and the value of honouring obligations or returning good deeds. The development and use of OERs can be a sustainable approach to improving the currently struggling FODE/L by providing needed resources for students. OERs are part of the Open Educational Practices (OEP) defined by ICDE as “practices which support the production, use and reuse of high quality Open Educational Resources (OER) through institutional policies, which promote innovative pedagogical models, respect and empower learners as co-
producers on their lifelong learning path” (Atenas, Havemann, & Priego, 2014). An OER model empowers individuals and promotes the pedagogy of abundance (Littlejohn & McGill, 2016). This involves learner participation in the adoption of OERs from outside PNG, and their adaptation, use, and reuse in appropriate settings, as well as the creation of PNG’s own OERs.

![Diagram of OER potentials for learners as co-creators of learning resources](image)

**Figure 7.5** OER potentials for learners as co-creators of learning resources (A Littlejohn & L. McGill, 2016) used with permission from Springer.

An implication and significance for the integration of OER is that it is a way forward for FODE/L universities who are struggling to meet learners’ demands for contemporary resources pertaining to modern day realities. QA in PNG’s FODE/L exists and has the potential to change and evolve towards the ideas of perpetual improvement. Three stages of QA of evolutionary growth from conception to maturity and perpetual QA improvement (Mannan, 2008, Hopkins, 2003) are evident in PNG universities offering FODE/L.
Figure 7.6 The evolutionary Stages of QA in FODE/L at PNG Universities adapted from Mannan (2008) and Hopkins (2003)

7.9 The Ethics Enterprise QA Model for FODE/L in PNG

This study argues that PNG FODE/L is based on human, cultural, ethical and spiritual modes of learning. These modes foster the provision of quality education through integral human development in a process of “upbringing and educating a perfect human professing a worldview with basic components of belief, spirituality, harmony ethics, harmony-morality, harmony-peace, harmony-love, mutual understanding, patience, tolerance, personal and collective harmony and Christ’s ethics” (Suvorov & Suvorova, 2015a). Pertaining to PNG’s constitution as a Christian country, its ideals for QA and HE should also be reflective of such proclamations. Whilst modern Christianity is faced with new challenges, HEIs offering FODE/L are reminded to be mindful of the challenges of such student demographic backgrounds and the expectations that students bring with them. This attention can ensure that harmony within a sustainable FODE/L is based on social justice, equity and accessibility to HE.
The proposed model of QA is derived from multiple perspectives and philosophical domains. It is based on Aristotle and Aquinas’s propositions of the cardinal virtues of prudence, temperance, justice and courage, as underlying paradigms (Neubert & Bruno Dyck 2016; Schumacher, 2016). Prudence links with practical wisdom. Schumacher (2016) explains prudence as the virtue that positions our minds within reality, the essences of our worldly encounters and our own realities. In the classical ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas, prudence guides human actions and is not found in the speculators, dreamers or impulsive humans, but in the active doers of human activities (Farrell & Healey, 1952). Farrell and Healey affirm that a prudent society, man or individual pursue all human activity as worthy in the vision of God. For FODE/L a quality attribute that needs fostering is prudence in the conduct of education and service towards the common good for all.

The cardinal virtue of Justice offers ways to imbue our desires with motivation to make the most of the abilities and resources we have, for the sake of contributing to the flourishing of others. This is where the ideal of abundance comes. As societies are manmade, their happiness emerges from peace and order through the virtue of justice. In FODE/L, the virtue of justice requires giving stakeholders what is deemed to be their right. Justice fosters stability and efficiency resulting in successful living.

The cardinal virtue of Fortitude provides all with the strength to face challenges whilst exercising justice and prudence. This virtue requires resilience, courage, strength and faith in oneself and thus is a moral virtue. When a man or, in this case, FODE/L universities have a great love of moral good, then they can find strength to be brave in the pursuit of good (Farrell & Healey, 1952).
The cardinal virtue of Temperance gives us discipline or faithfulness to live. This virtue promotes happiness and control. In sustaining QA for FODE/L, universities in PNG need to remain faithful to their promises, such as engaging with QA. Quality has to be pursued for the benefit of stakeholders.

Sustainability for FODE/L through QA mechanisms and systems develops from ethics, moral, virtues, harmony, abundance and happiness. These must flourish within the culture of continuous improvement for the betterment of oneself and others. Sacred connections to the ideals bring in the embodiment of divine intelligence that comes from the creator of all that is. Some people may refer to this creator of all that is as God, which, in one’s ontology, is the spiritual component of one’s being. The moral and ethical crisis (Suvorov & Suvorova, 2015a) currently faced in PNG FODE/L results from quality being compromised and revolves around contradictions. Harmony is the vehicle by which holistic and sustainable development in the nation is produced. An ideal QA model proposed for PNG FODE/L is one that is integrated with contextual values, best practice ideals and embraced in conditions that are perfect for sustained development-evolution of human beings, nations and civilisations in the lenses of harmony, ethics and moral values.

Orimativian (2006, p.117) explains ‘integrity’ as “a high standard of honesty, truthfulness, decency and honour for all that is never breached.” An integrity-based FODE/L is one that promotes harmony over the combination of tribalism, corruption, ignorance, division and faction (Narakobi, 2010). A proposed QA framework harnesses worldview, nature, and positive cultures by sensitising to the source of everything and what it means for the good of all. The four cardinal virtues highlighted by Neubert and Dyck, (2016,p.4) of “prudentia [practical wisdom], justitia [justice], fortitudo [courage], and temperentia [self-control]” are morally and ethically relevant
to PNG’s FODE/L QA system as underlying principles that can be evident in the QA processes.

**Figure 7.6** Ethics Enterprise QA Framework for QA in PNG FODE/L adapted from Lemaitre (2014)

The Ethics Enterprise QA Model (EEQAM) is aimed at establishing virtues that cut across race, belief systems and to higher regard for moral conscience in HE (Watson, 2014). Harmony conforms to love and surpasses competition, negligence of duties, corruption and pursuit for credible and high quality of HE delivery. Whilst there are disharmonious traits of practice, leadership, policy and sustainability ideals, FODE/L remains critically important with other forms of HE delivery. Its QA systems and mechanism have to be crafted and designed with the contextual realities
of PNG - positive Melanesian values, evolutionary growth of quality and most importantly fostering the four main cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance.

7.10 Conclusion

This study has revealed some aspects of QA in HE for FODE/L in PNG. The emerged findings reveal that QA culture in PNG FODE/L is growing and the energies for QA increases in the current HE sector. The researcher’s notion of quality culture and QA for FODE/L connects to mother earth and her Melanesian ontological grounding in the values of spiritualism, sacredness and cultivation of food. The garden metaphor is appropriate to this thinking about FODE/L practices of QA within PNG universities. FODE/L universities prevail as sacred mind gardens. These mind gardens flourish with quality embedded or rooted in its existence. What is visibly on top of the soil is a manifestation of the invisible features beneath the soil upon which the FODE/L garden thrives. Its blending with good practices sustains quality cultures and outcomes through existing quality assurance mechanisms within the institutions.

Though QA in FODE/L still lags in QA practice, policy, leadership and sustainability efforts, optimism exists for the establishment of QA systems. It is one’s dream that innovative approaches imbued with creativity are harnessed as ways forward to a revamped and emerging PNG FODE/L. Within the dimensions of harmony, ethics, moral values and positive Melanesian precepts, a proposed QA framework is advocated for the common good for all. Given the findings, this study identifies opportunities for a sustainable QA culture and proposes a QA framework based on ethics, integrity, moral standards and continuous improvement, called The Ethics Enterprise QA Model (EEQAM) for PNG FODE/L. This proposed model might shape and improve the current PNG FODE/L system, and hence, provide
research data for the planners and policymakers of PNG HE. The EEQAM is a personal conviction based on goodness, harmony and the logic of the creator of all that is. It is a story of one’s identity for growth, prosperity to create opulent mind gardens for future generations whilst harnessing the challenges of the moments for a better tomorrow. Significantly, this study fills a gap in PNG FODE/L literature. Whilst PNG FODE/L blooms, the need to inform practice and policy through research is vital for HE.

The next chapter presents the conclusion to this thesis with further research implications for a quality assured PNG FODE/L.
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Introduction

This study offered insights into the nature of QA in those PNG universities that are engaged in Flexible Open Distance Education/Learning (FODE/L) programs. The study embarked on pursuing authentic stakeholders’ insights within their contextual realities towards a greater understanding of QA. The study examined the ways in which QA is expressed in the FODE/L context and thus contributes to the likelihood that more relevant and practical outcomes for good practice can ensue.

This chapter consists of six parts. Section 8.2 gives an overview of the study, the theoretical framework and the methodologies used in this study in alignment with the research questions. Section 8.3 summarizes the main conclusions of this study based on the findings from Chapter 7. Section 8.4 offers further findings derived from the theoretical, research, practice and policy evidence of QA in FODE/L, while section 8.5 highlights the contributions from this research, reveals the strengths and limitations of this study, and discusses the potential for further research. Section 8.6 offers some recommendations to pursue in light of QA for FODE/L within the national, institutional and micro levels of operations.

8.2 Overview of the Study

Chapters 1 to 4 presented the background and contextual insights about QA from global (regional) to national to local (glo-na-cal) policies and practices. The broad outlines of QA were examined first to enable an understanding of its historical origins and applications in many parts of the world, first to hard-core industry, manufacturing, and business enterprises and then to less-regulated occupations, such
as healthcare and education services. Definitions of the word ‘quality’ were explored to clarify the extent to which this word could be applied meaningfully to the activities of education.

Question 1 probed the nature of QA in PNG’s universities that provide FODE/L programs and services, while Question 2 explored the major obstacles faced in those universities in relation to the implementation of those quality standards and practices. Question 3 investigated the ways in which existing QA guidelines could facilitate the integration and development of Open Educational Resources (OERs) in PNG. This question underlined the latent quality improvement initiatives of FODE/L and invoked the possibilities provided by the use of emerging and affordable technologies.

This study used a multiple theory approach (discussed in Chapter 5) to obtain some insights into QA in PNG’s FODE/L system. Guided by Research Questions 1 and 2, it explored and evaluated the current status of, challenges to, and opportunities for, QA. The ideals of QA for FODE/L in PNG’s context are congruent with, and supported by the researcher’s deeply rooted Melanesian identity and connections, spirituality, the pursuit for enhancing life and the nurturing of cultural attributes. These correspond to the sacredness, co-creation of knowledge and activities focused on the common good. Similarly, contemporary PNG FODE/L is evaluated and compared through the agency of a worldview lens of ethics, morals and harmony.

Chapter 6 presented the data analysis and treatment of data whilst chapter 7 provided the results study and some discussions of those results. Chapter 8 concludes with the research discussions, research limitations and potentials along with some recommendations linked to the findings.
8.3 Conclusions of the research findings

This section includes the research conclusions based on the research aim, questions asked and the revelation of the findings in the previous chapter. The research intended/aimed to explore and evaluate the current status of, challenges to, and opportunities for, QA culture and good practices in the PNG’s FODE/L-offering universities.

| Research question 1 - what is the nature of QA in PNG’s Universities that provide Open and Distance Learning programs and Services?

The nature of QA in the context of FODE/L in PNG’s dual mode universities is problematic as the findings of this study revealed the critical need for an integrated, systemic and consistent FODE/L system in PNG’s the HE sector. It emphasises on the development of a sustainable, pervasive QA culture, evidenced by demonstrable procedures and practices. The study revealed that the practice of QA currently takes place in fragmented systems of the FODE/L institutions, which is gradually improving with piecemeal approaches. This reality shows the need for a unified FODE/L system within which comprehensive QA mechanisms can be crafted. This study shows there is a demand for an integrated system of FODE/L and, where possible, autonomy of FODE/L delivery within current dual-mode arrangements and also through the establishment of the proposed PNG National Open University.

As revealed in this study, QA initiatives in each of the universities that were researched are at different levels of evolutionary realities. University4 has a mature QA system whilst the rest of the universities are struggling at the embryonic and evolving stages of its establishment. The interviews and questionnaires showed that each participant (stakeholder) derived their meaning of quality from various influences, including those of ethical responsibilities, moral obligations, social justice
and prudence, regarding what FODE/L is declared to be in PNG. Whilst common definitions of quality exist (Harvey & Green, 1993; Mishra, 2007), the need for more QA understanding persist. Students’ voices in this study revealed that quality matters to them and they notice, and critique, what they are provided with. Students defined quality as relevancy, efficiency, effectiveness, and fitness for purpose and value for money. A common finding from the students revealed their desire to be offered contemporary, diversified and relevant curriculum for lifelong learning. From the practitioners’ perspectives, QA was related to the ideals of being exceptional, fitness for purpose, consistency and stakeholders’ satisfaction. It was evident that FODE/L practitioners are aware of persisting and accumulating quality issues but recognise the need for their respective university management teams to guide and help build confidence in the revitalisation of their systems.

Similarly, leaders of FODE/L attested that QA pertains to an institution-wide culture of quality, should relate to global perspectives on QA, and should employ professionally qualified human resources. It was evident from this study that QA is well orchestrated in the rhetoric but the reality contradicts the so-called strategic policies, mission statements and goals. External observers, such as Lee and Green (1993) and United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisations (2005) state that the meaning of quality within QA processes, mechanisms and systems needs to be elucidated through a range of definitions. The evidence remains that QA for FODE/L is yet to be fully framed, designed and developed. There is, however a growing evidence of physical presence of the departments established to promote the culture of academic quality audits and other related quality activities.
Furthermore, authentic realities need to be reflected in appropriate parts of the FODE/L curriculum and instructions for learners and lead towards integral and civic human development without losing touch with global, sensitiveness, values and significance, as Yung-Chi Hou et al., (2015) remark. The diversifications of programs are reflective of labour market demands but also include aspects of different local diverse, positive cultures and traditional attributes. The natural diversity of PNG cultures is a wealth that should foster individual identity with an outward look towards global sensitivities as well. According to Shrestha and Khanal (2016) culturally sensitive curriculum is inclusive of cultural perspectives and knowledge construction through locally relevant and meaningful activities. This notion surfaced when this study searched for the understanding of the importance of OER development and integration for FODE/L learning resources.

Research Question 2: What are the major obstacles facing Universities offering FODE/L in their attempt to ensure quality standards and practices in PNG?

First, major obstacles facing PNG universities that offer FODE/L programs indicate an urgent need for concerted commitment to FODE/L from the government down to the University levels where FODE/L exists. Within the contextual realities of PNG’s HE system, FODE/L suffers its QA from the constraints of an evolving FODE/L system. PNG FODE/L suffers from the lack of commitment to QA (Rooney, 2015) as a culture and exists within lines of tensions, contradictions and ironical paradoxes. Total QA systemic approach inclusive of products, processes, production, delivery systems and philosophy for FODE/L in the PNG context remains fragmented.

Second, information exchanges from FODE/L institutions to students and from students in return suffer from delays and lack effectiveness and efficiency.
Furthermore, a culture of complacency hinders the implementation of efficient and good-quality services to the learners. So parts of the problem are poor communications, management and staff attitudes.

Third, academics, such as facilitators, course writers, lecturers and tutors perpetuate the problems through their uncharitable attitude toward FODE/L learners whereby learning materials remain out-dated, feedback on students’ assessment is slack, less-qualified academics are given the tasks of facilitating learning for students, and students are lured into enrolling in incomplete and limited programs. Whilst such tendencies occur in both FODE/L and face-to-face contexts, they may often be more visible in the FODE/L contexts where quality mechanisms and QA culture are deficient, fragmented and given less priority.

Second, in view of QA policy discourses, major obstacles for QA policies include the lack of:

1. An authentic PNG QA philosophy for FODE/L.
2. An absence of a National QA policy framework for FODE/L.
3. A robust strategic planning of QA initiatives as revealed from findings in the data.
4. FODE/L moral and ethical integrity as a quality indicator.
5. Systemic policies for QA in FODE/L.
6. Robust QA policy implementation where there are QA policies in place.

Other deficiencies include lack of HE policy in recognising each other’s programs as well as a national policy for HE ICT integration. The array obstacles portray the nature of QA policies in the context of PNG FODE/L.

Fifth, a major obstacle to ensuring quality for PNG FODE/L is leadership. Leadership for quality enhancement is needed to drive QA initiatives in the
universities that are currently offering FODE/L programs and services. The findings relating to this aspect include the lack of leadership QA passion, governance and leadership in contemporary times. This study revealed that where there are QA policies, implementation plans and leadership remains a challenge. A major obstacle relates to the lack of drive to pursue QA initiatives such as sustainable strategies and comprehensive understanding of systemic quality enhancement. In general in HE, (Reynolds & Wallace, 2016) find that contemporary leaders include those who are receptive to the trends and ideals of 21st Century FODE/L. They describe adaptive leadership as “the proactive development of innovative leaders, the integration of dynamic and relevant organizational systems, the creation of an efficient decision-making culture, and the design of adaptable institutional models that enable organizations to thrive in continuous complexity” (p.107). Whether it be e-learning, online learning, blended learning or OER initiatives, leadership remains critical.

Sixth, a major obstacle in the pursuit for quality of FODE/L is sustainable QA practice, policies, leadership and FODE/L systems. The requirements for the sustainability of QA in FODE/L were highlighted in this research. The current situation is fragmented and the piecemeal approach to QA procedures is ineffective and lacks consistency. Kirkpatrick (2005) suggests that, to develop staff support for QA, relevant training in the areas of educational design and pedagogies, ICT policy procedures, student support management procedures and workable reward systems are required. Similarly, comprehensive student support is mandatory for quality improvement. The concept of an open university received mixed reactions from the participants. Seen from the perspective of improvement in innovative ideals such as OER and Open University concept, such ideas are yet to be fully realised. Whilst HE leaders, especially vice-chancellors rejected the idea, heads of FODE/L departments
and students supported the idea of an open university for PNG. The idea has not been explored in public in any detail, apparently, and evokes tensions that require resolution before seeking to develop a university that would be dedicated to FODE/L and ‘open’ in many as yet undefined ways. Its development would demand total commitment and a large allocation of funding, when FODE/L is already poorly supported financially. Such a priority is currently ‘misty’ and seen as a dream compared with the existing HE system. To be sustainable, FODE/L demands immediate scale-up efforts in QA policy frameworks, QA action plans, QA mechanisms and support structures to avoid the collapse and demise of FODE/L as a result of poor quality practice and culture and poor leadership.

Research Question 3: To what extent do the existing institutional quality assurance guidelines, process and support meet the demands of Open Educational Resource users in FODE/L?

First, it appears that institutional QA guidelines in the three universities investigated do not include standards required of OER integration for FODE/L programs. Second, findings from the study and literature also indicated that what is needed are QA policies, standards and guidelines that includes OER integration towards enhancing the quality of resources for FODE/L learners and practitioners. As highlighted in the findings, there is vague mention of OER QA guidelines in the QA policies that were analysed. The interview and student questionnaires also showed the lack of QA guidelines for OER integration thus it is an area that will require policy attention from the universities as well as an umbrella QA policy that covers innovations such OER and ICT in PNG’s context of FODE/L. Third, OER conceptualisation is needed to bring forth the potential of OERs and fourth,
digital literacy surfaced in the data pertaining to FODE/L cultures such as e-learning, OER competencies and educational technology sensemaking. Digital literacy is part of the capacity-building initiatives needed for PNG. Being digitally literate is a 21st Century skill that opens access to study, knowledge and competency. In FODE/L, efforts should be made to harness modern literacies to enable the use of emerging and affordable educational technologies for learning purposes.

This study revealed the need for multi-literacy skills in the areas of FODE/L, QA, OER and digital literacy for both staff and students. To harness growth and quality in FODE/L, sustainable innovative ideas must be pursued. To benefit from the integration of OERs into the learning resources, learners need, first of all, to have good IT skills and awareness of its possibilities. Once OER software is available, students can become both consumers and co-creators of learning resources in an environment where they are encouraged to share resources and connect with other learners and facilitators. Littlejohn and McGill (2016) illustrate an approach that encourages creativity, promotes quality, and contributes to the production of usable, relevant resources. Unfortunately, the cost and access to electronic communications is an unsurmountable challenge for FODE/L institutions currently, especially as many cohorts of their students live in rural towns and villages. Such can be overcome if the ideals and obstacles to QA are comprehensively taken to task for improvement in the current status and nature of FODE/L in the PNG HE space.

8.4 Implications for QA practice, policy, leadership and sustainability

This section highlights areas of practical implications based on the research findings. First, the implementation of QA procedures would result in FODE/L engaging in systemic and consistent efforts in the presentation and delivery of their courses and programs. This study recognises the systems of FODE/L and the current
efforts being made. However, managers of the current FODE/L systems need to examine carefully their QA processes at every level of operations. Systemic, integrated QA fosters good practices and aids individual and professional scrutiny of current policies, plans, processes and understandings. The establishment of a PNG Flexible Open Distance Education Council (FODEC) necessitates the crafting of national FODE/L systems, QA policies and an effective framework. FODEC, having created an overarching QA framework, would require QA initiatives at the institutional level to conform to it so that these efforts would result in quality outcomes.

In contributing to PNG’s development goals in the area of quality-enhanced authentic learning for capacity building of FODE/L Department of Personnel Management (2009), and Abrioux, (2008) this study applauds the establishment of FODEC and the potential revamp of the current FODE/L system. Among vital components of FODE/L capacity building, QA consciousness and advocacy are priority items that would lead to the desired culture of quality in HE where FODE/L is concerned. An integrated and functional FODE/L system aligns to the PNG’s Vision 2050, PNG’s Higher Education Plan and the Millennium Sustainable Development Goals in addressing quality access and equity mechanisms, policies, cultures, practices and innovations towards an inclusive, skilled and educated society.

Second, this study provides insights into the nature of QA and its importance for accessible and equitable HE in PNG via alternative modes of study, as offered by FODE/L. FODE/L depends on the active principle of bringing teaching and learning activities to students in their homes, work places or other centres. FODE/L is a proven, valid practice which has the potential of offering high-quality learning materials and thus can be even better than conventional learning, if it is executed
within good practices such as QA (Abrioux, 2008; Kember, 2007; Melton, 2002; Mishra, 2007a; Ngugi, 2011). While it is commonly suggested that ODL is a viable means of providing access and equity of educational opportunities for all (Melton, 2002), its quality remains critical so that learners and other stakeholders are satisfied and trust is continually maintained. It is therefore fitting that this research serves the purpose of outlining the value of QA to FODE/L and showing that both staff and students are aware of the necessity for QA implementation. It advocates for a harmonious FODE/L system that is based on ethical virtues towards a spiritual culture of care through the assurance provided by quality processes that foster trust in the system.

Third, the proposed Ethics Enterprise QA Framework suggested in this study demands that QA is planted, nurtured and cultivated within the ideals of common good, wealth and well being for all. QA in FODE/L for PNG should pertain to thinking beyond bureaucratic systems and help emphasise human dignity for ethical and moral harmony. Bogue (1999, p.16) asserts that QA responsibility is vested beyond technical systems and bureaucracy and is thus conferred in ‘minds, hearts, in values, courage, trust, passion, inventions and imaginations to transform quality performance.’ QA calls for a culture of care where there is integrity. The cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance aligned with positive Melanesian values are all critically needed in PNG’s HE system to enable resistance to systemic corruption. This study offers the Ethics Enterprise QA Framework (EEQAF) as a means to pursue virtues to promote corruption-free FODE/L services. The ideals of the EEQAF are integral and holistic and thus are connected to the ideals enshrined in the PNG National Constitution, its National Directive Principles and National Pledge for the common good of all.
Fourth, enactment of sustainable QA policies for FODE/L requires participatory approaches by all stakeholders with aims of transparency and accountability. Where QA policies currently exist, dedicated QA expertise is needed to help implement the policy directives that translate into quality procedures and practices throughout the institution. These activities then must be monitored within an established culture of evaluation and analysis. Where QA policies are borrowed, rigorous sensemaking should prevail to analyse where they can be applied within current realities, challenges, cultures and practices. Open dialogue and collaborative consultation can support the effort needed to enact FODE/L policies and plans at every level of operations from the national, institutional, faculty, programs, course to individual levels.

Fifth, QA discourse and research about FODE/L in PNG contributes to the literature for FODE/L and forms a baseline conversation for the ideals of QA in FODE/L HE. The study confirms the prevailing ‘quality failures’ identified by Garnaut and Namaliu (2010b), Guy (1992), Laufa, (2009) Lockwood and Koul, (2010) and Rooney, (2015). Greater efforts are needed to address the current impediments to QA. Effective communication and QA advocacy strategies are required to promote comprehensive understanding of QA, and its purpose and rationale. Once these are assimilated, the identification of areas for improvement can be made, along with statements about what is missing and/or not working effectively; these can be communicated and acted upon. Further more, this study contributes innovative approaches to enhance the FODE/L quality culture. In the search for emerging and innovative practices for quality sustainability, this research establishes that OERs have the potential of improving the quality of the learning by augmenting the chosen subject resources. Technology paves the way to modern FODE/L.
opportunities for creating and optimising the learning environment. Learning spaces for FODE/L learners require redesigning to match the realities of time and place. Herington, Reeves and Oliver (2010) observe that universities need to consider technologies that are readily accessible to students and teachers such as mobile technologies, although in PNG, mobile technologies are subject to the availability of accessible ICT services.

The learning experiences designed for FODE/L learners should be interactive and provide authentic experiences that enhance learning. Further to that, the use of Web 2 tools for educational purposes should be encouraged. The Horizon Report (2015) indicates that digital literacy is a solvable issue in HE. Students should be enabled to use technologies and to demonstrate creativity and innovations as part of their learning.

8.5 Contributions, strengths and limitations

This study aspires to filling a gap in the PNG FODE/L literature with specific attention to QA. Research regarding QA for FODE/L is limited (International Council of Distance Education, 2011; Laufa, 2009; Rooney, 2015) in PNG’s context, hence this study serves as a baseline study to the QA discourse for FODE/L. This study establishes a line of conversation for the QA discourse because of the authentic voices of the stakeholders.

The research limitations encountered were mainly those of costs and time, power and politics, the Hawthorn effect, PNG linguistic and cultural traits, and security during the data collection phase. With limited research funds, minimal time was spent on doing fieldwork. The research was also limited in its inclusiveness of QA stakeholders from the OHE who could have provided more insights into research.
Further to that, since QA is a sensitive issue, power and politics essence were sensed as limiting factors. Power dominance prevailed within the composition of the focus groups. The mixture of academics and non-academics presented some limitations. First, academics were more vocal and may have posed some level of intimidation on the non-academics who were recruited in the focus groups. Second, junior FODE/L practitioners and female participants lacked confidence in speaking out on the realities that mattered to them regarding good QA practices in the presence of very senior academics and officers of the respective universities. A future research consideration may involve encouraging more women participants as well as separation of focus groups into different cohorts to enable participants’ confidence and participation.

A limiting factor corresponding to confidence was job security. Participants were cautious in the words they used as well as appearing suspicious of others within the different groups in the organisation. Although, being assured of confidentiality, there was a level of fear, suspicion and a lack of confidence pertaining to the practitioners’ various organisational contexts and cultures. In addition to QA being a sensitive issue, QA Policy documents were not readily available and accessible to the researcher, with the exception of University4 and University1. This was a limitation that was encountered from the other two research sites.

As a researcher, it was important to take on the outsider’s perspective in this research but, as an Instructional Designer, a member of the Senior Management of University1’s FODE/L unit and a former Executive of the PNG Association for Distance Education, all of which was known to the participants, it was difficult to avoid having some influence on their responses. The Hawthorne or halo effect is seen as both an enhancing factor and a limiting factor (Kember, 2003; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The participants may have responded differently if someone other than
the researcher had conducted the interviews. This is to avoid the Hawthorn, halo effect and/or researcher’s bias.

Security consciousness posed some limitations during the data collection phase when travelling between the different research sites. As a female researcher in a context where law and order is a challenge and women are often victims of crimes, the researcher was extremely cautious in this regard. Fieldwork for female researchers can be a risky business. Being a novice researcher also posed limitations throughout the research process; however the experience gained during the work enhanced the researcher’s ability and confidence to pursue future research.

8.4.1 Future research opportunities

Firstly, this research starts a research conversation with the potential for future research in the area of QA in FODE/L in PNG. Whilst QA was researched in terms of what currently exists in PNG universities, other areas for research exist. For example, research can examine the QA of student support, programs and courses in FODE/L, theory development of QA in the context of PNG FODE/L and QA sustainability research to map out the ideals of QA initiatives based on good practices related to integral personal and citizenship development.

Second, further QA research into indigenous HE for FODE/L is necessary to foster knowledge building and documentation of indigenous values and natural, harmonious philosophy. This research ideally pertains to areas of relevant crafting or designing of QA initiatives for authentic impacts in PNG’s diverse traditional/indigenous and contemporary landscapes.

Third, research is needed in the area of instructional design with a specific focus on the analysis of learning outcomes that are specific, measureable, authentic and achievable within specified time frames.
Fourth, research into methods to quality-assure OER development and delivery needs to be pursued.

Fifth, learning analytics is an avenue for fostering research efforts to unveil the quality innate in e-learning and other virtual learning dimensions to make them eligible for consideration as part of PNG’s FODE/L discourse, practice and realities.

8.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings from this research and the literature engaged, a number of recommendation are proposed for consideration and implementation at the national, institutional and individual level of operations. These recommendations will be beneficial for revitalising the quality of FODE/L initiatives in the PNG HE space. Government Policy makers and leaders, researchers, implementers and practitioners of FODE/L and QA may also benefit from the recommendations herein. Organisations situated in the local, national and regional contexts such as the PNG FODE/L offering universities, DHRST, FODE/L donor agencies, FODE/L academics and professionals in both the public and private sectors may also benefit. Researchers and students may also harness the recommendations where necessary, in the HE space for PNG and within the context of a developing country. Global partners in FODE/L may also benefit from the recommendations.

Recommendations at the National Level

Recommendation 1: Based on the literature and data findings in this study it recommended that a PNG National Flexible Open Distance Education Council (FODEC) be established to drive the QA initiatives for an integrated FODE/L system (Abrioux, 2008). QA is fostered through a quality conscious culture that will drive QA initiatives at all levels, leading to open discourse and good practice. The membership of the PNG FODEC will be inclusive of representatives from different
sectors of Higher Education and Universities. FODEC can be housed within the DHRST.

Recommendation 2: From this study, the gap in QA for PNG FODE/L in HE pertains to the lack of a FODE/L National Policy Framework whereby a FODE/L QA Policy is needed. It is therefore recommended that a National QA Policy Framework for FODE/L should be crafted based on contextual relevance and best practices. The integration of the Ethics Enterprise QA Framework proposed in this study or other relevant QA framework can be incorporated such as the COL-RIM model. Such an undertaking may come under the proposed FODEC and DHRST to cater especially for quality policies and instruments specific to the PNG FODE/L HE space.

Recommendation 3: As revealed in this study, research and publications into QA and FODE/L are meagre in the context of PNG. It is therefore recommended that;

a) Research priorities for FODE/L should be in the areas of sustainable QA strategies, policy sensemaking, innovative approaches to inform practice, policies, leadership and sustainable initiatives within PNG’s cultural dimensions and indigenous wealth.

b) A framework of new research dimensions should be developed to provide the basis for a proactive research culture in PNG’s HE FODE/L landscape. Such dimensions incorporate FODE/L research based on tools of discovery, integration, application and teaching (Latchem, 2007).

c) More diversified research methods should be encouraged to complement this qualitative study into QA for FODE/L in PNG’s universities and HE.

Recommendation 4: As highlighted in this study, collaborative efforts and greater partnership is necessary to foster national discourse for good practice in PNG’s FODE/L context. It is therefore recommended that the PNG Association for
Distance be re-invigorated to build its professional capacity. This professional body should:

a) Continue to foster best QA practices within this critically important HE sector. As defined by Lee Harvey (2004), a professional association consists of learned people within a specialised occupation or profession who are passionate about maintaining and safeguarding the legitimate practice of their occupation or profession. The absence of such an initiative leaves a gap within the HE system that is very noticeable.

b) Foster the building of a QA Community of Practitioners (CoP) for FODE/L that would be inclusive of National and International affiliations for sustaining the ideals of QA in FODE/L. Initiatives could include collaborative mentoring activities where those experienced in the area of QA offer their knowledge to novice QA professionals through workshops, seminars, conferences and forums.

c) foster the engagement of budding FODE/L practitioners to share their experiences of successes and failures.

Recommendation 5: This study revealed the need to embrace the culture of quality enhancement through the integration of OER to complement the limitations on learning resources. It is recommended that;

a) Changes through innovative approaches such as the use of OER are integrated into PNG’s FODE/L systems within the HE landscape to promote quality, access and affordable cost for inclusive quality education.

b) A Quality Enhancement Program be established associated with innovative approaches such as OER and QA targeting quality in different time frames, for example, short-, mid- and long-term phases. The short-term range of initiatives
includes those that can be achieved within a year. Annual reporting on QA in FODE/L would be mandatory for all FODE/L offering universities. The mid-term QA initiatives are those that can be worked upon and specified for achievement within 2-3 years of implementation, while the long-term range of activities is those that are achievable in five years’ time built on the successes of the previous phases.

c) OER research should be focused on establishing the contextual and cultural significance of OERs in PNG to test if they improve the quality of available learning resources.

Recommendation 6: As revealed in this study and confirmed by literature, the Open University concept is a way forward for PNG FODE/L. It is recommended therefore that:

a) The proposed PNG National Open University is actualised with a vision for quality improvement as its underlying principle.

b) The PNG government makes available Internet accessibility for FODE/L learners, with special attention to the needs of marginalised, disadvantaged and unreached PNG learners. This means opening up a wider broadband for current and emerging universities to foster flexible e-learning options.

Recommendations at Institutional Level

Recommendation 7: It is recommended that capacity building in QA should be fostered in all PNG FODE/L offering universities and other tertiary institutions. Such professional enhancement includes:

a) The provision of a Graduate Program for QA should be offered by under the proposed FODEC or offered through any of the current dual-mode
universities, through the proposed PNG National Open University, or offered
as an OER-based course for all FODE/L practitioners and interested educators.

b) The up-skilling of FODE/L practitioners to influence sustainable efforts with
the acquisition of relevant QA skills in PNG.

c) Collaborative partnership with regional QA agencies and universities, and
international organisations such as UNESCO, INQAHEE, ICDE, World Bank
and COL, to foster institutional QA capacity building initiatives.

Recommendation 8: As signified by this study, strong leadership is necessary for
QA in FODE/L and thus institutional QA evolves over time. It is therefore
recommended that a QA leadership-mentoring program for leaders at FODE/L
offering universities should be instituted. A QA leadership-mentoring program could
sustain and build the capacity of FODE/L. Novice and emerging FODE/L leaders
could then be accredited with a certificate of recognition of having completed a QA
Leadership mentoring program. Thereafter, on-going QA training for FODE/L leaders
and staff can occur as needed. Such an initiative could be supported by DHRST in
collaboration with the proposed FODEC and the PNG Association for Distance
Education. Alternative QA mentoring programs for FODE/L leaders could be
negotiated with organisations such the COL or ICDE whose mission and goals are
towards improving good practice in FODE/L.

**Recommendation at Individual Level**

Recommendation 9: QA responsibility is a must for all within any FODE/L
offering HEIs. Based on the data and literature, QA is necessary for all those
responsible for FODE/L delivery and services. It is therefore recommended that all
FODE/L practitioners are QA conscious within their activities. Ideally, they pursue
quality as part of a culture for civic responsibility, thus have a moral obligation to
undergo a process of self-assessment. The practice of reflective self-evaluation or assessment should prevail at individual levels to influence professional practice in the context of FODE/L departments and thence into institutional self-assessments. In doing so, QA for FODE/L becomes a personal responsibility to pursue and work towards positive institutional QA outcomes.

8.6 Way forward and Implications

This study has revealed areas of improvement of QA in the practice, policy, leadership and sustainable of FODE/L in PNG universities. The implications of such findings offer insights into the improvement of FODE/L. First, an implication relating to practice that this research offers is the different voices of PNG FODE/L stakeholders on QA, providing a lens into the nature of current QA statuses and opening up a QA research discourse arena for future deliberation and actions. Second, there is a need to activate decisions, enactment of policies, creation of policies and sensitivity to the ideals that are proclaimed in strategic plans, visions and declarations for FODE/L in PNG. QA policy discourse is a sensitive one that needs to be worked through together within the different veins of authority. From an operational perspective, the creation of QA policy needs to be within a consultative manner for all stakeholders so that meaningful co-creation is crafted as a result of such policy discourses. For the practitioners, even before implementation of an already-created QA policy for FODE/L, advocacy is needed for better understanding so that implementation can take its place. A third implication of this research pertains to QA leadership for FODE/L that is in critical need of scaling-up through mentoring, encouragement and professional networking activities. FODE/L resides in a global landscape with communities of professional networks, practitioners, novice and expert leadership domains and ongoing support from international organisations such
as the Commonwealth of Learning, International Council of Distance Education, UNESCO and the World Bank. The dawn of thinking globally and acting locally has arrived and is an opportunity to build a revamped PNG FODE/L.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 8.1  Way forward for Glo-na-calisation of QA best practices**

A fourth implication of this study relates to embracing a worldview perspective of FODE/L through QA initiatives. A worldview is based on a system of moral and ethical norms and principles of human development, an evolution based on the Great Cosmic Law, Law of Development, God’s Law and the Law of Harmony (Suvorov & Suvorova, 2015). Sacredness to human activities requires respect, love and a culture of care regarding what is important for sustainable human development. There is no room for greed, corruption and craftiness in FODE/L if it is to improve its quality, based on the Great Laws of cosmic development, God and harmony in creating flourishing societies for all. The future of FODE/L in PNG has the potential to flourish for the benefit of humankind and the world.

### 8.7 Conclusion

This study of QA in PNG FODE/L paves the way for more research into the topic. QA should be a critical component of PNG FODE/L, thus should be a well-
known culture that is practised by any providers of FODE/L. With current efforts toward QA initiatives, the future of FODE/L remains a challenge. Where FODE/L struggles in terms of quality failures, there is no better time to embrace those failures and pursue new dimensions through establishing QA as the institutional culture and assimilating good practices as analysed and adopted from global or regional examples. QA demands total responsibility, consciously doing the required and right things, being aware of FODE/L aims and purposes and fostering integrity in the provision of educational services. The cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance require that. A conscious culture of QA is a necessary idea to be promoted and sustained. This involves being consistent in doing what FODE/L is said to be doing and therefore being truthful. Additionally, the promotion of good attitude along with the strong desire to offer the best for learners is fostered. Most importantly, fostering integrity demands being responsible and conscientious. This research therefore opens up ideas around the notion of QA for the purposes of revitalising and fostering harmony within the reality of FODE/L in PNG.
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1  Approval to Access PNG Universities

7th March 2013
Mrs Janet Rangou
University of Sydney
Faculty of Education and Social Work
A30 Education Building
Camperdown Campus
NSW 2006, Australia

Dear Mrs Rangou,

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION FOR ACCESS TO UNIVERSITIES IN PNG TO CONDUCT RESEARCH INTO QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH THE DISTANCE EDUCATION

This is to inform you that the Office of Higher Education in Papua New Guinea is providing support and authorisation for ethics protocol clearance for your research project in Quality Assurance in Higher Education for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning in Papua New Guinea.

Quality Assurance is of paramount importance in order to raise the standards of universities to international levels. Universities are members of an international community where there are continuous changes and transformations. Therefore, it is necessary to continually monitor and improve the quality of education to ensure that students, public and stakeholders confidence in the institutions is sustained.

The Office of Higher Education is the state body in charge of higher education in the country inclusive of six universities.

Of the six universities, four are also offering programs through distance/online/blended modes.

1. University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG)
2. Papua New Guinea University of Technology (PNGUT)
3. University of Goroka (UOG)
4. Divine Word University (DWU)

All universities in Papua New Guinea are currently undergoing an external quality assurance exercise to respond to the recommendations of the Namatuk/wamaut Report of 2010. This will include the audit of the university that offers programs through flexible/distance/online/blended modes of delivery. The OHE, in collaboration with AusAID has embarked on this project as of 2012 through to 2014. OHE has the assistance of an Advisor experienced in higher education quality assurance in this process.

I wish to also inform you that there is a Policy Guideline on Quality Assurance for Distance Education in Papua New Guinea developed by the OHE and approved by the Commission for Higher Education (CHE) in 2011. Other interesting
developments include the approval of the Papua New Guinea National Qualifications Framework (PNGNQF) by the National Executive Council in 2012. The approval of the PNGNQF is a mechanism when implemented will better regulate and monitor the development of programs and qualifications. The OHE is also at the final stages of the development of the National Higher Plan III.

As the demand for higher education increases, due to the ever increasing output by secondary schools, the Government is looking at other alternatives to expand the higher education sector to cater for the increasing number of students qualified to enter the universities and colleges. The Government has directed the OHE and CHE to immediately progress work on the Papua New Guinea National Open University (PNGNOU) concept.

Your research project title is critical and very timely as the OHE is now considering education through online and distance modes as a major way forward to address the issues of access and equity.

The OHE will provide support for your research into quality assurance in Higher Education for flexible and distance education in the country. All universities that offer programs through the distance mode will be informed of your research project and requested to provide their assistance.

I wish you all the best in your research project and your program.

Yours sincerely,

Professor David Kavanamur
DIRECTOR GENERAL

cc: Professor Samuel Haitue, Director - UPNG Open Campus
cc: Mr Paul Nongur-Director Department of Distance Learning PNGUOT
cc: Mrs Gana Wilson-Dean, Department of Flexible Learning UOG
cc: Dr Linus Yamuna-Director Flexible Learning DMU
cc: Mr Charles Mabia, Acting Director, Higher Education Development Division OHE
cc: Mr Francis Hualugomoni-Acting Assistant Director Institutional Development Branch OHE
Appendix 2. Ethics approval for this project

Research Integrity
Human Research Ethics Committee

Wednesday, 5 June 2013

Dr George Odhiambo
Education and Social Work - Research, Faculty of Education & Social Work
Email: george.odhiambo@sydney.edu.au

Dear George

I am pleased to inform you that the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has approved your project entitled “Quality Assurance in Higher Education for Flexible Open Distance Education/Learning in Papua New Guinea.”

Details of the approval are as follows:

Project No.: 2013/63
Approval Date: 05/06/2013
First Annual Report Due: 05/06/2014
Authorised Personnel: Odhiambo George; Rangou Janet;

Documents Approved:

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<td>Recruitment Letter/Email</td>
<td>Revised letter to participating PNG universities</td>
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<td>Participant Info Statement</td>
<td>Version 2 of PIS for FODEL practitioners</td>
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<td>Participant Info Statement</td>
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HREC approval is valid for four (4) years from the approval date stated in this letter and is granted pending the following conditions being met:

Condition/s of Approval
• Continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.

• Provision of an annual report on this research to the Human Research Ethics Committee from the approval date and at the completion of the study. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of ethics approval for the project.

• All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.

• All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.

• Any changes to the project including changes to research personnel must be approved by the HREC before the research project can proceed.

Chief Investigator / Supervisor’s responsibilities:

1. You must retain copies of all signed Consent Forms (if applicable) and provide these to the HREC on request.

2. It is your responsibility to provide a copy of this letter to any internal/external granting agencies if requested.

Please do not hesitate to contact Research Integrity (Human Ethics) should you require further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Dr Stephen Assinder
Chair
Human Research Ethics Committee

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council’s (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), NHMRC and Universities Australia, Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) and the CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice.
Dear Ms. Janet Bula Maria Rangou

The UREC has deliberated on your research submission seeking Ethical approval on the 17th of July 2013.

This approval letter serves as your written notice that the proposal has met the requirements for research involving human participation and has been approved on that basis. You are therefore authorized to commence research activities as outlined in your research proposal/project application. Subject to any specific and standard conditions detailed in this document hereunder.

Within this approval Certificate are the following:

- Project details
- Participant details
- Conditions of approval (specific and standard)

Please kindly note that Researcher(s) should report to the UREC Chairperson, events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project, including but not limited to:

(i) Serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants; and
(ii) Proposed significant changes in the conduct, the participant profile or risks of the proposed research.

Further information regarding your ongoing obligations regarding human research can be found via Research Ethics website http://www.research.dwu.ac.pg/ethics or by contacting the research Ethics Chairperson/Co-ordinator on: 424 1618

........................................

If any details within this Approval Certificate are incorrect please advise the Research Ethics Unit within 10-working days of receipt of this Certificate

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**Project Details**

**Category of Approval:**

- **Approval Number:** UREC-ESR-2013-004  
  **Approved until:** July 2014 (subject to annual report)

- **Project Title:** Intimacy in Urban Global Papua New Guinea: Something Social, Something Public

**Experiment/study summary:** This study aims to seek insights into Quality Assurance (QA policies), systems, and practices and how senior management executives, practitioners and learners of FODEL perceive it for FODEL in PNG universities. The goals of this study is to understand the nature and challenges of FODEL institutions in ensuring quality of their programs and services

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DWU-Ethics approval letter
to learners and ultimately advocate for workable QA regulatory frameworks, guidelines and policies to sustain a quality culture for FODE/L in PNG. The research findings will assist policy makers as well as FODE/L practitioners to be informed of what systems are in place and how these systems are effectively used to improve the quality of HE FODE/L by universities in PNG.

Investigator Details

Principal Investigator: Janet Bulumuris Rangou

Participant Details

Location of study:
Divine Word University – Madang, Papua New Guinea

Conditions of Approval

Specific Conditions of Approval: Not applicable

Standard Conditions of Approval: Apply as below

The University's standard conditions of approval require the researcher(s) and/or research team to:

1. Conduct the research/research project in accordance with University Research Policy guidelines and regulations, and the provisions of any relevant Provincial/National regulations or legislation;
2. Respond to the request and instructions of the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC);
3. Advise the Research Committee Chairperson immediately if any complaints are made, or experienced, or expressed;
4. Suspend or modify the project if risks to participants are found to be disproportionate to the benefits, and immediately advise the Research Chairperson of this action;
5. Stop any involvement of any participant if continuation of the research may be harmful to that person, and immediately advise the Research Ethics Chairperson of this action;
6. Advise the Research Ethics Chairperson of any unforeseen development or events that might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project;
7. Report on the progress of the approved research project at least annually, or at intervals determined by the Research Committee;
8. (Where the research is publically or privately funded) publish the results of the project in such a way to permit scrutiny and contribute to public knowledge; and
9. Ensure that the results of the research are made available to the participants/community/institutions.

Modification to Ethical Clearance

Request for variations must be made via submission of a Request for Variation to Existing Clearance Form to the Research Ethics Chairperson. Minor changes will be assessed on a case by case basis.

It generally takes 14-21 days to process and notify the chief/Principal Investigator of the outcome of a request for a variation.

Major changes, depending upon the nature of the request, may require submission of a new application.

DWU-Ethics approval letter
Audits: All active ethical approval are subject to random audit by the UREC, which will include the review of the signed consent forms for participants, whether any modifications/variation to the project have been approved, and the data storage arrangements.

Disclaimer: By giving ethical approval for the proposed research/Study to be conducted in the intended human population, UREC declares that it will not be responsible for any liabilities (financial or non-financial), indemnities, or be responsible for the content of any publication(s) arising from this proposed research/Study.

Professor/Dr. Francis W. Hombhanje, MBBS, MSc, MD
Chairperson of the University Research Ethics Committee
fhombhanje@dwu.ac.pg
Appendix 4 Research Safety Protocol

Safety Protocol

Research Topic: Quality Assurance in Higher Education for Flexible Open Distance Education/Learning in Papua New Guinea

Introduction
This safety protocol instrument provides information on possible risks on the researcher conducting research in a developing country - Papua New Guinea (PNG). Although, the researcher is from PNG, it is essential that possible risks to the researcher are outlined and information is provided on how to deal with such risks. The research involves one-on-one and focus group interviews to be conducted by a student researcher in a developing country context in PNG. Prior to commencing, the researcher will discuss interview techniques and safety and perform practice interviews with the Supervisor, including how to respond to difficult or unpleasant reactions.

Background
Access to the research sites (PNG universities) will be by air and land transport. The researcher will travel by air from Sydney into the country. In PNG, the researcher will travel mainly by air into various provinces and then by road transport to universities spread across the country.

Safety as a female researcher: Due to high risks of law and order, the researcher will be cautious at all times of her safety and will keep close contact with her local site contact person, supervisor, scholarship provider and family members. The researcher will dress appropriate to the research context and culture.

Individual & Focus Group Interviews: The researcher will be conducting one-on-one interviews, alone, with senior management officers of Flexible Open Distance Education/Learning Universities and focus group interviews with FODE/L practitioners in PNG. All the interviews will be conducted in public offices in the universities to be visited.

Individual Interviews: Interview participants will be given the opportunity to nominate the time and location of the interviews. Possible locations will be at the universities in which the officers work (within working hours where possible). Steps to ensure the researcher’s safety include:

- Conducting the interview in a public space
- Ensuring that an exit route is clearly known
- Ensuring that the door is not locked after entering the interview room
- Conducting interviews in daylight hours.

Focus group interviews will be a conference room in the selected universities. Communication with local site personnel will be ongoing, to an agreed timing and location of focus group interview sessions.

- The researcher will take advice from local institutions regarding the safety of the planned research process. The researcher is also well versed with issues in the country but will heed advice from local sources. Should anything untoward happen, or the researcher becomes uneasy for any reason, the interview will be terminated immediately and the interviewer will leave. The Supervisor will be contacted as soon as practicably possible.

Safety protocol Version 1
April 4, 2013
Communication

- There will be mobile phone coverage in all the sites of data collection. Internet access will vary from site to site but hopefully will be available for constant communication between the researcher and supervisor. The researcher will ensure that her mobile phone will be with her at all times during the research period.
- The researcher will be in touch with her supervisor by email, SMS text (where available) at least twice a week.
- The researcher will provide a detailed schedule of data collection to her supervisor so that he is aware of where/when the researcher is in the field/sites.

Local contact persons

Any contact in PNG will be made directly to the researcher and/or the local contact officers, whose contact details are listed below.

- The researcher’s local contact person in PNG will be:
  Mrs Bernadette Malaille,
  Centre of Research and Postgraduate Studies,
  University of Papua New Guinea. P.O Box 320, UNIVERSITY,
  National Capital District, Papua New Guinea.
  Office Telephone: 675 3267306
  Office Fax: 675 3267325
  Email Address: bmalaille@y7mail.com

Individual sites contact details.

1. Executive Director,
   University of Papua New Guinea Open College, P.O Box 320,
   UNIVERSITY, NCD, PNG.
   Office Telephone: 675 2267232
   Office Fax: 675 3267325
   Email Address: opencoll@upng.ac.pg

2. Mrs Gana Wilson, University of Goroka- Faculty of Flexible Learning
   Faculty Head of Department,
   P.O Box 1078, GOROKA 441 EHP.
   Email: wilson@uog.ac.pg
   Telephone: (675) 5323765 or (675) 532 3926.
   Office Fax: (675) 5322620.

3. Mr. Wilson Tovirika,
   University of Technology- Department of Open Distance Learning
   Phone: (675) 4734210,
   Email: wtovirika@otd.unitech.ac.pg

4. Dr. Lynus Yamuna, Divine Word University-Flexible Learning centre
   Divine Word University, P.O. Box 483, Madang, Papua New Guinea.
   Tel: (675) 422 2937, Fax: (675) 422 2812
   Email: fle@dwu.ac.pg
### Tentative schedule for data collection in PNG universities

**Site 1: University of Papua New Guinea**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10/06/13</td>
<td></td>
<td>UPNG</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/06/13</td>
<td></td>
<td>UPNG</td>
<td>Interviews x2</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/06/13</td>
<td></td>
<td>UPNG</td>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>Test 10 students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**10th - 14th June, 2013 will be at UPNG**

**Site 2: University of Goroka**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Venue</th>
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<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16/06/13</td>
<td></td>
<td>UOG</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/06/13</td>
<td></td>
<td>UOG</td>
<td>Interviews x2</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/06/13</td>
<td></td>
<td>UOG</td>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>Test 10 students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**16 - 18th June, 2013 will be at UOG**

**Site 3: University of Technology-Lae**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Time</th>
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<th>Task</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19/06/13</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unitech</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/06/13</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unitech</td>
<td>Interviews x2</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/06/13</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unitech</td>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>Test 10 students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**19th - 21st June, 2013 will be at Unitech**

**Site 4: Divine Word University**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24/06/13</td>
<td></td>
<td>DWU</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/06/13</td>
<td></td>
<td>DWU</td>
<td>Interviews x2</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/06/13</td>
<td></td>
<td>DWU</td>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>to 10 students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**24th - 26th June, 2013 will be at Divine Word University**

- Visa is in order to travel in and out of PNG.
- The researcher will follow the University of Sydney guidelines on *Fieldwork outside Australia: A supplement to Fieldwork Safety Guidelines.*
- The researcher has visited the universities in PNG in the past, is familiar with the culture and nature of the people and its environment.

This safety protocol has been agreed and accepted upon by the researcher and the supervisor.

**Supervisor:** Dr. George Odhimbo

**Student researcher:** Janet. Bulumaris Rangou

_Safety protocol Version 1_  
_April 4, 2013_
Appendix 5 Interview Question Guide

Research Topic: Quality Assurance in Higher Education for Flexible Open Distance Learning in PNG

Targeted for: Senior Executive Officers from each FODE/L offering Universities In PNG (Vice Chancellor & Head of FODE/L college, Faculty or Department).

Research Question 1: What is the nature of Quality Assurance in ‘s Universities that provide Open and Distance learning programs and services?

Meaning, Nature & Purpose of Quality & QA
1.1 What is your definition of Quality?
1.2 How can you describe the nature of quality as a culture fostered in FODE in your institution or in FODE/L in PNG?
1.3 What does Quality Assurance mean to you personally as a leader of your institution?
1.4 What does QA mean to your FODE/L institution?
1.5 What is the purpose of QA in your institution?

QA culture
1.6 How does your institution foster QA culture in your FODE/L activities?

QA Regulatory Frameworks
1.7 Describe the systems or procedures of QA that guide your QA activities in your FODE/L institution?
1.7.1 If you were to describe the stages of QA in your FODE/L initiatives, what stage would you say your institution was at from an embryonic, evolving and matured FODE/L QA stage? And why?
1.8 How do you assure Quality in your FODE/L activities from your University?
1.9 How would you describe the nature of QA of FODE/L in your institution?
1.10 What is the significance of QA for FODE/L in your institution and for PNG as a whole?
1.11 Explain how you as a leader advocate for QA in your organisation and especially for FODE/L.

1.12 What incentives should the government give to institutions that are proactive in their efforts to QA for FODE/L?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 2.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the major obstacles facing Universities offering FODE/L in their attempt to ensure quality standards and practices in PNG?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1 What are the major challenges for QA in your FODE/L institution?
2.2 What do see as the main source or factors to these obstacles?
2.3 What means can you suggest improving or addressing the challenges?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 3:0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent do the existing institutional quality assurance guidelines, process and support meet the demands of Open Educational Resource users in FODE/L?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Orientation Questions to OER

1.1 What does the term OER mean to you as a leader of FODE/L in your institution?
1.2 What are the advantages and disadvantages of OER in education?
1.3 What are the opportunities and challenges that OER creates?
1.4 How can PNG FODE/L offering universities effectively harness the use of OER in their learning?
1.5 Explain if OER has potential in PNG’s FODE/L or not?
1.6 How can FODE/L offering institutions embrace OER in their FODE/L learning programs?
1.7 Why do we need OER in PNG’s FODE/L?

QA & OER

1.8 How can OER be quality assured in PNG’s context?
1.9 What QA policies are in place to support the use of OER?

1.10 Explain in detail the specific QA guidelines currently in place for OER integration in FODE/L in PNG.
1.11 What considerations should policy makers recommend in the development of criteria for assessing the effectiveness of OER integration into institutional practices?

1.12 To what extent does existing QA processes support the demand of OER in PNG’s educational context?

1.13 What are the challenges of sustaining a culture of quality for OER in PNG’s FODE/L/ contexts?

Support and capacity building of OER

1.14 Explain if there is a need for training to foster in-depth knowledge and understanding of OER in PNG.

1.15 What specific areas do you think should capacity building in the use of OER in FODE be focused on?

1.16 Who needs training and support programs for OER use (practitioners, learners, policy makers, QA officers?)?

Conclusion of Interview

• Word of thanks to participant for being part of one’s research. Thank you so much for your time and participation in this interview. Your views are truly valuable towards my PhD thesis.
• Invite participants to ask questions if need be.
• Request for QA documents if they have for document analysis.
Appendix 6  Focus Group Interview Question Guide

Focus Group Interview Plan & Interview Schedule Guide

Time:  1-1 ½ hours

Interviewer:  Janet Rangou
Interviewee:  UPNG FODE/L practitioners.

Documents:  PIS, Consent form and interview schedule & post cards

Introduction
Greetings:  Good morning /Good afternoon– Thank you for accepting to be interviewed. Before we commence this interview, I will give you the PIS for your reading for the next 5 minutes.

Body
Part 1.

1.  PIS- Please take a few minutes to read through this document and you may also ask me any questions if need be. You may also keep it. After reading through the PIS, you can fill in the consent form, to give me your consent to participate in this interview.
2.  Invite questions from participation on the task on hand
3.  Explain how the focus group will be conducted and how long it should be for. Explain that there are no right or wrong answers from participants and what is important is their response to questions asked with the valuable feedback as practitioners of FODE/L in PNG.

Part 2- Interview: Conducting the actual interview

Targeted for:  FODE/L practitioners (implementers of QA policies- academics, instructional designers, student support officers, QA officers, finance officers, divisional heads/coordinators,) engaged in QA activities for FODE/L within their institutions

Research Question 1:0

What is the nature of Quality Assurance in ‘s Universities that provide Open and Distance learning programs and services?

Questions

1.1  What does quality in Flexible Open Distance Learning, mean to you as practitioners?

1.2  Can you describe how the culture of quality is fostered in your institution?
1.3 Explain how the **culture of QA** is advocated strongly within your FODE/L institution from the Senior Management level right down to you as a FODE/L practitioner.

1.4 What is your **perception of quality assurance** in your FODE/L practices?

1.5 How are you guided to **performing QA** in your activities within your institution?

1.6 Describe any **current QA policies, manuals, toolkit or procedures** practised in your institution?

1.7 What is missing in your FODE/L institution to foster **QA**?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 2.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>What are the major obstacles facing Universities offering FODE/L in their attempt to ensure quality standards and practices in PNG?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1 Please tell me if there are any **obstacles or barriers for QA in your institution**?

2.2 What are some **major, existing challenges** that you have in ensuring that QA is a paramount activity in your institution?

2.3 What do see as the main source or factors to these obstacles?

2.4 What ways can you suggest to improve or address these challenges?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 3:0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>To what extent do the existing institutional quality assurance guidelines, process and support meet the demands of Open Educational Resource users in FODE/L?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation Questions to OER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 What is your <strong>understanding of Open Educational Resources</strong> in FODE/L?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2 What does the term OER mean to you as a FODE/L practitioner in your institution?

1.3 How can OER be incorporated into your FODE/L context?
1.4 Describe any OER that are currently used in your programs, courses etc.?

1.5 What is your experience like in using OER in FODE/L as a user or creator/designer?

1.6 What are the potential of OER in FODE and how does it contribute to quality?

1.7 What are the advantages and disadvantages of OER in education?

1.8 What are the opportunities and challenges that OER adoption creates for uses of OER in FODE/L?

1.9 How can PNG FODE/L offering universities effectively harness the potential use of OER in their learning?

1.10 Why do we need OER in PNG’s FODE/L?

**QA & OER**

1.11 How can OER be quality assured in PNG’s context?

1.12 What QA policies are in place to support the use of OER?

1.13 Explain in detail the specific QA guidelines currently in place for OER integration in FODE/L in PNG.

1.14 What considerations should policy makers recommend in the development of criteria for assessing the effectiveness of OER integration into institutional practices?

1.15 To what extent does existing QA processes support the demand of OER in PNG’s educational context?

1.16 What are the challenges of sustaining a culture of quality for OER in PNG’s FODE/L/ contexts?

**Support and capacity building of OER**
1.17 Explain if there is a need for training to foster in-depth knowledge and understanding of OER in PNG and especially in your institution.
1.18 What specific areas do you think should capacity building in the use of OER in FODE be focused on?
1.19 Who needs training and support programs for OER use, the most? (Practitioners, learners, policy makers, QA officers?)

Networking for OER
3.26 How best can students be supported to partner with academic staff in producing OER?
3.27 With whom can you network with to build up the capacity of OER at institutional, national, regional and global levels?

Conclusion of Interview
• Remind interviewee of the end of the interview and invite questions from interviewee if they have any.
• Make any request for QA documents for document analysis.
• Word of thanks
  Thank you so much for your time and participation in this interview.
  Your views are truly valuable towards my PhD thesis.
Appendix 7  Student Questionnaire sample

Research Topic: Quality Assurance in Higher Education for Flexible Open Distance Learning in PNG

Student Questionnaire

Instructions: Thank you for volunteering to participate in this research. Your comments will highlight PNG students' views and learning experiences with regards to the quality assurance of programs, course materials, delivery mechanisms and student support. Responses are highly confidential and will be reported only in aggregate form. Please write your responses to the questions in the spaces provided below every question.

UNIVERSITY: CENTRE:

PROGRAM ENROLLED IN:

Research Question 1: 0

*What is the nature of Quality Assurance in ‘s Universities that provide Open and Distance learning programs and services?*

Meaning, Nature and Purpose of Quality and QA

1.1 What does *quality mean* to you -in your learning as an Open Distance learner? The word quality mean, the study materials have been organised

1.2 What does *Quality Assurance* mean to you personally as a student learning from a flexible open distance education/learning institution?

1.3 How does *quality matter* to you as a student?

QA culture

1.4 How can you describe *the nature of quality as a culture* fostered in Flexible Open Distance Education/learning (FODE/L) in your institution or in other FODE/L programs, service or institutions in PNG?
1.5 Describe aspects of your learning experiences that you can proudly say, were of high quality in terms of the program, course, student support, learning materials, academic support or institutional support experienced by you as a student and an important stakeholder in FODE/L?

1.6 How would you describe the quality of the following:

1. Your Learning materials:

2. Your student Support:

3. Your learning facilitators, tutors and lecturers:

4. Assessment and feedback to you as learners:

1.7 How does your institution foster QA culture in your FODE/L activities?

QA Regulatory Frameworks

1.8 What is the significance of Quality Assurance for FODE/L in your institution and for PNG as a whole?

1.9 What would be essential factors that you think would contribute to sustaining the quality of FODE?

Research Question 2.0

What are the major obstacles facing Universities offering FODE/L in their attempt to ensure quality standards and practices in PNG?
2.1 What are the major challenges for QA in your FODE/L institution?

2.2 What do see as the main sources or factors to these obstacles?

2.3 What means/ways can you suggest for addressing challenges to improve quality assurance practices in flexible open distance learning?

Research Question 3:0

To what extent do the existing institutional quality assurance guidelines, process and support meet the demands of Open Educational Resource users in FODE/L?

Orientation Questions to OER

3.1 What does the term Open Educational Resources mean to you as a student of FODE/L in your institution?

3.2 To what extent, does your institution use Open Educational Resources in some of your courses or programs?

QA & OER

3.3 How best can students like you be supported to partner with academic staff in producing PNG based Open Education OER?

3.4 In what ways can students be also involved in ensuring that Open Educational Resources used in their learning are of high quality?
3.5 Explain if students have a role in shaping the quality of educational experience?

3.6 How can students take active roles in assuring the quality of OER offered to them through social media like Facebook, LinkedIn, twitter, email, and blogs?

Support and capacity building of OER

3.7 What roles do students play in encouraging participation in activities to support OER development in PNG?

Thank you for your participation in this research project.
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, ............................................................[PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project

TITLE: QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION FOR FLEXIBLE OPEN DISTANCE EDUCATION/LEARNING IN PAPUA GUINEA.

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved has been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher.

3. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.

4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential. I understand that any research data gathered from the results of the study may be published however no information about me will be used in any way that is identifiable.
5. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher or the University of Sydney now or in the future.

6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

7. I consent to:
   • Audio-recording YES ☐ NO ☐
   • Receiving Feedback YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered YES to the “Receiving Feedback” question, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

**Feedback Option**

**Address:** ________________________________

**Email:** ________________________________

Signature

__________________________________________

Please PRINT name

__________________________________________

Date
Appendix 9  Consent Form for Focus Group Interviews

Faculty of Education and Social Work

ABN 15 211 513 464

Dr. George Odhiambo

Room 905
Education Building A35
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA
Telephone: +61 2 93516239
Facsimile: +61 2 93514580
Email: george.odhiambo@sydney.edu.au
Web: http://www.sydney.edu.au/

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, ............................................................................[PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project

TITLE: QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION FOR FLEXIBLE OPEN DISTANCE EDUCATION/LEARNING IN PAPUA GUINEA.

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

8. The procedures required for the project and the time involved has been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

9. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher.

10. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.

11. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential. I understand that any research data gathered from the results of the study may be published however no information about me will be used in any way that is identifiable.
12. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher or the University of Sydney now or in the future.

13. I understand that I can stop my participation in the focus group at any time if I do not wish to continue; however as it is a group discussion it will not be possible to exclude individual data to that point.

14. I consent to:
   • Audio-recording YES ☐ NO ☐
   • Receiving Feedback YES ☐ NO ☐

   If you answered YES to the "Receiving Feedback" question, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

   Feedback Option
   
   Address: ____________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________
   Email: ____________________________________________________

                           ........................................................
                           ........................................................
                           Signature
                           ........................................................
                           ........................................................
                           Please PRINT name
                           ........................................................
                           Date
Appendix 10: Focus Group Participants

Focus Groups from the PNG Universities

Table 1: University 1 Focus Group participants
Duration of Interview: 1-½ hours. Date of Interview: 25/07/13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Focus Group Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>FODE/L Role in FODE Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ali</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Centre Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerard</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Material Production officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Audio Visual officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pita</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Instructional Designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Bursar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruno</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Student Support Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valery</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Instructional Designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Instructional Designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felix</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>ICT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: University 2 Focus Group Participants
Duration of Interview: 50 minutes. Date of Interview: 01/08/13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Focus Group Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>FODE/L Role in FODE Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morris</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Course Writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Quality Assurance Officer</td>
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Table 3: University 3 Focus Group Participants
Duration of Interview: 50 minutes. Date of Interview: 07/08/13

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<td>Course Writer and lecturer</td>
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<td>Benny</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Sheilla</td>
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<td>May</td>
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<td>Bursary Staff</td>
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Table 4: University 4 Focus Group Participants  
Duration of Interview: 50 minutes.  Date: 13/08/14

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<td>Cecilia /Carol</td>
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<td>HOD/Lecturer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephan</td>
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<td>HOD/Lecturer</td>
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<td>Tomasi</td>
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<td>Lecturer</td>
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Appendix 11: FODE/L Students Insights under different codes

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