

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN TEACHERS EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

by

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Abstract

The importance of quality assurance in the educational sector as initiated by Common Wealth of Learning (COL) is not without many daunting challenges. This paper assesses, and reviews some factors and subsequently classifies teachers in Nigeria into four classes based on quality indicator. The classes are– Teachers per excellence, the charlatan in teaching profession, the mediocrity teachers, and the quack teachers. The challenges of training and maintaining quality and qualified teacher by any country in African should be anchored in identifying the existence of the above class. The suggested classification was occasioned by unemployment situation in Nigeria which renders teaching profession the last resort for all job seekers. The writers also review other areas of challenges militating against quality assurance in teachers' education in Nigeria. Recommendations are made and conclusions drawn.

Introduction

Education may be described as a process of teaching or instruction received; a process of training and improving one's test and life standard. Education has been described as the bedrock of every society and a tool for nation building. In recent times, quality education was brought to focus owing to the neglect and mass production of educated people without regards to set standard, procedure and process in Education. Quality education is said to be the right of every citizen, not a privilege that may be granted or withhold by who even is in-charge to provide it. For quality education to be achieved, it is important to know that the principal factors must be in place, these include: the teacher's, the learning environment and the student. The teacher must be adequate in quality and standard in a conducive working environment to adequately produce quality graduate for effective nation development. Adepoju (1999) agrees with the above assertion and implies that, people and nations are what they were because of the nature and type of education they have been exposed to. However, owing to the constant neglect in recent time by successive government to the educational sector, there have been rapid increase in the establishment of private

schools and institutions in Nigeria which has adversely affected the quality of education and in turn, retarding the development of the nation. The emphasis of this paper therefore is on quality assurance in teacher education in Nigeria.

Definition of Concepts

Quality is truly genuine position of a product, (goods and services) or a process attribute on good – bad scale. It is often associated or linked with defects and deficiencies in products or process. Quality is the capability of products or services to knowingly satisfy those preconceived composite wants of the user(s) that are intelligently related to the characteristics of performance and do not cause major overt or covert reactions or actions by other people (Robinson, 2006). The concept of quality combine two aspects – the first relates to the features and attributes of the product or service. Second is the absence of deficiencies in the product.

Assurance is described as a promise, guarantee or statement that something is true (Robinson, 2006). In early 2004, the Common Wealth of Learning started working in the area of quality assurance with the aim to achieve the outcome of enhanced quality at all levels of education. They provided adequate guideline for formulating quality assurance policies as well as for adopting systems and procedures within teacher education institutions for enhancing the quality of the processes involved in teacher development (Lakshim and Rama 2006).

Importance of Quality Assurance in Nigeria School

Adegbesan (2011) in his research paper stresses the need for quality assurance in Nigeria Education System in Nigeria to include:

- i. To serve as indispensable component of quality control strategy in education.
- ii. To ensure and maintain high standard of education at all levels.
- iii. To assist in monitoring and supervision of education.
- iv. To determine the quality of teachers' input.
- v. To determine the number of adequacy of the facilities available for quality control.
- vi. Quality assurance would ensure how the financial resources available could be prudently and judiciously utilized.

Before the initiative, many scholars in Nigeria had examined and worked extensively on quality assurance in Nigeria educational system because the concept is the engine that will drive general reforms in Nigeria education. Ajayi and Adegbesan, (2007) perceive quality as the total of the features of a process, product or service on its performance in 'customer' or 'clients' perception of that performance. It is not just

a feature of finished product or services but involves a focus on internal processes and outputs and includes the reduction of wasted and the improvement or productivity. While Fadokun (2005) characterized quality by three interrelated and interdependent strands thus:

- i. Efficiency in the meeting of its goals.
- ii. Relevance to human and environmental conditions and needs.
- iii. Something more” that is the exploration of new ideas, the pursuit of excellence and encouragement of creativity.

Therefore quality can be described as the entire features and characteristics of a product or services that contain on it, the ability or all attributes to satisfy stated or implied needs. Alexander Astin (1993) points out that quality education cannot be defined but easily identify when encountered. According to him, there are four views on excellence in quality of higher education to include – Excellence in reputation, excellence in resources, excellence in content, - excellence in outcome. The above mentioned qualities are very important in preparing a teacher. Therefore, colleges and universities must play a very vital role in the preparation of teachers. In Nigeria, nearly above 80,000 teachers are produced yearly. How many of these professional teachers are followed up to verify quality assurance in their various schools and colleges? Two times, the above figures join teaching profession due to lack of job not necessary trained.

Quality Assurance in Teacher Education

Education is a tool for Nation building. Teachers are the drivers of education in all spheres of life, be it capacity building, training and retraining programme—all manners of learning – teachers take the front stage. Therefore it is very important to take teachers’ education and breeding of teacher very important in terms of quality assurance. The subject of quality assurance is a very important matter in the sphere of higher education. In all higher education, teacher education occupies central stage because it takes care of macro educational system. It is the teachers’ education that is assigned the task of producing and modeling the teachers for nursery, primary and secondary education. Education of teachers is not only responsible for the improvement of school education but also for preparing well qualified teacher who are professionally competent committed, resourceful confidence and reproductive to meet the demand of the society. Therefore, a high quality teacher must imbibe the four pillars of education – urge for learning to learn:

- i. Acquisition of occupational skill and competence to deal with various situation and team work.
- ii. Development of an understanding of other people respect for other.

- iii. Development of one's personality and ability to act with greater autonomy, judgment and personal responsibility.

Arikewuyo (2004) sees quality in education to be judged by both its ability to enable the students performs well in standard examinations and relevance to the needs of the students, community, and the society as a whole. He finally concludes that quality serves as determination of gradations based on standard of excellence beneath which a mark of inferiority is imposed or adduced and above which grades of superiority are defined. However, quality assurance is related to quality control, but it functions in a rather proactive manner in the sense that quality control serves as series of operational techniques and activities used to fulfill that requirement are met. While, quality assurance goes beyond that, because it extends the focus from outcomes or outputs to the process which produces them. Similarly, Ajayi and Adegbesan (2007) argue that, quality assurance is related to accountability both of which are concerned with maximizing the effectiveness and efficiency of educational systems and services in relation to their contexts, of their missions and their stated objectives. In his own definitions, Ehindero (2004) says quality assurance focused on the following:

- (i) Learners entry behaviour, characteristics and attributes including some demographic factors that can inhibit or facilitate their learning.
- (ii) The teacher entry qualification, values pedagogic stalls, professional preparedness, subject background, philosophical orientation etc.
- (iii) The teaching / learning processes including the structure of the curriculum and learning environment.
- (iv) The outcomes, which are defined for different levels in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes including appropriate and relevant instruments to assess these objectives.

Fadokun (2005) sees quality assurance in education as a programmed, an institution or a whole education system. In such case, quality assurance is all these attitudes, objectives, actions and procedures that through their existence and use, and together with quality control activities, ensure that appropriate academic standards are being maintained and enhanced in and by each programme.

Performance Indicator or Benchmark for Establishing Quality Assurance in Teachers Education

For effective quality assurance in Teachers Education in Nigeria the following performance indicator are very important. (i) Planning, (ii) Monitoring and (iii) Evaluation (iv) Supervision and inspection (v) Quality Control (vi) Conformation to Standard (vii) Feedback.

- (i) **Planning:** Planning is the most important aspect of quality assurance in teachers be it goods or services in teachers education. Planning carries out

- design, process method, curriculum, projects and building measures, production control/documentation, local content development and data processing. Planning also conceptualizes policy designs and works out static and dynamic balances of the teachers initiate design procedures, checking and approving them, and carrying out amendments as may be required through feedback from the end users complaints.
- (ii) **Monitoring:** Refers to the process of collecting data at intervals about ongoing projects or programmes within the school system. The aim is to constantly assess the level of performance with a view of finding out how far set objectives are being met (Ehinder, 2001).
 - (iii) **Evaluation:** Involves arranging and reviewing data collected from ongoing system to draw a conclusion on the status of the programmed teachers education and to ensure how best to improve the malfunction area. Evaluation may be formative or summative. Quality assurance strategy, is to see how the system can be assisted to improve on the present level of performance (formative).
 - (iv) **Supervision and Inspection:** 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, grinding, refreshing, encouraging and stimulating staff (Onocha, 2002). While inspection institution has met prescribed standards, it is more of an assessment rather than an improvement induced exercise (Wes-Burham, 1994).
 - (v) **Quality Control:** In production and manufacturing industries quality control usually have a separate department responsible for best quality standard, ensure right configurations with correct results. Quality controls guarantee and ensure that quality standards of product are maintained at all times, through close monitoring and checking at each stage of production. In education, quality control may be described as strategies designed and established to ensure correct quality in the interior education system at all levels. On the qualification of teachers. ESA (2005) findings show that only 16.7% of teachers in technical colleges in the country have B.Sc in addition to their professional qualification in education while 22.5 and 6.5% have NCE and HND in education to professional qualification in education, respectively. The overall study reveals that 76.7% of the teachers in the sampled schools are qualified professional. However this study does not go into probing into skill and other criteria to qualify a teacher professionally.
 - (vi) **Conformation to Standard:** Teachers education and standard in Nigeria have been set since the formulation of education policy in the country, but has not been taken seriously because of Nigerian factor. Non-compliance to a set

quality standard lead to an abuse of standard as is the case in most private institutions (nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary) involved in training of teachers.

- (vii) **Feedback:** Since quality assurance cannot be completed without constant check to evaluate conformity, compliance and progression of product, it is important that the system that check the quality report back to appropriate authorities any form of deformity, lack of compliance, or confirmation toward the set standard to ensure that the final product from every stage, involved in training of teachers maintain the recommended standard.

The Way Forward and Recommendations

To ensuring high quality assurance in teachers' education in Nigeria, it is important to re-introduction institutions responsible for the training of non-professional tertiary teachers. Nigerian education should de-emphasize paper qualification but emphasis on simultaneous realization of the three major success factors in total quality management which include quality product (teachers), Cost and Time. To ensure total quality assurance in teacher's education in Nigeria the followings must be the content objectives:

- i. Profit assurance through quality product orientation.
- ii. Competitiveness by distinguishing through quality product.
- iii. Targeted increase in end-user satisfaction of products.
- iv. Constant performance comparison with the best (world class standard)
- v. Teachers motivation in all strata
- vi. Mastery of the subjects, skill and content processes (with zero defects)
- vii. Strict compliance to stipulated planned teachers education curriculum, dates and quantities.
- viii. Minimize or reduction of loses through blunder and cumbersome programme and policies (i.e. prudent management and supervision of scarce resources).
- ix. Better utilization of human, material and financial resources to suit prevailing circumstance and situation.
- x. Placing teachers already trained in suitable employment.
- xi. Appropriate measurement and evaluation of stipulated standard.

- xii. Research into new teachers education technologies to ensure increase in teacher's efficiency.
 - a. Good information management and proper guidance and counseling.

Conclusion

Having exhorted all these factors militating against quality assurance in teachers education in Nigeria, it evident the mode and criteria for selecting the training teachers in Nigeria lacks standard, integrity and competence thereby leading to mass production of unqualified teachers, quacks, charlatans, and mediocres in teaching profession. And to worsen the situation constant evaluation and monitoring are not carried out regularly by those vested with the responsibility. Therefore, the State Ministry of Education, Universal Basic Education of all States, Local Government Areas, and the Federal Ministries of Education should rise up to the occasion to ensure that quality assurance process is upheld and maintained in all their internal processes. Assurance for quality education is a total and entire process concerned with ensuring credibility and integrity of product. Therefore the responsibility for quality assurance is vested on the institution and education managers private and public. Finally, education managers and stakeholder are advised to be guided accordingly.

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