

## QUALITY ASSURANCE AND STANDARDS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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**ABSTRACT:** *Quality education in nation building is essential in any growing country like Nigeria. It is based on this background that this paper tries to examine the importance of quality assurance in our education system. It went further to x-ray the needs for quality assurance strategies for establishing quality assurance, the roles of educational managers in assuring quality education in Nigeria and challenges facing quality assurance, The paper also recommended that the government of Nigeria should formulate policy that will last for a long time concerning education system in the country, quality in education system should therefore focus on optimal development of skills, knowledge, values, attitudes, morals and capabilities of the recipients with emphasis on those relevant to the individual and the society and government should provide enabling environment for attaining of quality education in Nigeria.*

**KEYWORDS:** Quality Assurance, Standards, Primary Education

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### INTRODUCTION

The importance of quality education in nation building cannot be over emphasized. This is the reason why many stakeholders in education have called on different measures to improve education. Among those calls was to the establishment of quality assurance department in our education system. According to Etindi (2000), Quality Assurance is the process through which an education institution guarantees ‘to itself and its stakeholders of its teaching, learning and other services which constantly reach a standard of excellence. From this definition, it could be observed that the concept “Quality” has become one of the most fashionable themes.

Arikewuyo (2004) views quality in education to be judged by both its ability to enable the students perform well in standard examination and relevance to the needs of the students, community and the society as a whole. Similarly, Ajayi and Adegbesan (2007) argued 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. Furthermore, Ladokun (2005) sums the definition of quality assurance in education as a programme institution or a whole education system.

In this case, quality assurance is all the 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. From all these definitions above, it could be seen that assurance for quality education is a total holistic process concerned with ensuring integrity of outcomes. All these cannot be effective without apportioning responsibilities to a group of individuals in the school. They may be called school managers or quality assurance and standards officers or school inspectors etc. Any name that may be inscribed to them does not matter but their work is to improve quality and standards of education by working as partners with the teachers.

### **Need for Quality Assurance in Nigeria School**

The need for quality assurance in our primary schools cannot be overemphasized in order to ensure quality of teaching and learning. According to Adegbesan (2010), the following are the major needs of quality assurance in our primary education system;

- a. To serve as indispensable component of quality control strategy in education.
- b. To ensure and maintain high standard of education in all levels of education.
- c. To assist in monitoring and supervision of education for proper standards to be maintained.
- d. To determine the quality of the teachers input.
- e. To determine the number of classrooms needed based on the average class size to ensure quality control of education.
- f. To determine the level of adequacy of the facilities available for quality control.
- g. It would ensure how the financial resources available could be prudently and judiciously utilized.

### **Strategies for establishing Quality Assurance in our Primary Schools**

Today, the quality of education in our primary schools is deteriorating. This has resulted in finding means for improving the quality for a vibrant society. Some of the strategies used for maintaining of quality assurance in education include:

- a. **Monitoring:** This simply 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 a set objectives are being met (Ehindero, 2001). Monitoring enhances productivity as it helps to detect fault and gives room for amendment.
- b. **Evaluation:** This simply means passing value judgment. It is a formal process carried out within a school setting. Evaluation is based on available data which are used to form conclusions/judgments. It could be formative or summative. Whichever one it is, the aim of evaluation is to see how the system can be assisted to improve on the present level of performance (Adegbesan, 2010). The performance of children especially on the core subjects is not encouraging. Many pupils fear mathematics and English which have been regarded as the bedrock of other subjects.
- c. **Supervision:** Supervision is more of inspection. It goes beyond mere inspection. It includes an attempt of bringing about improvement in the quality of instruction. It involves staff as an essential part of the process. It is a way of advising, grinding, refreshing, encouraging and stimulating staff towards his/her work (Onocha, 2002). The aim of supervision is to improve the staff on his/her work for greater productivity of both the pupils and the staff.
- d. **Inspection:** Inspection usually involves an assessment of available facilities and resources in an institution with a view of establishing how far a particular institution

has not prescribed standards. According to Burham in Adegbesan, (2010), it is more of an assessment rather than an improvement induced exercise. The assessment will help to find out the lacking, unqualified and non existence of any item in the institution. This would then help in seeking for procurement which later helps for improvement.

- e. **Quality control:** the issue of quality control cannot be over-emphasized. It is one of the strategies for establishing quality assurance in our education system. Ojedele, (2007) views that quality control should be of concerns to the country in its drive towards technological development. If this is to be carried out successfully, there is need to examine the qualification of teachers, the adequacy of the curriculum, the availability of equipment in the required number as well as the proper use of the process involved in the various skills to ensure that the finished products are of high standard. Quality control is encompassing and it concerns itself to the overall welfare of the education system.

### **The Roles of Educational Managers in Assuring Quality of Education in Nigeria Education System**

For quality education to be maintained in our educational system, education managers should be employed. These education managers are charged with a lot of responsibilities ranging from administrative to professional functions. The administration in the education industry should be concerned on how to 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 classroom teaching activities. He should be responsible not only to himself and his pupils but also to other staff members and their pupils. This indicates that a teacher is for himself and for others. Again, the teacher is also faced with the responsibility of determining the priorities of management and the management style to be used for achieving qualitative educational results. Qualitative results is the major concern of a good teacher. Arikewuyo (2004), listed the following tasks for education managers for qualitative education; they include;

- a. Measurement and standardization of academic attainments.
- b. Evaluation of quality of work during supervision
- c. Use of competent teachers and administrative/supervisory personnel.
- d. Dissemination of information to teachers and pupils/students.
- e. Use of educational technologies with a view to increasing the efficiency of teaching.
- f. Engagement in new research and development invigorate all educational activities.
- g. Carrying out Guidance and Counselling
- h. Providing students with suitable employment information.
- i. Efficient management of all education resources available.

However, the educational managers roles portray the quality of education existed in the country. The educational managers can do other jobs to maintain quality in education like;

1. **Maintenance of cordial relationship between the teachers and the pupils** The teacher and the pupils/students are often at the centre of all discourse within the spectrum of quality assurance in education. The teacher's role is to build up, instruct, train and guide the young ones/pupils for healthy growth and stable adult life. The teacher provides activities, materials and guidance that facilitate learning. No teaching can therefore take place without the learners. The pupils or students are seen as the recipients of every teaching process. This teaching process cannot take place in an atmosphere of rancor. Therefore, the education managers should maintain a cordial relationship between the teachers and pupils for quality education to be achieved.
2. **Teacher's motivation and quality assurance:** Teachers are indispensable tools for maintaining quality education in any nation. This was expressed in National Policy on Education (2004) that no nation can rise above the quality of its teachers. If the quality of existing stock of teachers in Nigeria is inadequate, inefficient and ineffective, the teaching will be low; and raising the level of societal enlightenment and the educational standard will be a mirage. Fasbamiye (1987) quoted in Oduma (2013) observed that teacher's lack of dedication to duty has led to a fall in the standard of education. This belief goes to reinforce the idea that teachers do not deserve better treatment. When teachers are not treated properly, they will not work optimally. Hence result is low. For this, low result to be awakened, motivation will be given to teachers by the education managers. Peretomode (1991) in Oduma (2013) said that motivation is the process of influencing or stimulating a person to take action that will accomplish desired goals. However, teachers motivation is a way of empowering teachers in their occupation to put in more efforts in their work. Fredrikson (2004) enacted that low salaries and bad working conditions of teachers always breed corruption and redundancy in work. This is in agreement with Nigerian teachers. Therefore, the education managers will ensure that teachers are adequately motivated for effective and efficient delivery of their works.
3. **Proper monitoring and Evaluating of Instructional materials:** It is clear and evident that educational managers' role in achieving quality education cannot be over emphasized. Nigeria's educational system is totally in shambles as inadequacies are the order of the day with human and materials resources. Teachers are not employed on quality basis, rather, they are now being employed on political basis. This does not provide quality in education.

Furthermore, proper evaluation and monitoring are not carried out by school managers in our education system. However, it is done at all sentiment which becomes the order of the day. Quality assurance process recognizes the need for school to accept responsibility for its own management process. It is in this regard that the main difference between inspection and evaluation and quality assurance arises. Therefore, the school managers will take the responsibility of monitoring and evaluating both the human and non-human resources for quality and standard to be maintained in our educational system.

### **Challenges facing Quality Assurance in Nigerian Schools**

There is a growing concern by various stakeholders about the status of education in Nigeria. Many are of the view that major stride had been made by introducing quality assurance department in our schools. This is of the view to improve the quality of teaching and learning in our schools especially at the primary level as it is the foundation of other levels.

But when viewed in-depth, it could be observed that quality assurance and standards in Nigeria is faced with a lot of problems. Among them are

1. **Role ambiguity:** There is confusion of roles between quality assurance (inspectorate) and quality development (advisory staff), Most of the officers do not know what is expected of them in these two areas thereby concentrating more on quality assurance and abandoning quality development. The two are inseparable for quality to be maintained and should be treated equally.
2. **Transport Problems:** Lack of useable transport is a key reason cited over the years as a major problem militating quality in education. The inspection officers nowadays are full of women and as such, they reject monitoring the rural schools. Also, there are no vehicles or motorcycles to take them to hinterlands where most schools are cited. Moreover, where there is vehicle, it is not usually serviceable.
3. **Shortage of Personnel:** Personnel is one of the major problem militating quality in education. It ranges from lack of teachers and inspection officers. Many of our primary schools this day do not have enough teachers and education officers. Whenever government is asked to recruit teachers, she usually complains of lack of hind. This scenario has left our education system in the hands of mediocre who do not provide quality education. Furthermore, the few staff that remained usually look for lucrative jobs which whenever found, would leave the education system.
4. **Inadequate budgetary allocations and tools to education:** Many scholars have recommended that in order to ensure that the education offered at the school level continues to be of good quality, various measures should be maintained. Firstly, the education law should be revised to provide enough fund to facilitate quality assurance services. In Nigeria for example, the budgetary allocation for education is too small to contain the necessary ingredients of education. Quality of education has been determined by the inputs such as curriculum content, instructional materials and equipment, school culture, teacher pupil ratio, costs and guiding policies, quality assurance, learning duration and above all, the quality of the teachers and management practices. It is also determined, by the products of an education system and the focus should therefore be broad and not limited to teacher performance only. All these need enough fund if quality education is assured. Therefore, enough budgetary allocation should be given to education for quality education to be attained.
5. **Frequent changes in Policies:** The term “policy” can be explained as statement, which expresses goals, and the means of achieving them. Policy provides a roadmap for actions tailored towards meeting specific goals. Education policies, which may take the form of ordinance, code or even an act, have been observed to change with changes in the political leadership in Nigeria (Ekundayo, 2010). The inconsistencies in our educational policies have been argued to be responsible for the poor service delivery in the system. This has made quality education impossible in Nigeria

## CONCLUSION

A cursory look at the education system shows that the demise of quality especially in the primary level has been slaughtered on the corridor of the struggle to obtain or secure certificate



as a meal ticket. Quality needs to be restored in the Nigeria education system. It could be a collective activities which would involve all stakeholders in education. These distinct bodies should therefore attend to their responsibilities in the system if quality assurance is to stand firm in our education system.

Furthermore, for quality education to find its way to the education system, all those challenges envisaged should be trashed out. Teachers, school managers, government and other agencies in education should work together in order to maintain quality in education.

### **Recommendation**

The obvious need for quality education in our country cannot be overemphasized. It is seen that the work of quality assurance is a collective job and as such all and sundry must be on deck. It is on this note that the following recommendations were made;

- The government of Nigeria should formulate policy that will last for a long time concerning education system in the country.
- Quality in the education system should therefore focus on optimal development of skills, knowledge, values, attitudes, morals and capabilities of the recipient with emphasis on those relevant to the individual and the society.
- Government should provide enabling environment for attaining of quality education in Nigeria.

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