QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISM IN NIGERIAN EDUCATION

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 26TH CONGRESS
OF THE NIGERIAN ACADEMY OF EDUCATION
HELD AT THE
FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS FROM 21ST-25TH NOV. 2011.

Editors

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Preface

There is no doubt whatsoever that quality assurance is an indispensable process for achieving our national goals of education as well as the production of qualitative human capital for sustainable national development. In this regard, we recognise also the fact that issues of standards and values which are the root of our national educational educational efforts and sustainable national development are important co-ordinates of quality assurance mechanism in Nigerian Education.

Against this backdrop, the Nigerian Academy of Education at its 26th Annual Congress held at the Faculty of Education, University of Lagos from 21st to 25th November, 2011 decided to examine the theme: Quality Assurance Mechanism in Nigerian Education. This theme provoked keen intellectual discourse among scholars from different parts of the country. In well over a hundred papers, participants examined the different ramifications of the theme. Although all the papers were relevant to the central theme of the congress, only few could successfully pass through our peer review process. Only such papers that scaled through the peer review process were published in this compendium.

Majority of the papers examined quality assurance mechanisms at the basic education level, secondary education level and the tertiary level. There were other papers which considered quality assurance as it relates to teacher education, special needs education as well as research and development. More important are the strategies and actions that have been proposed by the different contributors on how to make the quality assurance mechanisms at the various levels of the Nigerian Education system more efficient.

In all these, it is important that educational institutions at all levels be encouraged to develop and maintain strong internal quality assurance mechanisms while the external quality assurance be refocused towards assisting tertiary institutions in Nigeria to meet global standards.

It is our earnest hope and desire that our policy makers in the education sector will buy into the rich proposals contained in this volume on how to fully operationalise the paradigm shift which quality assurance represents.

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QUALITY ASSURANCE IN SECONDARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: THE ROLES OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR AND STUDENT LEADERS

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Abstract
The paper critically examined the roles of secondary school administrator and student leaders in assuring quality in secondary school education system. No country is likely to go far beyond the threshold of development unless it ensures that most of its people receive a good basic education. And reaching the threshold for sustainable development requires that the majority of the population completes primary and secondary education of good quality. At moment, secondary education in Nigeria is in a mess. This accounts why most parents patronize private secondary schools nowadays. The paper discussed extensively the roles of administrators and school leaders in bringing about quality in the school system. Some of these roles include; the student leaders must ensure that regular dialogue is held with the school management on how to guarantee quality instructional delivery in the school system, organize the entire students on the need to take their studies seriously, work in collaboration with the quality assurance department or committee to ensure that quality services are provided in the school system, there is need to improve or employ modern teaching methods and techniques in the classroom, there is need to harmonize the internal and external criteria of quality assurance raising standard of excellence of the education system, effective supervisory system should be injected into the system by the school principal, etc.

Introduction
The worth of any educational system as an investment lies in its capability to continuously serve its customers (students, parents, employers or labour, the society) better and remain relevant. Educational planners are therefore faced with two main challenges: providing for quantity and for quality. Quantity is concerned with numbers, that is, getting as many students as possible to school within the shortest time allowed. While quality is about how good or bad the products are of two, quantity is easier to deliver than quality. If universal free education is backed up with adequate resources (teachers and teaching facilities), school enrolment is guaranteed. To ensure quality education is the aspect that presents educational managers the most challenges task. It is in the aspect of quantitative growth that educational planners even in Nigeria can lay claim to some success though a lot is still required to be done. In the process however, quality seems to have suffered with all the attendance consequences. Yet, without quality, education become wastage and even poses danger to the individual beneficiary and the society. The quality of education being provided for children has been a source of grave concern for long time. Critics have said that the education was too bookish and irrelevant to African needs during the colonial period and even after independence in 1960. The 1969 Curriculum Conference which culminated in the National Policy on Education and the 6-3-3-4 system of education was a reaction to that fact. The school curriculum was expected to be comprehensive to cater for varying talents of children. Yet, complaints about the low quality of education have continued. In recent times, more concerned people, state governors, government officials, etc have come out openly to admit and lament the rot in the educational system. For instance, Jacob (2001:11) expressed concern about the declining level of literacy in Igala land which can be traced to teaching employment given to unqualified applicants and admissions given to some unqualified candidates. Olayemi (2001:11) also observed that "the depression that has endangered public schools is undoubtedly the major cause that led to the emergence of private schools". He however noted that private schools need
to be closely monitored to stem the abuse which is now common among them. Apart from such comments, other indicators of declining quality and wastages in the secondary education system include high dropout and failure rates, rampant examination malpractices, poor reading and writing skills among students at all levels. Evidence of wastages abounds among the teeming population of students who repeat General Certificate Examination (G.C.E) and Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB) Examination every year. There is also evident of client reaction as many parents take their children to private schools within or outside the country for those who can afford to.

Concept of School Administration
School administration involves managing, administering the curriculum and teaching, pastoral care, discipline, assessment evaluation and examinations, resource allocation, costing and forward planning, staff appraisal relationship with the community, use of the practical skills necessary for surviving the policies of organization such as decision-making, negotiation, bargaining, communication, conflict handling, running meetings and so on (Ojo, 1999). All these tasks can be reduced to the following: planning, organizing, directing, supervising, and evaluating the school system. These activities are those of the school principal who must ensure they are all directed towards efficient and effective teaching and learning in the school so as to be able to produce quality outputs.

Quality and Quality Control
Quality is perceived differently by various professional who often use the term. While, for instance, an accountant sees the quality of a product in terms of cost-effectiveness, a customer is likely to judge it on the basis of its reliability. However, quality is something everyone considers good and wants to have (Cole, 1996). Quality has to do with whether something is good or bad; it is about the standard set. In manufacturing industries, standard or quality of products can be assessed against an original product or against customers' specifications. Quality control is a retroactive action used to determine the quality of a product or a system after processing and during which wastages would have occurred and what is left is to reject and/or battle with rectification. It is however, better, more rewarding and less costly to take steps to prevent failure and wastages before they happen, hence, the need for quality assurance which is preventive rather than corrective.

Quality Assurance or quality Control in Education
Quality Assurance is the consistent provision and utilization of good and high standard resources to foster effective teaching and learning, in every stage and aspect of the educational system. Quality assurance is meaningful when application of its strategy is not deferred till the end of an educational programme.

Quality control practiced in Nigerian education is based essentially on school inspection, monitoring and control, while such measures are appropriate for obtaining data on policy implementation and for strategic planning, and aid public accountability, they are of little value when it comes to managing classroom learning processes (West-Burnham 1994). Also, while the provision and rehabilitation of school facilities assist in the delivery of quality, some intervention is needed to plan and utilize such facilities effectively in the teaching/learning process.

Need for Quality Assurance in Secondary Education
The need for quality assurance in secondary education in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized in order to ensure quality of teaching and learning. However, the following are the major needs of quality assurance in our education system in Nigeria:
To serve as indispensable component of quality control strategy in education,
To ensure and maintain high standard of education at all levels,
To assist in monitoring and supervising of education,
To determine the quality of the teacher input,
To determine the number of classrooms needed based on the average class size to ensure quality control of education.

To determine the level of adequacy of the facilities available for quality control,
It would ensure how the financial resources available could be prudently and judiciously utilized.

Teachers must be seen to apply appropriate teaching methods in their instructional delivery,
Continuous retraining of school principals for effective school administration must be emphasized,
Principals must also ensure that teachers are made to embark on regular retraining exercise with the modern pedagogical techniques of global standards.
The issue of examination malpractices in the system must be angrily confronted by the school principals. No act of examination misconduct must be condoned in the system.

Strategies for Establishing Quality Assurance in Secondary Education

The strategies used for quality assurance in education include:

a. **Monitoring:** It refers to the process of collecting data at interval about ongoing projects or programmed within the school system. The aim is to constantly assess the level of performance with a view of finding out how far a set of objectives are being met (Ehindero, 2001).

b. **Evaluation:** This is a formal process carried out within a school setting. It is based on available data which are used to form conclusions. It could be formative or summative. The aim of evaluation (quality assurance strategy) is to see how the system can be assisted to improve on the present level of performance (formative) (Ijaiya, 2011).

c. **Supervision:** Supervision might involve inspection, but it goes beyond inspection and includes attempt at bringing about improvement in the quality of instruction. It involves staff as essential part of the process. It is a way of advising, guiding, refreshing, encouraging and stimulating staff (Onocha, 2002).

d. **Inspection:** Usually involves an assessment of available facilities and resources in an institution. It is more of an assessment rather than an improvement induced exercised (West-Burnham, 1994).

e. **Quality Control:** The issue of quality control cannot be over-emphasized. It is one of the strategies for establishing quality assurance in the inferior education system at all levels. Ojedele, (2007) views that, quality control should be of concerns to the country in its drive towards technological development. For this to be successfully carried out, there is need to examine the qualification of teachers, teachers by gender, the adequacy of the curriculum, availability of equipment in the required number, as well as the proper use of the processes involved in the various skills to ensure that the finished products are of high standard.

Roles of Educational Administrators in Assuring Quality in Secondary Education System in Nigeria

The roles of educational Administrators/managers range from administrative to professional. Professional staff in the education industry should be concerned about how they manage the educational resources allocated to them for use as well as the control of their schools and students. The teacher's managerial functions by the same token should go beyond those of the beginning classroom teacher. He should be responsible not only to himself and his
pupils but also to other staff members and their pupils. Not only that, he is faced with the responsibility of determining the priorities of management and the management style to be used for achieving qualitative educational results. Arikewuyo (2004) had listed the following tasks which must be done by education managers or administrators in order to have a qualitative education. The worth of any management is based on its ability to produce quality products and satisfy clients and other stakeholders. Its tasks, therefore, include identifying and solving any problem that militates against quality delivery. Such a problem solving approach will be directed at taking preventive measures against wastages. Prevention is therefore the basis of Quality Assurance Management or Total Quality (West-Burnham, 1994).

The issue of educational accountability has not been addressed in Nigeria for obvious reasons. In the U.S.A for instance, principals have been "dismissed or re-assigned due to low students achievement" (Reaves, 2001:21). In Nigeria, such school heads stay put. Lack of public demand for accountability from head teachers and teachers is a strong factor for declining quality in the system. Neither promotion nor transfer is linked to pupil achievement. The lack of clearly defined quality standard and how to assess it even makes it easier for teachers to feel unaccountable for quality. However, the government is not, at present, in a strong option to demand full accountability from Nigerian principals/teachers or take such a stern measure against them as in the U.S.A where education is much better funded and enjoys stability. Nigerian teachers work under difficult and unstable conditions such as inadequate teaching facilities, irregular and inadequate remunerations, and infrastructures, under-funding of education and strikes. It should be noted that quality delivery begins from policy makers to resource providers, policy implementers and students; that is, it is the responsibility of all stakeholders. Both the input and the output processes contribute to the quality of the products.

The need to enhance productivity and minimize wastages has led to a new but "broader" organization-wide approach to quality. Always from the traditional view of quality control to quality assurance (Cole, 1996: 23 7) which has been variously termed Quality Management (QM), Total Quality (TQ), Total Quality Management (TQM), etc (West-Burnham, 1992; Cole, 196: Bush and Coleman, 200). Total Quality "works to enhance that every aspect of the organization and every employee is focused all the time in meeting and then exceeding customer requirements" (West-Burnham, 1994:172). Cole (1996) sees it as an approach that is based in a positive attitude to quality at every level in the organization. Cole (1996) noted that TQ has its genesis in the work of professor Ishikawa, who while training supervisors on quality process came to the realization that workers' participation in the quality process can ensure the achievement of quality standard, provide feedback to supervisors and managers about quality problems and secure workers' commitment to quality. When workers form part of the total quality production process, quality assurance becomes participative collaborative (Cole, 1996).

Student Leaders' Roles

The student leaders are expected to play the following pivotal roles in bringing about quality in the secondary school system.

(i) The student leaders must ensure that regular dialogue is held with the school management on how to guarantee quality instructional delivery in the school system.

(ii) Organize the entire students on the need to take their studies seriously.

(iii) Ensure the provision of appropriate learning facilities in the system.

(iv) Ensuring that enabling and conducive learning environment is provided for effective teaching-learning activity.

(v) Work in collaboration with the quality assurance department or committee to ensure that quality services are provided in the school system.
(vi) Student leaders should see to the need for a periodic dialogue or interactive session between staff and students takes place in the school. Where the students can freely interact with their teachers on issues concerning their welfare and well-being in the school system.

(vii) Just as there are prefects in-charge of health, labour, sanitation etc. in the school system, there should also be prefects in-charge of quality, whose responsibility is to ensure that quality service is provided by the teachers. These prefects work hand in hand with quality assurance unit to assess or evaluate the teachers. The report of their assessment on the teachers should form the basis on which the teachers are promoted.

(viii) Student leaders must ensure that suggestion box and information boards are provided by the school administrator where students can freely air their grievances on issues that do not promote effective teaching, learning and discipline in the school system.

Achieving Quality Assurance in Nigerian Secondary Education System

To achieve quality assurance in secondary education in Nigeria the school administrators student leaders, stakeholders as well as the government at all levels should ensure that the following are put in place:

i. Education curriculum and standards of education in Nigeria should be reviewed to reflect the needs and aspiration of the society.

ii. There is need to harmonize the internal and external criteria of quality assurance raising standard of excellence of the education systems,

iii. There is need to improve or employ modern teaching methods and techniques in the classroom,

iv. A more developed and reformed curriculum content is highly desirable. There is also the need for curriculum evaluation to allow innovations and new techniques/methods to be incorporated.

v. Effective supervisory system should be injected into the system.

vi. Full professionalization of teaching in the country to set a standard under which a qualified and well trained teacher must operate is highly imperative,

vii. Government should endeavour to properly fund education institutions in the country to meet the expectation of the society,

viii. Quality assurance unit should be set up in every school to ensure quality education delivery in the school system. This unit should see to the assessment of the teachers using the students. Therefore promotion of the teachers should partly or majorly be based on their objective assessment by the students they teach,

ix. Proper management of fund: School principals must ensure that funds in the school system are managed with high sense of accountability. Wasteful resources management must be avoided. There must be a functional check and balance in the system to monitor the revenue generation and expenditure in the school system.

Conclusion

Assurance for quality education is a total holistic process concerned with ensuring integrity of outcomes. Thus, the responsibility for quality assurance rests with the schools system. Lastly, quality assurance recognizes the autonomy of educational institutions and seeks to enhance their capacity to operate in a responsive way. The desire for better quality of education is a generally shared feeling in Nigeria as in many other countries. Though, quality production is the responsibility all of stakeholders, the schools, in particular, play key role in the quality process. The traditional practices of quality control through school inspection, auditing and monitoring are mere retroactive actions taken after possible damage had been done. Total Quality is suggested as a better alternative for quality assurance because it focuses on wastage prevention.
rather than corrective. The goal of TQ is to develop a culture of total commitment to quality process in the school so that wastage is prevented before it occurs. The motto is right first time.

References


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