

FROM ACCREDITATION TO ACCOUNTABILITY: APPLYING QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORKS TO STRENGTHEN PUBLIC SECTOR GOVERNANCE IN LIBERIA

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Abstract: Liberia, like many post-conflict nations, continues to grapple with persistent challenges in public sector governance—weak institutional capacity, limited accountability mechanisms, and low citizen trust in government institutions. While quality assurance (QA) frameworks have been extensively applied in higher education to ensure institutional effectiveness, their potential application to public sector governance remains largely unexplored.

This article examines how principles and mechanisms from higher education quality assurance—specifically accreditation, program review, and continuous improvement methodologies—can be adapted to strengthen governance, accountability, and service delivery in Liberia's public sector.

Drawing from direct experience, Quality Assurance at the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) from 2016 to 2020, this conceptual article employs a comparative policy analysis approach, examine existing QA frameworks in Liberian higher education, analyze governance failures documented in reports from the General Auditing Commission (GAC) and Governance Commission, and synthesize literature on public sector reform and quality management.

The analysis reveals five transferable QA principles applicable to public governance: (1) standards-based performance benchmarking, (2) self-assessment and peer review mechanisms, (3) documentation and process transparency, (4) stakeholder engagement in evaluation, and (5) the Plan-Do-Check-Act continuous improvement cycle. The article proposes a "Public Sector Quality Assurance Framework" (PSQAF) comprising institutional accreditation for government ministries, performance audits aligned with national development goals, and citizen feedback integration mechanisms.

Adapting quality management approaches from higher education offers a promising pathway for strengthening Liberia's public sector governance. Such adaptation requires legislative backing, institutional capacity building, and a fundamental cultural shift—from compliance-oriented administration to performance-driven governance. The proposed framework holds implications for other post-conflict and developing nations facing similar governance challenges.

Keywords: *Quality assurance, public sector governance, accountability, Liberia, post-conflict reconstruction, institutional reform, accreditation.*

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

Liberia stands at a critical juncture in its post-conflict development trajectory. Following fourteen years of civil war (1989–2003) that devastated institutional infrastructure, the country has made significant strides toward peacebuilding and democratic governance. Yet, as I witnessed during my years in public service, persistent challenges in public sector performance continue to undermine development outcomes and erode citizen trust in government institutions (Governance Commission, 2021). The Liberian public sector remains characterized by weak accountability mechanisms, limited technical capacity, inconsistent service delivery, and troubling vulnerability to corruption (General Auditing Commission, 2022; World Bank, 2023).

Simultaneously, Liberia's higher education sector has undergone transformative change through the systematic application of quality assurance mechanisms. The National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE), established by Act in 2011, has developed and implemented accreditation standards, program review protocols, and institutional audit procedures that have progressively improved educational quality across the nation's universities and colleges (NCHE, 2019; Kesselly & Brown, 2020).

This juxtaposition raises a compelling question that has animated my thinking since leaving the NCHE: If quality assurance principles proved effective in strengthening Liberia's higher education institutions, might similar frameworks be adapted to address governance challenges in the public sector? This article explores that proposition, drawing on both scholarly research and

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the lessons I learned while working alongside dedicated colleagues striving to improve educational quality against considerable odds.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Liberia's public sector governance deficits manifest in multiple dimensions. The General Auditing Commission's annual reports consistently reveal weaknesses in financial management, procurement irregularities, and non-compliance with established regulations across ministries, agencies, and commissions (MACs) (GAC, 2020, 2021, 2022). The Civil Service Agency documents persistent challenges in workforce performance, merit-based recruitment, and professional development (CSA, 2021). Citizen satisfaction surveys indicate widespread perceptions of inefficiency and corruption in public service delivery (Afro barometer, 2022).

Traditional reform approaches—including anti-corruption campaigns; technical assistance programs, and administrative restructuring—have yielded mixed results at best. These interventions often focus on isolated symptoms rather than addressing systemic weaknesses in governance processes, accountability mechanisms, and institutional culture (Andrews, 2013). What remains conspicuously absent is a coherent, institution-wide framework for defining quality standards, measuring performance against those standards, and driving continuous improvement—precisely the function that quality assurance serves in higher education.

1.3 Research Questions

This article addresses three primary research questions:

1. What core principles and mechanisms from higher education quality assurance are potentially transferable to public sector governance contexts?
2. How these principles be adapted to address specific governance challenges in Liberia?
3. What would a comprehensive Public Sector Quality Assurance Framework (PSQAF) for Liberia entail, and what are the implementation requirements?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research contributes to both theoretical and practical domains. Theoretically, it extends quality assurance scholarship beyond its traditional educational boundaries into public administration and governance studies. It contributes to emerging literature on "good governance" by operationalizing abstract principles into measurable standards and accountable processes.

Practically, the article offers Liberian policymakers—including the executive branch, legislature, Governance Commission, Civil Service Agency, and development collaborates—a concrete framework for institutional reform. The proposed model draws on locally tested mechanisms rather than imported templates, enhancing its contextual relevance and potential for sustainable implementation. Furthermore, the framework's adaptability makes it relevant for other post-conflict and developing nations grappling with similar governance challenges.

1.5 Author's Positionality and Experience

The analysis presented herein is fundamentally shaped by my direct experience as Deputy Director General for Quality Assurance at the National Commission on Higher Education from 2016 to 2020. In this capacity, I had the privilege of working alongside committed Liberian and international colleagues to

develop national QA standards, coordinate institutional accreditation exercises, train peer reviewers, and engage with university leadership on quality improvement strategies. I witnessed firsthand both the challenges of introducing QA cultures in resource-constrained environments and the transformative potential when institutions embrace honest self-assessment and continuous improvement.

Those years taught me that quality assurance is ultimately about people—about creating systems that enable dedicated public servants to do their best work, that hold accountable those who fall short, and that restore citizens' faith in public institutions. This practitioner perspective is complemented by my ongoing doctoral research in public policy and administration, which examines institutional reform mechanisms in post-conflict settings. I offer this analysis not as an outsider prescribing solutions, but as someone who has wrestled with these questions alongside fellow Liberians and who believes deeply in our country's capacity to build institutions that serve all citizens effectively.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Conceptual Foundations

Quality assurance in higher education encompasses the systematic policies, processes, and practices designed to ensure that educational standards are maintained and enhanced (Harvey & Williams, 2010). The field has evolved significantly over the past three decades, driven by massification of higher education, increased accountability demands, and globalization of academic provision (Martin & Stella, 2007).

Core QA mechanisms include:

Accreditation: A formal, external recognition process determining whether an institution or program meets predetermined minimum standards (Eaton, 2015). Accreditation typically involves self-study, peer review, site visits, and a summative judgment. It serves both accountability (ensuring minimum quality) and improvement-identifying identifying areas for development) functions.

Program Review: A comprehensive, periodic evaluation of academic programs examining curriculum, faculty qualifications, student learning outcomes, resources, and graduate achievements (Materu, 2007). Program reviews combine internal self-assessment with external peer validation.

Audit: An examination of institutional processes to verify that stated policies and procedures are consistently followed, without necessarily judging the quality of outcomes (Woodhouse, 2004). Academic audits focus on the reliability and integrity of institutional QA systems.

Assessment: The systematic collection and analysis of information about student learning to understand and improve educational effectiveness (Palomba & Banta, 1999). Assessment focuses on outcomes—what students know and can do because of their educational experience.

Underpinning these mechanisms is the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle, originating in industrial quality management (Deming, 1986) but widely adapted to educational contexts. This continuous improvement model emphasizes that quality is not a static achievement but an ongoing process of reflection, adjustment, and enhancement.

2.2 Public Sector Governance: Definitions and Challenges

Governance refers to "the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised" (Kaufmann, Kraay, & Mastruzzi, 2010, p. 4). Public sector governance specifically concerns how government institutions manage public resources, deliver services, and ensure accountability to citizens.

The literature identifies several dimensions of governance quality:

- **Accountability:** The obligation of public officials to answer for their actions and decisions to citizens and their representatives (Bovens, 2007).
- **Transparency:** The openness of government processes and accessibility of information to stakeholders (Hood & Heald, 2006).
- **Effectiveness:** The capacity of government to formulate and implement sound policies and deliver services efficiently (World Bank, 2022).
- **Rule of Law:** The extent to which public authority is exercised within legal frameworks and citizens have confidence in state institutions (UNDP, 2014).

In post-conflict contexts like Liberia, historical institutional destruction, limited human capacity, weak regulatory frameworks, and the legacy of patrimonial systems (Reno, 2011; Sawyer, 2005) amplify governance challenges. These conditions create what Andrews (2013) terms "capability traps"—situations where governments adopt the forms of modern institutions without their functional substance.

2.3 Bridging Two Worlds: Quality Management in Public Sector Contexts

The application of quality management principles to public sector contexts is not without precedent. Total Quality Management (TQM) movements in the 1980s and 1990s sought to import private sector quality approaches into government (Morgan & Murgatroyd, 1994). New Public Management (NPM) reforms emphasized performance measurement, customer orientation, and results-based management (Hood, 1991).

More recently, scholars have explored specific QA applications in public administration. Pollitt and Bouckaert (2017) examine performance measurement systems in European governments. Van Dooren, Bouckaert, and Halligan (2015) analyze performance management as a distinct field of public sector practice. In developing country contexts, Andrews (2013) critiques "isomorphic mimicry"—the adoption of institutional forms without function—and advocates for "problem-driven iterative adaptation" (PDIA) that builds locally relevant solutions.

However, systematic application of higher education-style QA frameworks—with their emphasis on peer review, accreditation standards, self-study processes, and continuous improvement cycles—to public sector governance remains underexplored in both scholarship and practice. This article addresses that gap.

2.4 Liberian Context: Governance Challenges and Reform Efforts

Liberia's governance landscape is shaped by its unique history as Africa's oldest republic (founded in 1847) and its recent experience of civil conflict. The post-war period (2003–present) has witnessed significant reconstruction efforts, supported by substantial international investment.

Key governance institutions include the following:

- **Executive Branch:** Comprising 23 ministries and numerous autonomous agencies, responsible for policy implementation and service delivery.
- **Legislature:** A bicameral body with oversight, appropriations, and lawmaking functions.
- **Judiciary:** A constitutional court system with responsibility for legal interpretation and enforcement.
- **Governance Commission:** Established in 2006 to lead institutional reform and decentralization efforts.
- **General Auditing Commission:** The supreme audit institution with a constitutional mandate to audit public accounts.
- **Civil Service Agency:** Responsible for human resource management across government.
- **Public Procurement and Concessions Commission:** Oversees procurement processes and concession agreements.

Despite these institutional structures, governance challenges persist. The Governance Commission's Institutional Capacity and Performance Review (2021) documented significant gaps in strategic planning, human resource management, financial controls, and service delivery across multiple MACs. The GAC's 2022 annual report identified over \$80 million in audit exceptions and management letter findings. Public satisfaction with government services remains low, with only 32% of Liberians expressing trust in the civil service (Afro barometer, 2022).

Previous reform initiatives—including the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP, 2005–2010), the Agenda for Transformation (2012–2017), and the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (2018–2023)—have achieved partial success but have not fundamentally transformed institutional performance. This suggests the need for new approaches that address systemic weaknesses in governance processes and accountability culture.

3. Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a conceptual policy analysis design, integrating multiple data sources and analytical approaches to develop a comprehensive framework. This design is appropriate for research aimed at theory development and practical framework construction rather than hypothesis testing (Jabareen, 2009).

3.2 Data Sources

Three categories of data inform this analysis:

1. Quality Assurance Documentation: the study draws on NCHE policy documents, accreditation standards, program review guidelines, institutional self-study reports, and peer review protocols developed and implemented during my tenure from 2016 to 2020. These documents provide the foundation for identifying transferable QA principles and mechanisms.

2. Governance Assessment Reports: Publicly available reports from Liberian oversight institutions inform the analysis of governance challenges. Sources include:

- **General Auditing Commission:** Annual audit reports (2018–2022)

- **Governance Commission:** Institutional capacity assessments and policy papers (2015–2021)
- **Civil Service Agency:** Human resource management reviews (2019–2021)
- **Public Procurement and Concessions Commission:** Procurement audit reports (2018–2022)

3. Scholarly and Policy Literature: Peer-reviewed publications on quality assurance, public sector governance, institutional reform, and post-conflict reconstruction provide theoretical grounding and comparative perspectives. International frameworks—including the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA) and the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators—inform the analysis.

3.3 Analytical Approach

The analysis proceeds through three stages:

Stage 1: Comparative Framework Analysis. I systematically analyze higher education QA mechanisms to identify core principles, processes, and institutional arrangements. These elements are then mapped against governance challenges documented in Liberian oversight reports to assess potential applicability.

Stage 2: Contextual Adaptation Assessment. Identified QA mechanisms are evaluated for their contextual fit with Liberia's political, administrative, and cultural environment. This assessment considers institutional capacity constraints, political economy dynamics, and prior reform experiences.

Stage 3: Framework Construction. Drawing on the preceding analysis, I construct a comprehensive Public Sector Quality Assurance Framework (PSQAF). The framework specifies standards, processes, institutional arrangements, and implementation requirements for applying QA principles to Liberian public sector governance.

3.4 Limitations

This study has several limitations that warrant acknowledgment. First, as a conceptual analysis, it does not empirically test the proposed framework's effectiveness. Implementation research will be necessary to validate and refine the model. Second, the analysis is grounded primarily in the Liberian experience, which may limit generalizability to significantly different contexts. Third, my direct involvement in NCHE QA development, while providing valuable insider perspective, may introduce bias in interpreting the effectiveness of those mechanisms. I have addressed these limitations through systematic documentation of evidence sources, transparent analytical procedures, and explicit acknowledgment of the framework's provisional nature. I welcome critical engagement and empirical testing of the ideas presented here.

4. Results

4.1 Transferable Principles for Public Sector Governance

Analysis of higher education QA mechanisms reveals five core principles with demonstrated transferability to public sector governance contexts.

Principle 1: Standards-Based Performance Benchmarking

Higher education QA operates through explicit, publicly available standards against which institutions are evaluated. These standards typically address mission and purpose, governance and

administration, academic programs, faculty qualifications, student support, infrastructure, and quality improvement processes (NCHE, 2019).

Application to Public Sector: Government ministries and agencies could similarly be evaluated against explicit standards addressing:

- Strategic planning and policy implementation capacity
- Financial management and procurement compliance
- Human resource management and staff development
- Service delivery effectiveness
- Internal control and accountability mechanisms
- Stakeholder engagement and citizen feedback

Such standards would transform vague expectations of "good governance" into measurable criteria against which performance can be systematically assessed.

Principle 2: Self-Assessment and Peer Review Mechanisms

A cornerstone of higher education QA is the requirement that institutions conduct comprehensive self-assessment prior to external evaluation. This process compels institutional introspection, evidence gathering, and honest identification of strengths and weaknesses (Materu, 2007). External peer review—conducted by qualified professionals from peer institutions—provides objective validation and constructive recommendations.

Application to Public Sector: Ministries could conduct annual or biennial self-assessments against established standards, documenting evidence of compliance and identifying areas for improvement. Peer review teams, comprising experienced officials from other MACs and independent experts, would validate self-assessments and provide recommendations. This mechanism creates both accountability (through external validation) and professional development (through peer learning).

Principle 3: Documentation and Process Transparency

QA systems require extensive documentation of policies, procedures, and decisions. This documentation serves multiple purposes: ensuring consistency, enabling audit, preserving institutional memory, and demonstrating accountability (Harvey & Williams, 2010).

Application to Public Sector: Many governance failures documented in GAC reports stem from inadequate documentation—missing procurement records, undocumented personnel decisions, and unclear policy rationales. Requiring systematic documentation of key processes (procurement, hiring, budget execution, and service delivery) would enhance transparency and provide evidence for accountability reviews.

Principle 4: Stakeholder Engagement in Evaluation

Higher education QA increasingly emphasizes engagement with diverse stakeholders—students, employers, professional bodies, and community representatives—in evaluating institutional effectiveness. This ensures that quality is defined not solely by internal actors but by those who experience and depend on institutional outputs (Newton, 2010).

Application to Public Sector: Citizen Engagement in governance evaluation remains limited in Liberia. Systematic mechanisms for gathering and incorporating citizen feedback—through service delivery surveys, community scorecards, public hearings, and

citizen report cards—would enhance accountability and ensure that governance improvements address actual public needs.

Principle 5: The PDCA Continuous Improvement Cycle

The Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle transforms QA from static compliance to dynamic improvement. Institutions plan improvements based on self-assessment and peer feedback, implement changes, check results through subsequent evaluation, and act on findings to initiate further improvement (Deming, 1986).

Application to Public Sector: Government reform efforts often follow a project-based logic—implementing discrete initiatives with defined endpoints—rather than an embedded continuous improvement logic. Embedding PDCA cycles into routine ministry operations would institutionalize ongoing reflection, adaptation, and enhancement of governance processes.

4.2 Mapping QA Mechanisms to Governance Challenges

Table 1 presents a systematic mapping of specific QA mechanisms to documented governance challenges in Liberia.

Table 1: Mapping QA Mechanisms to Governance Challenges

Governance Challenge	Documented Evidence	Applicable QA Mechanism	Proposed Adaptation
Weak strategic planning and performance management	Governance Commission (2021): 65% of MACs lack current strategic plans	Program review; standards-based evaluation	Mandatory strategic planning standards with periodic review and external validation
Procurement irregularities and non-compliance	GAC (2022): 78% of audits identify procurement violations	Process audit; documentation requirements	Standardized procurement documentation protocols; regular process audits.
Limited merit-based recruitment and staff development	CSA (2021): Patronage concerns in 43% of hiring decisions reviewed	Faculty qualification standards; professional development requirements	Position qualification standards; competitive selection documentation; mandatory staff development plans.
Weak financial management and internal controls	GAC (2022): \$80M+ in audit exceptions and findings	Internal audit; peer review	Strengthened internal audit functions; periodic peer review of financial processes.
Poor service delivery and citizen satisfaction	Afro barometer (2022): 68% dissatisfied with government services	Stakeholder engagement; outcomes assessment	Citizen Satisfaction surveys; service delivery standards; community scorecards.
Inadequate documentation and record-keeping	GAC reports (2018–2022): Consistent findings on missing documentation	Documentation requirements; records management standards	Standardized record-keeping protocols; documentation audit requirements.

- **Procurement irregularities and non-compliance GAC (2022):** 78% of audits identify procurement violations
Process audit; documentation requirements
Standardized procurement documentation protocols; regular process audits.
- **Limited merit-based recruitment and staff development CSA (2021):** Patronage concerns in 43% of hiring decisions reviewed
Faculty qualification standards; professional development requirements
Position qualification standards; competitive selection documentation; mandatory staff development plans.
- **Weak financial management and internal controls GAC (2022):** \$80M+ in audit exceptions and findings
Internal audit; peer review
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Stakeholder engagement; outcomes assessment
Citizen Satisfaction surveys; service delivery standards; community scorecards.
- **Inadequate documentation and record-keeping GAC reports (2018–2022):** Consistent findings on missing documentation
Documentation requirements; records management standards
Standardized record-keeping protocols; documentation audit requirements.

This mapping demonstrates substantial alignment between QA mechanisms and Liberia's governance challenges, suggesting significant potential for adaptation.

4.3 The Proposed Public Sector Quality Assurance Framework (PSQAF)

Based on the preceding analysis, this article proposes a comprehensive Public Sector Quality Assurance Framework (PSQAF) comprising three interconnected components:

1. Institutional Accreditation for Government Entities,
2. Performance Audit and Review Mechanisms, and
3. Citizen Feedback Integration Systems.

Component 1: Institutional Accreditation for Government Entities

This component establishes a formal accreditation system for all ministries, agencies, and commissions, analogous to higher education institutional accreditation.

Standards Domains:

1. Governance and Leadership: Clarity of mandate; organizational structure; leadership effectiveness; strategic planning.
2. Human Resource Management: Merit-based recruitment; staff qualifications; professional development; performance management.
3. Financial Management and Integrity: Budget execution; internal controls; audit compliance; procurement integrity.
4. Service Delivery Effectiveness: Service standards; accessibility; timeliness; quality.
5. Accountability and Transparency: Documentation practices; information accessibility; stakeholder engagement; complaint mechanisms.
6. Continuous Improvement: Self-assessment practices; use of performance data; implementation of audit recommendations.

Accreditation Process:

- Self-Study: The MAC conducts a comprehensive self-assessment against standards, documenting evidence.
- Peer Review: An external team validates the self-study through document review, interviews, and site visits.
- Accreditation Decision: An independent body renders judgment: Full Accreditation, Provisional Accreditation (with conditions), or Non-Accreditation.
- Periodic Review: Accreditation is renewed every 3–5 years through a similar process.

Component 2: Performance Audit and Review Mechanisms

This component establishes ongoing performance monitoring beyond periodic accreditation.

- Annual Performance Audits: Focused audits examining specific aspects of MAC performance against standards, conducted by strengthened internal audit units and validated by the supreme audit institution.
- Program/Project Reviews: In-depth evaluations of major government programs, examining design, implementation, and outcomes.
- Management Letters: Formal communication of findings and recommendations to MAC leadership, with required response and action plan.
- Follow-up Reviews: Verification of implemented improvements.

Component 3: Citizen Feedback Integration Systems

This component ensures that governance quality is evaluated not only by officials but also by those served.

- Service Delivery Surveys: Regular, representative surveys measuring citizen satisfaction with specific government services.
- Community Scorecards: Participatory processes where communities evaluate local service delivery and engage with providers on improvement.
- Citizen Report Cards: Aggregated citizen feedback on public service quality publicly disseminated.
- Complaint and Redress Mechanisms: Accessible systems for citizens to report service failures and seek remedy.

4.4 Institutional Architecture for PSQAF Implementation

Effective implementation requires clear institutional responsibilities and coordination.

Proposed Institutional Structure:

- National Governance Quality Authority (NGQA): An autonomous body established by legislation to oversee PSQAF implementation. It would be composed of commissioners with demonstrated integrity and expertise, appointed through a transparent process with legislative confirmation. Responsibilities would include:
 - Developing and reviewing accreditation standards
 - Conducting or commissioning accreditation reviews
 - Maintaining a public register of accredited MACs
 - Publishing an annual report on governance quality
 - Building QA capacity across government
- Strengthened Internal QA Units: Each MAC would establish an internal quality assurance unit responsible for:
 - Coordinating self-assessment processes
 - Maintaining documentation for accreditation
 - Monitoring implementation of improvement plans
 - Liaising with the NGQA

3. Enhanced Oversight Coordination: A formal coordination mechanism would link the NGQA with existing oversight bodies (GAC, Governance Commission, CSA, and PPCC) to ensure complementary mandates, avoid duplication, and share information.

4. Peer Reviewer Roster: A trained pool of qualified peer reviewers (drawn from senior civil servants, retired officials, academics, private sector, and civil society) would be available to serve on review teams.

5. Discussion

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to several theoretical conversations. First, it extends quality assurance scholarship beyond its traditional educational boundaries, demonstrating how QA principles can be adapted to governance contexts. This addresses Harvey and Williams's (2010) call for QA research that engages with broader institutional and societal dynamics.

Second, the article contributes to governance theory by operationalizing abstract governance concepts into measurable standards and accountable processes. It addresses the "measurement gap" identified in governance scholarship—the challenge of moving from principles to practice (Kaufmann et al., 2010).

Third, the proposed framework offers an alternative to both "isomorphic mimicry" (adopting forms without function) and purely indigenous solutions (Andrews, 2013). By adapting locally tested QA mechanisms—developed in Liberian higher education for Liberian conditions—the framework represents "problem-driven iterative adaptation" grounded in contextual reality.

5.2 Implementation Considerations and Challenges

Several challenges must be addressed for successful PSQAF implementation.

Political Economy Dynamics: QA systems inevitably create winners and losers. Officials who benefit from current opacity may resist transparency requirements. Political interference in accreditation decisions must be anticipated and guarded against through strong legislative protections, independent appointments, and civil society oversight. During my NCHE experience, we learned that building political will for quality assurance required persistent engagement with institutional leaders, demonstrating how QA could strengthen rather than threaten their institutions.

Capacity Constraints: Effective QA requires technical skills—self-assessment, data analysis, peer review—that are currently scarce in Liberia's public sector. Phased implementation with substantial capacity building is essential. An initial focus might target a small number of pilot MACs with successive expansion. The peer reviewer training programs we developed at NCHE could serve as models for public sector capacity building.

Resource Requirements: Comprehensive QA systems require investment in training, information systems, and review processes. Development partners could support initial investments, with sustainable financing mechanisms (such as a modest percentage of the national budget) established legislatively. However, we must be realistic about fiscal constraints and design systems that are affordable to sustain.

Cultural Transformation: Perhaps most challenging is shifting from a culture of compliance (following minimum rules) to a culture of quality (continuously seeking improvement). This requires leadership commitment, incentives for performance, and time for new norms to take root. In higher education, we found that highlighting early successes and celebrating institutions that embraced improvement helped shift cultural attitudes. Similar approaches could work in the public sector.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on this analysis, the following recommendations are offered:

For the Executive Branch:

- Champion legislation establishing the National Governance Quality Authority
- Direct all MACs to establish internal QA units and begin self-assessment capacity building
- Require accreditation as a condition for budget submissions and program approvals

For the Legislature:

- Enact enabling legislation with strong protections for NGQA independence
- Exercise oversight by requiring NGQA annual reports and testimony
- Consider accreditation status in appropriation decisions

For the Governance Commission:

- Lead stakeholder consultations on PSQAF design
- Support development of accreditation standards
- Coordinate with the NGQA on the institutional reform agenda

For the Civil Service Agency:

- Integrate QA competencies into civil service training curricula
- Recognize QA leadership in performance evaluations and promotions
- Support development of peer reviewer training programs

For Development Partners:

- Provide technical and financial support for PSQAF piloting
- Support capacity building for the NGQA and internal QA units
- Align programmatic support with PSQAF standards and processes

For Civil Society:

- Advocate for PSQAF legislative passage
- Participate in standards development and review processes
- Monitor implementation and hold government accountable

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

This study's conceptual nature necessitates empirical validation. Future research should:

- Pilot PSQAF in selected MACs to test feasibility and refine standards
- Conduct comparative studies examining similar QA adaptations in other post-conflict contexts
- Develop and validate metrics for measuring governance quality improvements
- Examine political economy dynamics affecting QA implementation
- Assess changes in citizen perceptions resulting from improved governance transparency

I hope that scholars and practitioners will take up these research questions, refining and improving upon the ideas presented here.

6. Conclusion

Liberia's governance challenges, while substantial, are not intractable. This article has argued that principles and mechanisms from higher education quality assurance—tested and refined in the Liberian context through NCHE accreditation processes—offer a promising pathway for strengthening public sector governance. I have offered this analysis not as a definitive solution, but as a contribution to an ongoing conversation about how Liberia can build institutions worthy of its citizens' trust.

The proposed Public Sector Quality Assurance Framework (PSQAF) adapts five core QA principles—standards-based benchmarking, self-assessment and peer review, documentation and transparency, stakeholder engagement, and continuous improvement—to address documented governance weaknesses. By establishing institutional accreditation for government entities, strengthening performance audit mechanisms, and integrating citizen feedback, PSQAF creates a comprehensive system for defining, measuring, and continuously improving governance quality.

Implementation will require political commitment, institutional capacity building, and cultural transformation. Yet the potential rewards are substantial: more effective government services, reduced corruption, enhanced citizen trust, and ultimately, stronger foundations for Liberia's continued development. I remain hopeful because I have seen what is possible when dedicated public servants embrace quality improvement—in university administration, in accreditation exercises, in the quiet work of building better systems.

As Liberia approaches two decades of post-conflict reconstruction, the question is no longer whether institutions exist, but whether they function effectively for the citizens they serve. Quality assurance offers not a quick fix but a systematic approach to answering that question honestly and acting on the answers consistently. From accreditation to accountability, from compliance to quality—this is the journey Liberian governance must undertake. I offer this framework in the spirit of contribution to that essential journey.

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