



Quality Assurance as Panacea for Effective Educational Service Delivery in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examined quality assurance: as panacea for effective educational service delivery in Nigeria. The paper argued that the worth of any educational system as an investment lies in its capability to continuously serve its customers (students, parents, employers of labour, the society) better and remains relevant. The Total quality management theory (TQM) and McGregor X & Y theory were used as analytical constructs. In pursuance to achieve quality assurance in education objectively, there is need that today's business education prospectus must satisfy a number of pressing demands because the world presently is witnessing a lot of renovation challenges in almost all realms of life including the educational system, bringing about world class standards which points towards a need for greater coherence and synergy in quality assurance approaches in particular thereby linking the effective interplay between internal and external mechanisms in the industry to ensure that they best serve desired school development and innovation. Consequently, education reform has become necessary in pursuance of educational quality and effectiveness of service but unfortunately most educational reforms in the past decades have resulted in serious dissatisfaction and failure even though they are often based on good will. This paper therefore highlighted the need for transformation in education with frantic emphasis on quality assurance (QA) as universal remedy for effective educational service delivery in context, globalization, localization and individualization. The paper concluded that the educational sector is the largest enterprise whose function remains indispensable. Since it is the centre for research, human resource development and human skill development, quality assurance cannot be compromised. Based on these, suggestions were made that there should be efficient, effective and functional international system within the educational system.

Keywords: Quality Assurance, Panacea, Educational Service Delivery.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the world, people consider education to pave way for practical and more just social order on the ground that quality education instills in the young one's crucial humanitarian values such as equity, tolerance and peaceful coexistence. Among the three inter-related variables-education, politics and economy that spur national development, education is the most crucial because it provides the human capital that steers the countries developmental process and activities. However, it is a truism that the type of human capital referred to above can only be produced by quality education and non-mass schooling. In fact, the peculiar complete nature of the 21st century has made different demands on the education system which makes it mandatory on education to be functional and relevant otherwise the country will remain under developed. Ehudero (2004) confirms this when he asserts that for the educational system to satisfy the present demands, it must not just produce human capital for the labour market, rather it should produce "knowledge worker with flexible and adaptable skills" who can apply their critical and creative arsenals to generate ideas for the continuous regeneration of the society and the survival of humanity.

In supplementary words, for the education system to be of quality in order to satisfy the current human and societal needs as described above, the input, process and output dimension must be of quality confirming the importance of the above three inter-related components of quality education. Alves and Raposo (2005) asserted that the quality of education output is largely dependent on the quality of input and process. Equally, Ambrus (2004) was right when he asserted that, people and nations are what they are because of the nature and types of education they have been exposed to. However, the modern view, even where only lip service is being paid to it, is that, quality education is the right of every citizen. This view has been given great urgency by demands of the modern industrialized and technological education today. It must have the effect of making it possible for a country to have a steady supply of highly creative citizens who will help to keep improving the living conditions of the general citizenry, and to solve the existential problems that crop-up from time to time. There is no gainsaying, that basic education has become inadequate to meet the challenges of the growing world not only in Nigeria but also in the entire global village. The demand for higher education has, therefore, become imperative and is rapidly increasing geometrically (Fabiya & Oladipo, 2008).

As it is well known, the problem that government has is in reconciling access with quality in the provision of education. But it is abnormal to describe education as anything that lacks quality. Yoloje (2005) agreed that quality must characterize education at every stage and the real problem that governments have to face is deciding the mix of levels of how many of its citizens must go beyond the basic education and how many must have higher education. One seldom hears of inspectors of education today or of the variety of which actually goes round and ensures good standards in primary and secondary schools. It is claimed that, it is partly because there are now many more schools, but this need not to be so. The real reason is that, particularly after their ill-advised taking over of all primary and secondary schools by the government of the federation. Education has become bureaucratized and subjected to the un-enterprising attitude of the Nigerian public service. It is doubtful, if children in schools today have seen an inspector visit their schools. This is why today, many primary and secondary schools are in fact shopping malls. The learning environment has equally woefully deteriorated. Little wonder, then, that all those who can afford education, give the government schools a wide berth, a trend which is now raising the cry of commercialization of education in the country.

Theoretical Framework

In the 1960s, social psychologist Douglas McGregor developed two contrasting theories that explained how managers' beliefs about what motivates their people can affect their management style. He labeled these Theory X and Theory Y. These theories continue to be important even today. Theory X and Theory Y were first explained by McGregor in his book, "The Human Side of Enterprise," and they refer to two styles of management – authoritarian (Theory X) and participative (Theory Y). If a manager believes that his team members dislike their work and have little motivation, then, according to McGregor, you'll likely use an authoritarian style of management. This approach is very "hands-on" and usually involves micromanaging people's work to ensure that it gets done properly.

McGregor called this Theory X. On the other hand, if you believe that your people take pride in their work and see it as a challenge, then you'll more likely adopt a participative management style. Managers who use this approach trust their people to take ownership of their work and do it effectively by themselves. McGregor called this Theory Y. Furthermore, the theory suggests that the approach you take will have a significant impact on your ability to motivate your team members. So, it's important to understand how your perceptions of what motivates them can shape your management style. Consequent upon the theory above, it is expedient that in order to ensure quality in our school system that will geared the desired positive outcome the adoption of the theory will emancipate and foster development in the Nigerian education system when applied appropriately.

The Total Quality Management Model (TQM) developed by Dr. W. Edwards Deming in the early 1940s is being emphasized and believed to be a powerful tool in enhancing quality education and increasing school effectiveness. The TQM model defines education quality as types of elements in the input, process, and output of schools that provide services that satisfy both the internal and external strategic constituencies completely by meeting their explicit and implicit expectations. Total quality management (TQM) is an approach that seeks to improve quality and performance which will meet or exceed customer expectations. This can be achieved by integrating all quality-related functions and processes in any given organization. TQM looks at the overall quality measures including managing quality design and development, quality control and maintenance, quality improvement and quality assurance. The Nigeria education system is not an exemption to this model if the efficacy of the education dream in terms of context, globalization, localization and individualization is to be attained.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance (CA) has been defined differently by various authors. Quality assurance is the maintenance of a desired level of quality in a service or product, especially by means of attention to every stage of the process of delivery or production. Quality assurance (CA) is a program for the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the various aspects of a project, service or facility to ensure that they are being met. A Quality Assurance program is defined as "the sum total of the activities aimed at achieving that required standard" (Iso, 2000). Any monitoring program or assessment must aim to produce information that is accurate, reliable and adequate for the intended purpose.

In this context, Quality Assurance (CA) is the act or process of confirming that educational system's quality requirements are being met. Managing the quality of educational service delivery involves planning, fulfilling and monitoring activities within the educational sector. Quality Assurance is the monitoring facet of that discipline. The term "quality

assurance" is sometime used interchangeably with "quality control", another facet of the management process. However, quality control pertains to the actual fulfilment of whatever quality requirements have been put in place. Quality assurance is checking in on quality control methods to ensure they're working as planned. Therefore, quality assurance is one facet of quality control, alongside proper planning and implementation.

The Nigerian educational system has undoubtedly encountered a number of significant obstacles in the last decades and continues to struggle with the implementation and assurance of educational and teaching quality. A scarcity financial and human resources, poor national economic performance, inappropriate governing structure, political interference, and general instability have all contributed to low quality educational outcomes and ill-prepared graduate. Quality Assurance Model is hereby proposed as a solution to certain chronic educational and teaching quality problem. Education Quality Assurance (ECA) is a process of monitoring, assessing, evaluating and reporting objectively based on agreed quality standards, all aspects of school life to ensure that maintained and improved upon continually. Effective educational service delivery is certain if only this education quality assurance model is applied.

Quality Assurance Practice in Nigeria Education System

Quality assurance approaches can encompass a range of mechanisms (tools, processes and actors) to monitor overall system performance, policy implementation, school and staff effectiveness and individual student outcomes. School systems include various layers, operate in diverse contexts and employ staff with a range of experience and competences. Quality assurance in tertiary institutions can be carried through various means; internal (within the system) and external control measure, checks and balances by regulatory agencies. Quality in education is determined by the performance of students in public examination and the quality of performance of the graduate in their jobs. When the standard of education is compromised, a lot of issues like tertiary institution turning out graduates who can barely defend their certificates, indiscriminate award of contract at tertiary schools, employment of mediocre among others come to play in the political dispensation (Awodun & Boris, 2020).

Kazim (n.d) noted that the wealth and poverty of nations depends on the quality of higher education. Those who are poorly educated live a life of a quiet desperation consequently submits to the deceit of politics of patronage, thuggery which poise threat to sustainable democracy in Nigeria. It is in line with this that this paper will look at strategies that will enhance quality assurance in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The Nigerian government in the bid to ensure quality in tertiary institution established commission like the National Universities Commission (NUC) National Commission for Colleges of Education, (NCCE), and National Board for Technical Education (NABTE). These commissions and Board are mandated to ensure quality assurance education in Nigeria tertiary institutions.

Quality assurance approaches can include mechanisms that are external and internal to schools. External mechanisms may include national or regional school evaluations and/or large-scale student assessments. Internal mechanisms may include school self-evaluation, staff appraisal and classroom-based student assessments. These mechanisms have different but complementary purposes. Ideally, they are part of a coherent, integrated system, with the different mechanisms supporting and reinforcing each other (Cejudo & Michel, 2015). This kind of productive synergy can ensure a clear focus on school development, providing data on aspects such as school climate and the well-being of all members of the school community, effective teaching and learning, and the impact of innovations. Quality assurance is important for accountability as well as to support ongoing development of schools and of teaching and learning. Well-functioning systems have mechanisms to support and balance vertical and horizontal, internal and external accountability. Quality assurance that is focused

on development supports schools to adapt to the changing needs of learners. The focus is not only on improvement but also innovation that is, the development or experimental testing of approaches in different contexts to support quality, equity and efficiency. Approaches to quality assurance may need to be adapted over time to better meet needs for feedback and decision-making across systems.

According to Angell et al. (2008) quality is seen as the degree of excellence while quality assurance is seen as a system for assuring that quality of output meets the required standard all the times. It therefore implies that a product has to conform to a specification or requirement. Quality assurance 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 or battle with rectification in a like manner. Similarly, Uchendu et al. (2006) stated that quality assurance is the action taken in the schools' system (tertiary institution) to determine that the standard of education is maintained in terms of the inputs, processes and output.

Based on the paradigm shift, a new quality assurance indicator in terms of value added and value created indicators which are completely different are added to the list. The enhancement of value added depends heavily on improvement of internal processes while value created relies mainly on the increase in goal relevance and stakeholder satisfaction with quality of education services (Chiaha & Nane-Ejeh, 2015). Continuous institutional development becomes necessary for total QA in our school system and quality management of the new school curriculum that emphasizes entrepreneurship education. Consequently, transformation from the traditional ways of school management, to new creative and innovative approach, such as introduction of Tripartite Curriculum for inculcating multiple intelligences, instead of mono-intelligence that is currently prevalent in the Nigerian secondary school curriculum, is therefore advocated for so that the current paradigm shift to a new secondary school curriculum in Nigerian will surely be a success.

Quality Assurance is concerned with implementing the sound processes that will ultimately be used to produce quality in the education systems. It ultimately focuses on three major areas of concern, namely, input, process and output. It is used to identify potential problems in the educational process that might lead to quality products later. In educational institutions, quality assurance is normally implemented through two major channels, which are monitoring and supervision (Stromquist & Monkman, 2000). Through monitoring and supervision shortfalls in the process of education can be identified and corrected before major problems result. Potential problems in pedagogy that would affect teaching and learning are usually taken care of in the monitoring process, while supervision is concerned with improvements in teaching and learning. The highest priority of quality assurance is to set high quality goals.

Quality Assurance Measuring Parameters

Quality of education could be measured in terms of quality of input, quality of output, quality of content and quality of process.

Quality of Resource Input: It is often said that no education can rise above the quality of its teachers. The teacher is the most important of all the inputs that go into educational provision. This is because education of the highest quality requires teachers of the highest quality. Education in Nigeria today seems to lack, not only quality programmes but also dedicated and high-quality teachers. Most of the teacher education institutions including Faculties of Education turn out teachers that are deficient in content and methodology (Ololube, 2006a,b). As a result, they are unable to teach effectively which has an effect on the

quality of the education imparted. There is thus, the need for the Government to review and overhaul the curriculum for Teacher education at all levels of Nigerian education in order to meet the demands of the 21st century. Government, as a matter of urgency, needs to embark on Quality Teacher Programmes. Special attention needs to be paid to the quality of candidates being admitted to the teacher education programme. According to available statistics, there are about 426,794 primary school teachers and approximately 16,945,567 pupils enrolled in 40,876 primary schools utilizing 456,512 classrooms (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2001, 2014). It is highly imperative to know that all these are affected by the quality of the products of the universities, simply because university products serve as teachers, administrators, planners, heads and supervisors at the lower level of education. There is disparity between policy and practice.

Quality of Output: The quality of education does not depend only on resource inputs, but also on the output process, which includes academic achievement on tests, scores and progression and pass rates; in other words, the internal and external efficiency. The Monitoring of Learning Achievement (MLA) project, a nationwide study conducted between 1994-1996 and the report published in 1997 by the Federal Ministry of Education, with the support of UNICEF and UNESCO, named three learning areas selected for the MLA studies as:

- Numeracy
- Literacy and
- Life skills (a combination of science, social studies and general knowledge).

The MLA study in Nigeria gives considerable insight into the quality of outputs especially at the lower level of education in Nigeria. The result of the study indicates that an average public primary school child in Nigeria can neither read, write nor calculate properly. Several reasons have been given to explain this:

Lack of textbooks and writing materials: The National Situation and Policy Analysis (SAPA) survey conducted under the auspices of UNICEF and the Federal Government in 1992 showed that 77% of public primary pupils had no textbooks while 36% had no writing materials; science equipment was lacking in the majority of the schools.

The poor quality of instruction among others: Generally, it is believed that poor quality education exists at all levels of education in the country because similar problems exist at all levels. If the consequence of the above scenario is to be reversed, in order to meet the challenges of globalization, Nigeria must therefore, begin by giving greater attention to the entire sector, i.e our pre-school, primary, secondary, vocational foundation and tertiary levels. All stakeholders in education should endeavour to play their roles doggedly to ensure quality education in Nigeria.

Quality of Content: The curriculum content of our educational system has been criticized as being overloaded, and does not sufficiently attend to the needs of the Nigerian learner. The data from the Monitoring of Learning Achievement (MLA) project has also shown that there is a wide gap between the intended curriculum and the achieved curriculum. However, this criticism has been challenged because the curriculum content of our institutions compares favorably with those in other countries. What is needed in our system is a re-ordering of the curriculum content i.e. (the intended curriculum) and an enrichment of the achieved curriculum and for the implemented curriculum to focus on relevance and functionality. The

achieved curriculum is the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are achieved or learned while the implemented curriculum is the translation of curricula intentions into reality in classrooms, laboratories, workshops, playgrounds and other settings for learning, while not losing sight of the language provisions in the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004). Following this, there should be a flexible curriculum. Curriculum rigidity must give way to 'curriculum liberality'. Such curriculum must be relevant to both individual learner's needs and societal needs at large.

Quality of Process: This implies student/teacher interaction, level of learner participation and engagement in learning. In an earlier study, Ali and Akubue (2008) found that teachers dominated the lessons and posed few open-ended questions. Group work which encourages discussion is rarely encountered, and only 10% of teachers used continuous assessment. Okebukola's (2005) observational studies showed that boys are given greater opportunities than girls to ask and answer questions, to manipulate materials and to lead groups. In science classroom interaction, girls were also given less time on practical work than boys. Quality assurance involves the systematic review of educational programmes and processes to maintain and improve their quality, equity and efficiency. While the design of quality assurance mechanisms (tools, processes and actors) varies across national contexts, their common objective is to improve teaching and learning – with the ultimate goal to support the best outcomes for learners.

Other Strategies for Enhancing Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education

Modification of curriculum in tertiary institutions: The curriculum is probable to respond positively to modern trends of event through emphasis on innovative knowledge and skills which are variously referred to as 'daily living skills, survival skills and life coping skills' (Njoku, 2003:3). The world is not static in nature but dynamic and change is a constant phenomenon in the world. Therefore, the education industry which is the most dependable for interpretation and adaptation of the constant changes in the world turn out a lot of graduates every year who are expected to identify and solve problems, establish good working relationships with others and organize and manage themselves responsibly, collect and evaluate information, communication in different ways, use science and technology effectively and the capacity to develop a consistent world-view (Udosen, 2003). Courses are modified and new courses are introduced to enable student acquire lifelong coping skills through science processes which include observation, experiment, generalization and prediction. The modification of the curriculum enhances the holistic development of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains for quality productivity and meaningful integration into the society for sustainable living. The introduction of courses like general studies (GST), entrepreneur education and vocational education among others are indices of curriculum modifications in tertiary institutions.

Accreditation of tertiary institution and their programmes: The exceptional growth of tertiary institutions in Nigeria is unparalleled anywhere in the African continent. The growth has been in terms of increase in student's population and then number of tertiary institutions themselves. These citadels of learning which are means of social mobility, self-development and skill acquisition are expected to play major roles in the fulfillment of Nigeria philosophy of education through training and research to ensure quality of their institution. It is therefore imperative for faculty members, facilities, the examination and grading system to be subjected to scrutiny by a team of professors in that discipline, selected from different tertiary institutions by the different commission or board like NUC, NCCE, NBTE, who are charged with responsibility of monitoring the activities of the various tertiary institutions. The

accreditation exercise is usually carried out every two-five year. During the exercise, the programmes that are irrelevant are eliminated while programmes that are relevant and of good quality are given full accreditation status.

Strategic Planning of Programmes

Another strategy for quality assurance in Nigeria tertiary institution according to Etuk (2006) is strategic planning of programmes. Etuk stated that strategic planning requires that heads of departments, deans of school/faculties state the objectives of their academic programmes, its contribution to economic development with regard to their graduates in terms of their capabilities when they are out of school. They should also use Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis to assess their programmes. Strategic planning in tertiary institutions will attract funds from government and other agencies if the programmes are relevant and given accreditation. Funds have been a very crucial and fundamental concern to the government and managers of tertiary institutions. Strategic planning of programmes can induce generation of revenue from both internal and external sources, since government alone cannot fund their tertiary institutions sufficiently, it's imperative for these institutions to adapt strategic plans to earn her sustenance.

Availability of Human Resources: A very fundamental issue in assuming quality in the educational sector is the quality of human resources available. It is worthy of note that the unprecedented influx of academic personnel into tertiary institutions through god fatherism pose both strength and threat to these ivory towers. It is strength when the human resources available have potential, talents and abilities which are used in combination with other resources to produce quality output. On the contrast, it is a threat when these potential, talent and abilities in combination with other resource produce mediocres, or constitute a brooding habitat for touts, prostitutes, armed robbers among other vices on which students are highly vulnerable, as the teachers' performance according to Madumere-Obike (2004) determine quality of students. Chukuma (2001) revealed that there is general dissatisfaction from employers of graduates with regard to their professional skills, key abilities such as critical thinking, problem solving and time management skills. A survey of the Nigeria teachers in Nigeria tertiary institution shows the level of dissatisfaction among the teachers (Tanji, 2001). Employment into universities should be on merit and their wages should commensurate with their output if quality is to be assured, in tertiary institutions.

Adoption of Information & Communication Technology: Another laudable area of need in ensuring quality in tertiary institution is the adoption of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Information is an indispensable part of the contemporary world, not only has it brought about rapid technological, economic transformation, and globalization, the tertiary school system depends on it to cope with the worldwide information need. Within the school system, ICT adoption promotes teaching and learning for instance ICT can be used to ease the load of supervision, evaluation and appraisal of students and teachers. The management task, removal of wastages and quality cannot be achieved without application of ICT in all areas of school application.

Effective Supervision

Effective supervision of activities within the tertiary institutions should be enforced in order to attain quality assurance in tertiary institutions. Supervision involves the use of expert knowledge and experience to oversee, evaluate and coordinate the process of improving teaching and learning activities in school. Close monitoring and supervision of teachers

pulsates them to implement educational polices, and reforms. Based on these supervisions, recommendations are made such as provision of adequate facilities and human resources. Supervision creates awareness of sound education philosophies. Igwe in Egbo (2007) described supervision as a process that the polices, principles, rules, regulations and methods prescribed for the purpose of implementing and achieving the objective of education are carried out. Teachers are influenced, stimulated, coordinated, commanded to carry out their assigned task in order to maintain standard. For quality education to be realized at the tertiary levels of education supervision is highly crucial as it boost the morale of teachers.

CONCLUSION

In summary this paper examines quality assurance as a panacea for effective educational service delivery in Nigeria. Also, several literatures and theories were reviewed and an adequate model for quality service is demonstrated. Quality has been the bed rock of the success of any developed and successful establishments around the world. Service industries which education is part, are not exceptions, quality service delivery is more essential in-service industry since most products are not physically present but can only be felt or experienced. Academic institutions are real examples of a service industry where quality service delivery determines the success and continuous existence of such establishment. The major determinant of the going concern of any University is the quality-of-service delivery, since enrollment depends largely among other factors on quality service. Likewise, Sustainable development can only be achieved if an uneven attention is given to education sector to ensure its quality seeing that it is the bedrock of any transformation and sustainability. In order to ensure a peak performance by our educational institutions there is need for modalities that will enhance quality output. The educational sector is the largest enterprise whose function remains indispensable. It is the centre for research, human resource development and highly dependable to proffer solutions to global needs therefore, quality assurance in this industry cannot be compromised.

Recommendation

Delivering quality service in academic institutions is a duty of every participant in that community. Total quality management philosophy sees it as all involving from the chief executive to the first man at the gate. On this premise, the following recommendations are made:

- There should be efficient, effective, and functional internal control system in the education system
- There is need for the government and educational stakeholders to synergize and uphold quality assurance in levels of education in Nigeria
- Quality assurance measuring parameters should be emphasized with zero tolerance of defaulters
- The education curriculum should be reviewed to meet the 21st century demand in order to remain relevant and equip the youth (output of the education system) with competitive skills in the world market that is to incorporate technological advancements into the curriculum through new courses and modification of existing courses.
- The worth of any educational system as an investment lies in its capability to continuously serve its customers (students, parents, employers of labour, the society) better and remain relevant and to ascertain this feat, there should be quality training,

update and programmes organized for teachers and staff to boost their effectiveness and productivity on the job thereby promoting quality service delivery

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