

Teachers and Quality Assurance in Education

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Abstract

Quality of education has become one of the central issues accorded priority in the recent educational reforms going on world wide, and assurance has become one of the mechanisms used in achieving it. This paper addresses teachers and quality assurance in education. It highlighted qualities of a good teacher, quality assurance and theoretical issues, target areas and raising the status of teacher. Challenges of quality assurance were also examined. Finally, how teachers can contribute to quality assurance in Nigeria was discussed of which the strategies include; Total quality management, strategic implementation framework, quality assurance agency, students support services and effective monitoring of students progress among others. Good conduct of examination as among the strategies are not left out before the conclusion. It was concluded that the willingness and ability of the teachers to follow the road that leads to improved performance in school will go a long way in assuring quality in our schools.

Key words: Quality Assurance, Effective Monitoring, Quality Education, Poor Teaching, A Good Teacher.

Introduction

Philosophical objectives of quality assurance are the decision of educational programme to train individuals to achieve competence in a given area of industrial production function. The focus of which, is to prevent problems, strengthen organizational systems and continually improving performance. Thus, quality assurance is the ability of educational institutions to meet the need of the use of manpower in relation to the quality of skills acquired by their products. With this, the quality of an academic programme becomes a universal concern.

Quality of education has become one of the central issues accorded priority in the recent educational reforms going on worldwide, and quality assurance has become one of the mechanisms used in achieving it. However, the understanding of quality and the possible ways and means of assuring quality in education varies. Quality assurance is the meeting or conforming to generally accepted standards as defined by quality assurance bodies or appropriate academic and professional committees (Hayward, 2006).

The notion of quality varies from that of providing a distinctive, special or even exclusive product or service, to meeting or conforming to predetermined specifications or standard. According to Whitely (2001), quality assurance in education has become an all-embracing concept that includes all policies, processes and actions through which the quality of education provided is developed and maintained.

Concept of a Teacher

A teacher is more than someone who passes on knowledge. According to Nwankwo (2012), a teacher is a person whose interaction, relationship, understanding and encouragement enable a person or child to reach the full potential. This should not merely being able to pass tests or exams but developing fully in all areas as a whole person who reaches and surpasses his or her full potential and also develops a lifelong love for learning and discovery.

Being a great teacher means knowing when to assist, when to stand back and insist on independence. Doing too much for a learner leads to reliance and lack of perseverance, which will in turn lead to lack of self-esteem. Reaching that goal with encouragement but no physical help will enable the learner experience the feeling of an achievement that inspires further learning.

A teacher must therefore, provide the opportunities which allow the learners to learn for themselves. Learners do not learn by being told, they learn by finding out for themselves. The learners here may be toddlers playing with water, or university students doing independent research. In whichever case, the principle is the same. According to Piaget (1896-1980), in order for a child to understand something, he must reinvent it. He notes further that, every time we teach a child something, we keep him from reinventing it 'himself'. This is not meant to say we must not teach, but we should provide opportunities for children to explore and discover new things themselves. This provides an increased level of understanding than telling them about something.

True teachers teach as a way of life, they live to teach rather than teach to live. They never stop learning themselves as the journey of discovery is ever present. They are not teachers just in school hours, they are constantly looking for ideas to use in the classroom and they often take part in out of school activities as other ways to support and provide for their learners. They are able to pass this enthusiasm onto their students, instilling in them the joy of discovery.

If you enter a classroom of a great teacher you will see learners wanting to learn, interacting with each other and the teacher. You will often see groups working independently, on differentiated tasks designed to stretch their individual abilities. You may also see some students benefiting from one to one attention from a teaching assistant. They may be having difficulty in a certain area, or are above the ability of the rest of the class and are completing advanced work. It is this understanding and individual plans of learning that enable learners to keep on task, never feeling bored or unable to complete work. The balance of being supported, yet maintaining independence, is an invaluable skill that separates good teachers from teachers.

We can see then that a teacher is not just someone who is knowledgeable, but also someone who knows how to teach. Students taught in an inspiring way would want to learn rather than learning for a specific test or reward. They know how to pass on, not just knowledge but love of learning, and most of all the care about the whole person not just exam results. A great teacher is a truly special person and will influence the lives of his learners for the rest of their lives.

In the broadest sense, a teacher can be defined as someone who not only teaches or imparts knowledge, but also most importantly someone responsible for shaping and molding the minds and hearts of all those whom he teaches. A teacher has the power to yield a strong influence on his/her learners. When coupled with certain definite skills, a good teacher has the potential of having a lifelong impact on the students.

Qualities of a Good Teacher

Many people would happily switch profession with a teacher but contrary to the popular belief that teaching is a stress-free vocation, teaching actually can be quite demanding at times. A teacher has to do the mantle of a lucid communicator, a fair evaluator, an adept manager, a strict disciplinarian, a healing therapist and skillful team leader.

Moreover, at times, a teacher also plays the role of a surrogate parent. Thus, a teacher should possess certain requisite qualities expected of him. This will help him elicit the best from his students and enjoy a rewarding career too. In the following lines, few qualities that make good teachers are articulated.

- One of the most important attribute of a good teacher is to be a good communicator. He should be comfortable explaining things and enjoy doing the same.

- At times, a teacher might feel like yelling or shouting at students, but a good teacher is one who knows how to keep the temper in check and act calmly in such situations.
- A good sense of humor is another great tool that helps a teacher to simplify his task. Wit and humor, when applied in the proper manner, can form an important part of a successful teaching program.
- A good teacher must have good time management skills and always values the importance of time. In fact, wise utilization of time is the hallmark of a good teacher.
- A teacher should always adopt a fair attitude, when it comes to making any form of evaluations. He should be fair to his profession and assess students on their performance, instead of personal rappings and likings.
- A good teacher should have the necessary command over the subject matter he teaches. This way, he can be comfortable while explaining things. Besides, he will be equipped with answers to any possible questions that might crop up during the lecture sessions.
- A teacher should be dedicated to his work. He should not kill his time in the classroom and wait for the school bell to ring. Instead, taking out time and engaging in after-school meetings and activities is what suits him.
- A good teacher should be meticulous and have an eye for detail. In fact, a disorganized person would find the vocation unsuitable and unfulfilling. Well thought-out plans and programmes for teaching will assist the productivity of a teacher.
- A good teacher should be a good leader and a good friend. He should also be a disciplinarian and the students must look up to him. However, this should not stop him from acting like an ally under certain situations.

Quality assurance also has been defined as “systematic management and assessment procedure adopted by higher education institutions and systems in order to monitor performance against objectives, and to ensure achievement of quality outputs and quality improvements” (Harman, 2000, p.1). Terms like effectiveness, efficiency, equity, equality and quality are often used interchangeably.

Ebong and Efue (2005) posit that it is a holistic term that is directed towards education as an entity. According to the authors, it entails the suppliers and consumers and all the various activities put in place to produce quality products and services. Quality as defined by the International Organization of Standardization (1994) is the totality of features and characteristics of a product of service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated needs. According to Article II of the World Declaration on Education (2003), quality is a multidimensional concept which should encompass all the functions and activities in schools.

Alele-Williams (2004) defines quality assurance in any educational institution as that which indicates the pre-eminence and special features that makes the institution distinct from other forms of institution.

Based on the above conceptualizations, quality assurance is a proactive means of ensuring that the right thing in any organization is done. In education, it aims at preventing quality problems and ensures that the products of the system conform to the expected standards. A systematic and consistent quality assurance system helps to establish an institution's good reputation and image. It includes defined standards of achievement, documented procedures for all identified process, established ways of responding to issues and clear accountability for outcomes. The result is greater public confidence, more satisfied students, efficient processes and staff who are confident

in their jobs. Students are more likely to experience better quality instructions, learning materials and interactions with the institution and its staff, leading to enhanced learning outcomes.

Theoretical issues in Quality Assurance

The need to assess quality in educational provision is now generally accepted as one of the tools of educational reforms. There are two widely used systems of quality assurance in higher education.

The first is the system of certification of students by a renowned scholar in the field. The value of the credentials awarded, are assured by the reputation of the scholar as well as his place in the genealogical succession of established scholarship in the field of study. This brand of quality assurance has evolved into one of internal and external peer review of student performance and advancement of scholarship within the academia.

The second system is the accreditation of institutions or professional programmes. The essence of accreditation system is that of meeting input standards in such areas as curriculum, library facilities, staff qualifications, students' entry qualifications, duration of study etc. It should be noted that the two systems are mutually in-exclusive. The current tendency is for the two approaches to be grafted into one another (Miller, 2002).

According to Enaohwo (2003), the concept of quality assurance in the education system can be looked at from two angles, *viz*: the internal perspective (within the system) and the external measures (checks and balances by the regulatory agencies). Again, Harvey and Knight (2006) suggest that quality can be broken down into five different but related dimensions: quality as exceptional (e.g. high standards), quality as consistency (e.g. zero defects), quality as fitness for purpose (fitting customer specifications), quality as value for money, and quality as transformative (an ongoing process that includes empowerment and enhancement of the customer satisfaction). While they advise that quality as transformative incorporates the other dimensions to some extent, it can also be argued that different stakeholders are likely to prioritise the importance of these different dimensions of quality according to their motivations and interest (Owlia & Aspinwall, 2013).

Traditionally, external bodies have been associated with quality assurance procedures. Quality assurance in this regard refers to the 'planned and systematic actions [deemed] as necessary to provide adequate confidence that a product or service will satisfy given requirements for quality' (Borahan & Ziarati, 2002). For teachers, this requires them to demonstrate responsible actions in their professional practices, be accountable for public funds received as salaries or spent on education and demonstrate the results they achieve with the available resources (Jackson, 2008). Elton (2012) refers to these as the quality 'As: Accountability, Audit, and Assessment' and suggests that these are concerned with the control of quality and the people who control quality. The particular mechanisms for assurance are usually imposed by external bodies, such as university management and most commonly include accreditation, external examiners and quality audits (McKay & Kember, 2009). As a control tool therefore, the focus is predominantly on the extent to which the procedures and conditions that are perceived to result in appropriate levels of quality are followed within institutions or programmes and are effective in meeting their purpose (Jackson, 2008, p. 39). Prioritised dimensions of quality therefore include quality as consistency, quality as fitness for purpose, and quality as value for money. As these external bodies also assure that a minimum threshold of quality is maintained, quality as exceptional is also a relevant dimension.

Teachers therefore, are more likely to be concerned with quality as transformative where it is an ongoing process that includes empowerment and enhancement of customer satisfaction (Harvey & Knight, 2013). The emphasis for them here is therefore not only on quality assurance, but additionally on quality enhancement which aims at an overall increase in the actual quality

of teaching and learning often through more innovative practices (Mckay & Kember, 2009). Elton (2012) suggests that this approach focuses on the quality 'E's: Empowerment, Enthusiasm, Expertise, and Excellence.

Mechanisms to be adopted by the teachers are likely to include self evaluation practices and student surveys. As students are viewed as an integral part of the learning process, this approach tends to be more formative in nature and therefore more likely to lead to continual quality improvement efforts. The involvement of teachers is also more likely to result in a culture of quality being embedded within programmes. However, these measures are representative of a comparatively limited number of teachers and where self-evaluation practices are employed, there can be a tendency to paint a rosy picture especially when linked to appraisal or tenure decisions.

Target Areas in Quality Assurance

Quality assurance has become an internationalized concept. The NUC reported the first attempt at universalization of quality assurance in higher education across the globe in 2004. The study ranked the universities in terms of their productive functions, and the relative efforts on their product. No African universities were ranked, including Nigeria. Since this development, the NUC has heightened its efforts in standardizing the quality of university education in Nigeria.

To establish and maintain high quality standards, the universities and the NUC have a shared responsibility in addressing the following key areas, according to Adedipe, (2007).

1. Minimum academic standard.
 2. Accreditation
 3. Carrying capacity and admission quota
 4. Visitation
 5. Impact assessment
 6. Research and development
 7. Publications and research assessment
 8. Structures, infrastructures and utilities
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1. Minimum academic standards form the baseline for entrenching quality university education, since it prescribes a profile of curriculum, human resources, structures, infrastructures, equipment and associated facilities required for establishing, governing and managing the university.
 2. Accreditation is the process by which programmes are evaluated against set minimum academic standard. Institutions comprehensive academic research and development activities are evaluated against prescribed criteria (including self-visioned and self-produced strategic plan).
 3. Carrying capacity of a university is the maximum number of students that the institution can sustain for qualitative education based on available human and material resources.
 4. Visitation to universities is a statutory requirement that empowers the proprietor to ascertain the well-being of the university.
 5. Impact assessment is a specialized form of evaluation aimed at finding out if the core expectations of the establishment of a particular university are being met.
 6. Research is the driving force for human development as globally determined; such

research should be evidenced by publications.

7. Structures, infrastructures and utilities are essential driving force for qualitative productivity in any organization, particularly in the university system.

However, Baldwin (1990) in his own view highlighted the following as quality assurance checklist:

- Institution /faculty mission and objectives
- Teaching programmes
- Students selection
- Course structure and documentation
- Teaching arrangement
- Postgraduate supervision
- Students support
- Assessment/evaluation
- Grievance procedures
- Monitoring of outcomes
- Research and development
- Community service
- Staffing issues
- Infrastructure/resources
- Governance

Other target areas to be considered to ensure quality are:

Mode of Admission

It has been observed that education courses are the least preferred by candidates seeking admission into tertiary institutions. Majority of the students who studied courses in education did so not because they desired such but because they were not able to get the cut off marks on their preferred choice courses. The provision of quality teachers demand that the mode of admission of candidates into the teaching profession be changed. Superior brains should be attracted to the teaching profession through the use of incentive packages like scholarships, bursaries, wavers and allowances be given to education students to induce and attract good brains into the profession.

Teaching Practice or Field Experience

Teaching practice is one of the core courses in teacher education programme that helps to prepare and equip teachers for the task they are captured to perform. It aims to build up student teachers real classroom experiences and competencies as they practicalize what they have learnt theoretically. Supervisors must ensure that real supervision is done. The practice of not completing the supervision time of student teachers should be seriously frowned at. Omebe (2013) suggest that teaching practice should be done in two contacts for efficiency and effectiveness. In addition, there should be a one year internship system similar to that of Medical Doctors and Pharmacists. This will make NCE a four year course and B.Ed a five year course and at the end of training, NCE holders will be employed on Grade Level 08 and degree holder on 09. The one year internship should be regarded as national service and students should be paid stipulated allowances.

Motivation

Oduwaiye (2000) defines motivation as the totality of financial and union financial rewards given to an employee in return for his services to an organization. People are motivated when they expect that a course of action is likely to be rewarded. By implication, the level of rewards provided for staff largely influence their commitment and performance. Teachers in schools need adequate motivation because they are mandated to translate educational programmes into practical experiences. Without motivation, teachers' willingness to perform will be low hence poor achievement of educational goals and objectives. Teachers are motivated through payment of salaries, promotions, leave allowances, staff development, etcetera. Motivation helps to increase effectiveness and efficiency which makes for quality. Improved conditions of service, should be used to motivate teachers already in the profession and to attract qualified ones into the teaching profession.

Recruitment

Recruitment is defined by Bello (2003) as a process of enlistment of new members into a group and through which they become part and parcel of administration of an organization. The main purpose of recruitment exercises is to attract qualified and sufficient number of potential teachers to apply for job vacancies in educational institutions. With the belief that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers, the following method of teacher recruitment must be seriously considered.

- (i) Advertisement of the job and application forms.
- (ii) Employment interviews.
- (iii) Selection tests.
- (iv) Investigation of applicant's background
- (v) Medical examination
- (vi) Selection decisions.

If these strategies are strictly and transparently followed, qualified and dedicated teachers will be recruited into the teaching profession for quality assurance in education.

Raising the Status of Teachers

Teaching is one of the professions in Nigeria that is looked down on. People look at a Nigerian teacher as an unambitious fellow who cannot fit into the society's highly valued professions like medicine, law, engineering, pharmacy, accountancy, among others. The poor uncomplimentary perception of teachers has made them to lose self confidence and interest in professional responsibilities. The poor self image of the teacher has serious consequences for the teaching profession in Nigeria. Raising the status of teachers should have prime consideration. Government should quickly translate her policies and promises to teachers into actions. When a teacher's self image is raised, self confidence, courage, dedication, and commitment will come into the teachers and this will help in improving efficiency and effectiveness.

Challenges to Quality Assurance

Poor Teaching: Teaching is the bedrock of knowledge and the quality of teaching among other things depends on the quality of teachers. The quality of teachers on the other hands is influenced by their qualifications and experience.

In the past, tertiary-level teaching for example, had been characterized by rich, well delivered lectures, practicals, field trips, well-organised tutorials, free handouts to students and students that were well-prepared for examinations. Today the opposite is what is obtained in our tertiary

institutions. This has been found to be one of the reasons for examination malpractices that are on the increase in our campuses nowadays.

Brain Drain: The issue of brain drain is affecting the quality of teaching negatively because it is becoming difficult to get a replacement for those who will be as highly qualified and experienced as those who are leaving. This situation is worse in disciplines such as medicine, engineering and the sciences.

Rise in Students' Enrolment: The rise in student enrolment has not been matched by the growth in the number of teachers available. System-wide, the number of academic staff increased by an average of 2 percent each year between 1988 and 1994 while student numbers grew at the rate of 12percent per year. The average teacher/student ratio was 1:14 in 1988 and was 1:21 in 1994 and increased to 1:31 in 2005 (NUC, 1995). The trend shows an increase in the teacher-student ratio indicating that teachers were coping with more students than the NUC norm. It shows a dearth in the supply of academic staff in the Nigerian universities. This coupled with the aforementioned problems aids decline in the quality of education.

Poor Facilities Development: The facilities needed for teaching and learning process in schools include classrooms, laboratories, workshops, staff offices and libraries. The collapse of oil boom in the early 80s made it difficult for schools established since this period to compare with the preboom era ones in terms of quality and quantity of facilities availability. There is decay in the facilities in all our schools, regardless of their age or generation. This decay is so terrible that it has been a source of incessant strikes by the teachers Unions (for example, Academic Staff Union of Universities) and condemnation by the parents and students.

Lack of Commitment to the Teaching Profession: Some teachers are not committed to the ethics of the teaching profession. In tertiary institutions for example, most lecturers are now either contractors, that is, supplying goods and services to schools or engage in commercial business within and outside the school at the detriment of the academic calling and purpose. Some lecturers have turned their offices into commercial centers either doing typesetting services or engaging in buying and selling petty goods. Some have turned to selling cars; that is helping people to bring cars across the border and ferry them into the country. Some of them argue that they have had to resort to this "moonlighting" to augment their salaries which are meager and not regular. The tertiary institutions that are established to promote intellectual excellence, good virtues etc. have deviated from their traditional obligations of teaching, research and development of manpower. We are faced daily with reports of teachers (lecturers) who prefer commercial business to their primary assignment.

How Teachers can contribute to Quality Assurance in Nigeria

Quality assurance is about what people at different levels or units of an organization contribute to accepted standard of product quality. A number of strategies could be adopted by teachers to enable them record success in the quality assurance efforts. The strategies include the following among others:

1. **Total Quality Management:** Lankard (2013) suggested that Total Quality Management (TQM) models could be applied by teachers in higher education institutions in assuring quality. These models should be appropriately linked to the selection of contents/ learning experiences, lesson presentation and evaluation of the students. Thus, they should ensure that what they give the students are up to standard.
2. **Strategic Implementation Framework:** A strategic implementation framework is also vital to the success of quality assurance efforts. The framework should begin with a quality policy statement for managing and encouraging students' participation in classroom management. This has been found to be effective in resolving problems such

as low student morale, low student performance, truancy and student failure.

3. **Quality Assurance Agency:** Teachers can set up a quality assurance agency. The watchdog body could be necessary to ensure quality as well as define benchmark against which to judge standards and quality in schools. The agency should not only have power to discipline erring teachers but be autonomous and have universal acceptability and credibility.
4. **Peer Review:** Through peer review, they can establish standards for ensuring internal quality in programme design, approval and review procedures. This may include internal peer review of learning materials, moderation of assessment and course evaluation. With this too, they can specify how programme delivery will be managed including who is accountable for doing what.
5. **Students Support Services:** It is important that teachers are aware of institutional policies about assessment of student learning, plagiarism and return of student assignments, as well as how to optimize the use of e-mail and online learning management systems. Teachers should be aware of the support services available to students.
6. **Good Conduct of Examination:** They are to establish and maintain proper procedures for the scheduling, notification, administration and conditions of examinations, along with processes that ensure the integrity of examinations and marking. They can also schedule regular monitoring and review against specified performance indicators.
7. **Effective Monitoring of Students' Progress:** On students' outcomes, teachers are to establish acceptable rates of student progression and retention. They should develop mechanisms for monitoring student progress and strategies for identifying and responding to problems. Ensure that students can progress, by examining scheduling, calendars, mode of offering and pre-requisites.

Conclusion

The Assurance for quality education is a total holistic process concerned with ensuring integrity of outcomes. Thus, the responsibility for quality assurance rests with teachers and this is expressed through conducts that measure up with established standard in the school. This paper has successfully explored the concepts of teacher, quality assurance, challenges to quality assurance and strategies through which teachers can contribute to quality assurance in school. The willingness and ability of the teachers to follow the road that leads to improved performance in school will go a long way in assuring quality in our schools.

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Citation: Omebe Chinyere Agatha (2015) Teachers and Quality Assurance in Education. IJHSSE 2(4), pp: 151-161.