QUALITY ASSURANCE: THE BASIS FOR QUALITY SECONDARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This paper examines the basis for quality assurance of secondary education in Nigeria. In fact, Nigeria is populous in Africa, but the problem of quality secondary education confronting standard of education in Nigeria. It was discovered that the products were poor quality, the poor quality was however, as a result of the multifaceted problems bedeviling the system in Nigeria such as inadequate funding, inadequate facilities, low morale of teachers, poor supervision of schools and frequent changes in educational policies. The roles of the principal in meeting these challenges were examined as the chief executive who manages the school finance and who can use his ingenuity to raise fund to complement government efforts, provision and maintenance of physical facilities, principal as a curriculum and instruction supervision, a motivator and a change facilitator. It was there recommended that modern day principal should be knowledgeable, professionally competent and resourceful. It was again recommended that government should make provision for sponsoring principals and organizing conferences for them to serve as a means for professional growth.*

KEYWORDS*:* Quality, Assurance, Secondary School, Education, Challenges

INTRODUCTION

Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits. Educational methods include storytelling, discussion, teaching, training, and directed research. Education frequently takes place under the guidance of educators, but learners may also educate themselves. Education can take place in formal or informal settings and any experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels, or acts may be considered educational. The methodology of teaching is called pedagogy. Secondary school level is the bridge between the primary and tertiary levels. The importance of secondary education made the Federal Government to state the broad aims of secondary education as preparation for useful living within the society and for higher education. The underline principle here is that the secondary schools should be able to provide quality secondary education to all those who can benefit from it.

However, it appears that the secondary schools are not living up to expectation in discharging its obligations. Omoregie (2005) lamented the products of today's secondary system can neither usefully live in the society nor move into higher institution without their parents' aid or forgery. They cannot think for themselves or respect the views and feelings of others. They love no iota of dignity of labour except for things that will give them quick money.

It must be stressed that education cannot be an instrument par excellence for achieving national development where the secondary education is not effectively managed to accomplish its aims and

objectives. In the administration of secondary schools, the principal is central. This is the man at the helms of the affairs who receives all praises (in terms of success) and blames (in terms of failure). According to Ibukun (2009), the jobs of the school principal in Nigeria has progressively become more complex and highly hazardous. In order to cope with the ever-rising challenges of the system, the school principal must be read to see himself as a change agent. According to Ajayi (2002a) and Omoregie (2005), secondary education in Nigeria is riddled with crises of various dimensions and magnitude all of which combine to suggest that the system is at crossroad. It is against this background that this paper examined the concept of output of secondary school from the three domains of learning (cognitive, affective and psychomotor), the problems militating effective administration of secondary schools and the roles of the principals towards meeting the goals of the system.

Concept of Quality
The concept of quality, according to Webster's Seventh Collegiate Dictionary is defined as a peculiar and essential character of an inherent features; a degree of excellence; a distinguish attribute. Quality is concerned with how good or bad a product is. It is about the standard of something when compared with other things. It therefore presupposes that there is a standard set against which the outcome is compared. Jaiyeoba and Atanda (2005) posited that quality is synonymous with standard, efficiency, excellence, relevance and worthiness. When applied to education, it is the success with which an institution provides educational environment which enables students to effectively achieve worthwhile learning goals including appropriate academic standard. Still linking quality to education, Aigboje (2007) refers quality to excellence or more of societal values embodied in the school curricula. This involves stages and activities that take place until certificates are issued.

Quality of Outputs from Nigerian Secondary Schools
Assessment of students' learning behavior is expected to be carried out in totality. That is assessing the students in all activities in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains.

The Cognitive Domain: This domain includes those objectives which deal with recall or recognition of knowledge and the development of intellectual activities. Osunde (2008) posited that the cognitive outcome deals with the acquisition of knowledge. Acquisition of knowledge is demonstrated at six levels which include: knowledge, comprehension. Application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. According to Osunde (2007) and Bandele (2002), the major instrument for assessing behaviour the cognitive domain is the class test/examinations.
It has however been observed that secondary schools in Nigeria are not doing well in this domain of learning. Ajayi (2002[b]) WAEC (2007) and Adeyemi (2008) have shown at different times the extent of poor performance of students in public examinations. This is a pointer to the fact that all is not well with the students' attainment in the cognitive domain.

The Affective Domain: The affective domain includes objectives, which describe changes of interests, attitudes and values and the development of appreciation and adequate adjustment. Under affective domain comes the pupils' attitudes, feelings, emotions, opinions, interest, values, beliefs, reactions, motivation, social relations habits (Osunde, 2008).

Personal experience has however shown that personality traits like honesty, hard work, punctuality, self-denial and self-discipline 'which are necessary conditions for effective citizenship have disappeared in the secondary schools. Students, these days, appear to be lazy, dishonest and always search for short-cuts to success. Abolade in Omoregie (2005) listed the problems manifested at the secondary school level as examination malpractices, cultism, and manifestation of juvenile delinquency, drug abuse and academic incompetence among others.

The Psychomotor Domains: This deals with motor activities. Some examples of psychomotor behaviour include writing smoothly and legibly, speaking fluently, drawing maps accurately, models, ability to manipulate laboratory equipment and used effectively, maintaining farm tools, weave and make baskets, perform a dance steps accurately and so on (Osunde, 2007). The author posited that Skill assessment requires some form of performance testing under a controlled condition. The test will require the student to perform some tasks.

It has also been observed that very few graduates of secondary schools these days can communicate effectively or exhibit evidence of good and solid education background. It appears that students have poor mastery of English language, lack requisite technical skills, oral and written communications. All these point to the fact that the secondary school system is in state of despair. Osunde (2012) argued that the behaviour under the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains should form the basis for the teaching and learning process and subsequently assessment. All these three areas should he taught, assessed and the result utilized in taking decisions on each learner. The basis for this is that education aims at moulding and developing the individual in his totality. Bandele (2002) also posited that the combination of the three domains of learning makes the recipient of the education lived a fulfilled life and contribute meaningfully to the society he lives. I secondary school system seems to have failed in discharging its duties because of the perceived problems that bedeviled the system.

Problems in the Secondary School System in Nigeria
A careful examination of the secondary school system in Nigeria reveals the following as some of the problems bedeviling the system which have been hindering the system from achieving its lofty goals: Inadequate funding: Inadequate funding is one of the obstacles to effective management of secondary education in the country. According to Aghenta (2004), the success of any secondary school depends upon the resources available to it. Money is very important in this respect because by it, all other vital elements in the school can be obtained, such as school building, purchase of equipment, payment of teachers' salaries and allowance and running expenses.

Meanwhile, Jaiyeoba and Atanda (2003) explained that the rapid expansion of students' enrolment in Nigeria since the attainment of independence followed by the enrolment explosion in recent years have made education a thorny responsibility for government to shoulder. Hence inadequate funding has resulted in poor teaching and dilapidated buildings (Omoregie, 2005). There is no doubt whatsoever, that the inadequate funding of the secondary school system in the country has hindered the accomplishment of some of the aims and objectives of this level of education as contained in the National Policy on Education.

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Inadequate Facilities: School facilities are the material resources that facilitate effective teaching and learning in schools. Jaiyeoba and Atanda (2005) posited that educational facilities are those things which enable a skillful teacher to achieve a level of instructional effectiveness that far exceeds what is possible when they are not provided.

The state of infrastructural decay in many secondary schools in Nigeria is a manifestation of poor funding of the system. Ahmed (2003) revealed that in most of the nation's secondary schools, teaching and learning takes place under a most un-conducive environment, lacking the basic materials and thus hindered the fulfillment of educational objectives.

The Staff Morale: Teachers are the centre-piece of any educational system. No education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Teachers whose morale is low are not likely to perform as expected in the school system. According to Ajayl and Oguntoye (2003), the numerous problems permeating the entire educational system in Nigeria such as cultism, examination malpractices, drug abuse, indiscipline, persistent poor academic performance of students in public examinations and many more seem to suggest that teachers have not been performing their job as expected. Fadipe (2003) posited that teachers, apart from students, are the largest most crucial inputs of an educational system. They influence to a great extent the quality of the educational output. Teachers' irregular promotion, low pay package (when compared to other public workers), societal perception of the job and many more have dampened the morale of teachers. When teachers are not motivated, their level of job commitment may be low and the objectives of the school may not be accomplished.

Poor Supervision of Schools: Effective instructional delivery and maintenance of standards in the school system are enhanced through regular internal and external supervision. Ayodele (2002) argued that secondary schools are presently supervised by two categories of people, viz: (i) internal supervisors within-the school, supervisors as principals, vice-principals and heads of departments (ii) external supervisors- the outside-the school, supervisors as the formally designated officials from the inspectorate division of the Ministry of Education and the various Area or Zonal Education Offices. The primary responsibility of inspectors is to see that high standards are maintained and that schools are run in accordance with the laid down regulations. While it has been argued that the principals have been discharging their duties as internal supervisors, the external supervisor (inspectors from the Ministry of Education) appear non-functional as they seldom visit schools to monitor the operations in these schools. This has invariably hinder effective teaching-learning in schools.

Frequent Changes in Policies: The term "policy" can be explained as statement, which expresses goals, and the means of achieving them. Policy provides a road-map for actions tailored towards meeting specific goals. According to Jaiyeoba and Atanda (2005), education policy represents definite courses of action proposed by the government in power or an executive authority and adopted as expedient to the issues and problems of education. 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 of Nigeria. Principals of schools are often caught in this web when government changes existing education policy. The inconsistencies in educational policies have been argued to be responsible for the poor service delivery in the system.

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Roles of the School Principal

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

By implication, the principal of a school is a planner, director, controller, coordinator, organizer, adviser and a problem-solver (Maduabum, 2002). The principal is the person on who shoulders rest the entire administration, success or failure of the school. The principal identities and set goals and objectives of the school, which of course, must be in line with the national objectives, analyses tasks and share responsibilities of the staff according to specialization and expertise (Uyanga, 2007).

The following are therefore the duties of the principal in ensuring that the multi-faceted problems facing the secondary school system do not hinder the efficient service delivery towards producing quality outputs in this 21st century.

Management of School Finance: The principal is the chief executive and accounting officer who is entrusted with the responsibility of controlling the revenue accruing from the school and ensuring judicious utilization of PTA levy. In order to raise fund to complement the efforts of the government, the principal can establish a very good rapport with the Parents Teachers Association, Board of Governors, Old Students' Association and Non-Governmental Organizations for fund raising act.

Provision and Maintenance of Physical Facilities: Principals must be fully concerned with the physical environment and other facilities around the school. Dilapidated buildings, leaking roofs, abandoned projects, over-grown trees and lawns, dingy and dark buildings, etc have demoralizing effects of people, especially the adolescents (Obidoa, 2006). As a result, the principals have the responsibilities of ensuring that these facilities are in good shape. Even with the meager resources at their disposal, they have the responsibility of providing teachers and other instructional staff with necessary resources for effective teaching (Babayemi, 2006).

Principal as a Motivator: Ajayi and Oni in Babayemi (2006) opined that a school principal must not only be trained in the act of administration but must be well-acquainted with the principles that guide and control administrative processes. As the chief executive, the principal owes it a duty to modify the attitude of the staff and motivate them to put in their best at achieving educational goals through effective teaching-learning process. Motivation enhances job performance (Ajayi and Oguntoye, 2003).

Principal as a Curriculum and Instructional Supervisor: The functions of the school principal as a supervisor include: obtaining and making available for teachers all educational information; visiting classrooms often to observe his teachers teaching; inspecting teachers' lesson notes and class registers, diaries and teaching aids and offering professional advice for their improvement.

Principal as a Change Facilitator: When it comes to efforts to improve the quality of school, the principal is the critical person in making change to occur. According to Uyanga (2008), since a school is known to be an instrument of change and reforms in the society, the principal is said to be the pivot of such reforms and changes. This responsibility is very obligatory and the principals are expected to deploy the managerial skills in adapting to this change and effecting it in the school system. The principal is the key-supporting agent for change.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Secondary schools can only be productive if there is effective and efficient management of human and material resources in the system by the principal. This paper examined the outputs from the secondary school system in Nigeria and concluded that they were of poor quality. The poor quality, however, had been linked with the numerous problems bedeviling the system, such as inadequate funding, inadequate facilities, low morale of staff, poor supervision of schools and frequent changes in policies. The paper further examined the roles of the principal who serves as the fulcrum of education reform process, keeping a delicate balance between the often-conflicting pressures coming from teachers, community, the education administrators and the government. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made: the modern-day school principals should be knowledgeable, professionally and administratively competent, as well as resourceful so as to complement the efforts of the government towards achieving the goals of the schools. Government should make provision for sponsoring principals and organizing conferences for them to serve as a means for professional growth as well as incentives to the principals. Again, government should refrain from frequent changes in educational policies as policies which are ambiguous with marked difference from the existing ones may leave school principals confused.

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