

Quality Assurance Techniques on Teaching and Learning in Secondary Schools in Nigeria: The Rivers State Experience

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Abstract

This paper examined quality assurance techniques on teaching and learning in secondary schools in Nigeria: The Rivers State experience. The research study discussed quality assurance techniques, teaching and learning. Furthermore, the concept of quality assurance techniques on teaching and learning in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria was addressed. Moreover, the various techniques for quality assurance were explained, the roles of school administrators given, how school administrators can ensure effective quality assurance in schools were enumerated, the importance of quality assurance in schools in Rivers State were also stated as well as the factors that inhibits quality assurance in secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. It was concluded that collaboration among all stakeholders in the business of quality assurance practices to ensure the right results. The paper therefore recommended that developed quality assurance policies be properly enforced, synergy be encouraged among monitoring agencies for effectiveness, teachers are to do their bid to ensure quality assurance in the classroom, school administrators should follow up the teachers to ensure guidelines are being followed and that education stakeholders should partner with the government for effectiveness and efficiency in the entire process.

Introduction

Human beings as rational beings have a deep desire and liking for anything quality, say quality life, house, cloth, cars, education, and the list is inexhaustible. Fasai (2006) sees quality as degree of excellence or level of value in a product. Middlehurst (2007) perceived quality as grade of achievement, a standard against which to judge others. It was maintained that it is not just a feature of a finished product or services but involves a focus on internal processes and output and include the reduction of waste and the improvement or productivity. Taking a cue from the above definitions, Fadokun (2005) characterized quality by three interrelated and interdependent strands; Efficiency in the meeting of its goals, Relevance to human and environmental conditions and needs and Something more that is, the exploration of new ideas, the pursuit of excellence and encouragement of creativity.

With regards to education, the International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP) (2003) viewed quality from different perspectives. The first is from the internal criteria of the system such as profile expiration and the external criteria which are the fitness and relevance of such an education to its environment. Arikewuyo (2004) viewed quality in education to be judged by both its ability to enable the students perform well in standard examinations and relevance to the needs of the students, community, and the society as a whole. He finally concluded that quality serves as determination of graduation based on standard of excellence beneath which a mark of inferiority is imposed in order to have assurance on it.

MacDonald (2011) defined quality assurance as the set of activities whose purpose is to demonstrate that an entity meets all the quality requirements. He added that this is done by adopting a standard act of process and usually quality assurance techniques like review, training facilitation, etc. Quality assurance is meaningful when the application of its techniques is not deferred till the end of an educational programme. In his own explications, Ehindero (2004) stressed that quality assurance in education is focused on the (i) learners entry behaviours, characteristics and attributes including demographic factor that can inhibit or facilitates their learning; (ii) the teacher entry qualification, values, pedagogic stalls, professional preparedness, subject background, philosophical orientation, etc. (iii) the teaching/learning processes including the structure of the curriculum and learning environment; and (iv) the outcomes, which are defined for different levels in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes including appropriate and relevant instruments to assess these objectives. The above factors could only be determined by certain a technique which in this research study is referred to as quality assurance techniques with examples as monitoring, supervision, professional development e.t.c. The essence of using these measurement parameters is for them to serve as the yardstick to actually measure the extent of fineness of the teaching and learning process.

Learning is about a change: the change brought about by developing a new skill, understanding a scientific law, changing an attitude. Learning is a relative permanent change, usually brought about intentionally. When we attend a course, search through a book, or read a discussion paper, we set out to learn! Sequeria (2012). Teaching is set of events, outside the learners which are designed to support internal process of learning. Therefore, this paper is to investigate quality assurance technique effects on teaching and learning in secondary schools in Nigeria: The Rivers state experience

Concept of Quality Assurance Technique Effects on Teaching and Learning in Nigeria

According to Nwokoro (2010) he gave some deep insights on the teachers' entry qualification and professional preparedness. For him, in view to assuring quality in education and regulating teaching as a profession with an intention to pursuing international standards, Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria was established by Act 31 of 1993. It (TRCN) maintains offices in all the states of the Federation. Some of the quality assurance techniques employed by the Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) in its bid to assuring and maintaining high standard in Nigeria educational system are as follows: licensing of teachers: TRCN believes that the distinguishing mark of a genuine professional is the possession of a valid practicing license. Secondly, professional quality examination; this is systematic testing of competences before granting of membership. To Nwokoro, this exercise began on 13 December, 2008 for all teachers intending to register and was conducted in all states of the country and the Federal Capital Territory. The success of the examination brought greater credibility to the teaching profession and sent a strong signal to teachers that they must keep learning. After the 2008 successful exercise, TRCN has become more equipped to develop the on-going PGDE programme and Modules (Nwokoro 2010). Thirdly, the induction of education students at point of graduation; this is the plan of TRCN to catch young teaching professionals. Accordingly it is geared towards laying a strong foundation for professional consciousness and commitment. Moreso, quality assurance for teacher education is enshrined in the laws of the entire professional regulatory agencies such as National Teachers' Institute (NTI), National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), National Universities Commission (NUC) and Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT). By this provision, the agencies are empowered to accredit, monitor and supervise the quality of training being given to individuals who intend to register as teachers. Explaining furthermore, it was stressed that while some of the professional

agencies carry out the quality assurance functions independently others work collaboratively with the supervisory agencies. For instance, from 2004-2006, Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) together with the World Bank, NUC, NCCE, NTI, NUT and other stakeholders sponsored a national research to investigate the quality of NCE and education graduates already in practice in Nigeria. The findings of the research formed the basis for the last national minimum standards for NCE and Bachelor degree in education being introduced to the colleges of education and universities in Nigeria currently by the NCCE and NUC, respectively. The TRCN has made critical contributions at the relevant national workshops organized by NCCE to come up with the current national Minimum Standard. He further emphasized that Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria is collaborating with other agencies to ensure quality assurance for teachers. Among these are: the UNESCO Teacher Training Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa (TTISA) and the development of quality assurance tool kits by the commonwealth of learning, Canada. All PGDE programmes are expected to measure to specified Minimum National Standards. Accordingly, PGDE programmes, to him, shall be accredited for routinely supervised quality assurance by using TRCN set parameters. Such parameters shall be reviewed from time to time with a view to meeting qualifications. The holders of qualifications not below Nigeria Certificate in Education, PGDE or Professional Diploma in Education only shall be allowed to teach in the PGDE programme. Nwokoro also disclosed that TRCN has introduced the Special Teacher Upgrading Programmes (STUP) which is now domiciled at NTI with the irresistible drive to rid the teaching profession of quacks. TRCN also has evolved yet another quality assurance technique called Continuous Professional Development (CPD). This covers every critical aspect of teaching skills and professional competencies (Nwokoro, 2010). Finally, Fadokun summed the definition of quality assurance in education as a programme, an institution, or a whole education system. In such case, quality assurance is all these attitudes, objectives, actions and procedures that through their existence and use, and together with quality control activities, ensure the appropriate academic standard are being maintained and enhanced in and by each programme. According to Macdonald, (2011) both quality assurance and quality control have the same objective but differ in approaches and style. To him, while quality assurance is a set of activities whose purpose is to demonstrate that an entity meets all quality requirements, a proactive and preventive measure to eschew defects. Quality control on the other hand is a set of activities whose purpose is to ensure that all quality requirements are being met, a corrective measure to identify any defects so as to correct them. Quality assurance uses techniques such as review, training, inspection, supervision, etc while quality control uses techniques such as testing, auditing, etc. Quality control is for defect detection.

Furthermore, some scholars have identified some basic techniques used for quality assurance in education. Techniques are set of related pattern of actions geared towards achieving specified tasks or objectives. Ehindero (2001) identified monitoring as one of techniques used for quality assurance in management of teachers. To him, this refers to the process of collecting data at intervals about on-going project or programme within the school system. The aim is to constantly assess the level of performance with view of finding out how far set objectives are being met. Supervision was identified by Onocha (2002) as other techniques for quality assurance. According to him, supervision might involve inspection, but goes beyond inspection and includes attempt at bringing about improvement in the quality of instruction. It involves staff as essential part of the process. It is a way of advising, grading, refreshing, encouraging and stimulating staff. West-Burham (2000) yet identified inspection as one of the techniques. To him, inspection usually involves an assessment of available facilities and resources in an institution with a view to establishing how far a particular institution has met prescribed standards, it is more of an assessment rather than an improvement induced exercise. For this to

be successfully carried out, there is need to examine the qualification of teachers, teachers by gender, the adequacy of the curriculum, availability of equipment in the required number as well as the proper use of the processes involved in the various skills to ensure that the finished products are of high standard. According to Ojedele (2007) the trend of students transiting from the junior secondary school to other level of education has not been encouraging as it has been falling short of the expectation. He argued that the issue at the tertiary level presents a situation that calls for concerns in terms of variation in access at the universities, polytechnics and colleges of education and in terms of gender disparity. There is no gainsaying that universities from time have been recording higher percentage in Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) Examination than Polytechnics and Colleges of education in Nigeria. Adegbesan (2011) identified mentoring, proper funding and provision professional development programmes as techniques by which quality can be assured in education. To him, mentoring is a method of pairing experienced and quality teachers with the ones making a debut in teaching in view to making the new teachers share in experiences and competence of mentoring for quality service delivery in their future venture in teaching. In establishing quality in education, Adegbesan (2011) emphasized that proper funding is indispensable. He stressed that anything quality does not just occur without money. It is therefore good to reiterate that proper funding should be at fore whenever the issue of quality assurance is mentioned. This is because other quality factors such as supervision, inspection, provision of development programs largely depend on funds to be carried out effectively. Money is required to hire the services of quality and competent teachers, provide quality resources and environment in which they work and carry out other functions incidental to assuring quality in the school system. Adegbesan (2011) stressed that the provision of development programmes such as in-service training, off-service and pre-service training is also one of the techniques for assuring quality in educational system. This is because no quality teacher can remain like that for a long time without renewal or upgrading of his knowledge and skills in line with the new emerging realities and challenges from this profession.

Again the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2009) had reported a high level of professional needs in the areas of: teaching special needs student, ICT teaching skills, student discipline and behavior problems, instructional practices, subject field, student counseling, content and performance standards, student assessment practice, teaching in a multicultural setting, classroom management and school management and administration. These elements targets of quality assurance processes in the educational system. In other words, when the school administrators are able to direct and plan in respect of these skills, there is every tendency that the academic achievement of the students will definitely improve, therefore, the roles of school administrators in schools

Roles of School Administrators in Managing in Quality Assurance Processes in Teaching and Learning

For effective assurance of quality in teaching and learning in secondary school, the principals are expected to adopt and use the appropriate and workable quality assurance techniques.

1. They are required not only to keep the teachers in a right mind frame but also their quality is assured for effective teaching and efficient school system. According to Adegbesan (2011), the role of education administrators range from administrative to professional.
2. Professionally, they should be concerned about how they manage the educational resources at their disposal as well as the control of their schools and teachers. Their managerial function should not be to act as only nominal heads in their respective

schools, but should also to plan, to direct, to coordinate resources and to do other things incidental to the development and survival of the entire school system.

3. They should be responsible not only to themselves and their colleagues but also to teachers. Not only that, they are faced with the responsibility of determining the priorities of management and the management style to be used for achieving qualitative educational results.
4. Besides this, the school managers, according to Nwizu (2009), should place teachers under his control in their field of their specialization. This will give the teachers a great sense of mastery or expertise and entrench quality in the school system.
5. According to Arikewuyo (2004) yet another role identified was the provision of educational technologies to teachers and encouraging them to use the technologies. This is in view of the fact that teaching as profession in this twenty-first has gone beyond the use of only outdated instructional materials. Are certifiable in terms of school of practice.
6. The other roles that could be performed by school administrators include that found in Nwigwe (2009), Calitus (2011), Fred (2004), Ajayi (2001), Onocha (2002), West-Burham (2000) and Ojedele (2007) who took their turn in identifying and explaining techniques the school manager can employ in order to establish quality in managing teachers. These include monitoring, evaluation, supervision, inspection, quality control, mentoring, professional development programmes, access and equity and proper funding.

How School Administrators can ensure Effective Quality Assurance in Secondary Schools in Rivers State Nigeria

1. **Planning:** This is emphasized that it is an essential aspect of good management. It requires the ability of the school manager to look ahead and be able to formulate and select appropriate objectives and procedures to be followed with the school system.
2. **Organizing:** This is the ability of the school managers to create structural work. That is, he should focus attention on the structure and process of allocating tasks to achieve common objectives.
3. **Staffing:** To a large extent is another essential role of school managers. It requires his ability to search for the right people and to place them on the right job both in quality and quantity which would reflect their experience and capability for the school objectives to be achieved.
4. **Motivation:** This is a major energizing force behind all other activities of school administrators. Managers should know how to boost the morale of their workers in order to obtain maximum efficiency and effectiveness from them. This includes constant payment of salaries and other emoluments needed for their welfare.
5. **Evaluation,** to him, is the ability of school manager to assess and know the outcome of the school aims and objectives. He ensures that set down goals and objectives are achieved through quality control system which includes: (a) an effective quality school system (b) periodic audit of the operation of the system, and (c) periodic review of the school system to ensure it meets changing requirements.

Importance of Quality Assurance Techniques for the secondary schools in Rivers State Nigeria

Importance of quality assurance techniques in teaching and learning cannot be overemphasized. For Adegbesan (2011) the following were said to need for quality assurance techniques which include: ensuring prudent and judicious utilization of teachers, ensuring effectiveness and efficiency in educational system and giving the teachers new creative ideas.

Moreso, a teacher whose quality is outstanding in his/her field of specializations is good resource in the hands of the school administrator who can always use such to actualize his set goals and objectives for the school system.

Okwuosa (2007) emphasized that the major purpose which quality assurance techniques are established in the school system is to ensure the internalization of effectiveness and efficiency of which without these the educational system become meaningless and non-proactive. This is because an effective and efficient teacher produces an effective and efficient pupils or students and both build effective and efficient educational system.

In the opinion of Multon (2008), quality assurance techniques encourage employment of teachers based on merit. Merit however has to do with the demonstration of professional knowledge and skills during the recruitment test process. Through this means quality is assured in educational system. Olatunji (2010) believed that through the effective use of quality assurance techniques, sound and employable school graduates will be produced. He further stressed that the problem with the educational system in Nigeria is pivotally revolving round lack of quality assurance in the operational base of the school system.

Another importance of quality assurance techniques as captured by Belch (2008) and Ikwuelo (2010) is that it creates room for improvement and modification. In explaining this, they stressed that professional development programmes, mentoring, and supervision, among others boost and improve the capacity of teachers and impact positively on their knowledge and skills. These also stir up the best side of teachers and give them the clear sense and competence to break away easily from obsolete knowledge and skills or get them configured in line with the current realities in teaching and learning

Adegbesan (2011) also maintained that quality assurance techniques are the best way of determining the quality of the teacher input. This means that the quality of the teachers' instruction is determined by the type of nature of pupils or students he produces at the end. It suggests that the quality of the teachers' input (teaching) can be well-evaluated using the quality pupils or students he turns out. He also stressed that another importance of quality assurance techniques is that they can be employed to determine the level of adequacy of the facilities available for quality control. Quality control is an internal arrangement of assuring quality. However quality assurance goes beyond internal arrangements to include all other external ones.

Factors that Inhibits the Effective Use of Quality Assurance Techniques in Secondary Schools Rivers State, Nigeria

Inhibition is anything blocking the progress or development of on-going action or thing. Effective use of quality assurance techniques suggests the ability to use quality assurance techniques to achieve the desirable goals of the school system. In using these techniques in assuring quality in the school system, some of these factors may constitute inhibitions as reviewed and captured by some scholars and authors presented below.

- a. One of the hindrances facing a school manager in using quality assurance techniques very effectively in managing of teachers is lack of required competence. This prevailing situation presents a scenario where the school manager himself is not knowledgeable enough, Nwizu (2009).
- b. Apart from this above, Umezurike (2010) perceived that effective use of quality assurance techniques could be hindered when the school manger is showing indifference to information, seminars, conferences, symposia, etc, from where he can get up-to-date knowledge and skills

- c. In furtherance of this, Awuzie (2008) had identified lack of funds as one of the factors that can obstruct the effective use of quality assurance techniques in the management of teachers. He stressed that, to maintain and to assure quality in the school system is expensive and needed proper funding.
- d. Fakaye (2007) saw governmental interference as another major obstacle to the effective use of quality assurance techniques in managing teachers. To him, in Nigeria, for instance, the recruitment of teachers, principal officers and administrative staff are sometimes influenced by people in government to be in favour of their family members, cohorts and political friends. Bamidele (2010) emphasized bribery and corruption as one major hindrance to the effective use of quality assurance techniques in management of teachers. According to him, bribery and corruption has eaten into the fabric of our national life.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it was concluded that quality assurance enhances provision of appropriate and relevant knowledge, collaboration or sharing of academic experiences which will increase the potentialities of the teaching and learning skills and capacity building among teachers and creativity enhancement among learners in the school system. This implies that quality assurance affect teaching and learning in term of strengthening potentialities in covering course outlines, completion of teaching-work-load before the end the semester or session, adequate utilization of modern instructional materials

Recommendations

The following are the suggestions supporting this research study:

1. Developed policies that would ensure quality assurance in the school system should be enforced to the latter by the agencies of government concerned.
2. The synergy between monitoring agencies to determine the extent of cooperation with existing rules and policies on quality assurance in secondary schools should do more to ensure that no gap is left for sharp practices to take place by smart individuals who would skip doing what is right.
3. Teachers must ensure the given regulations on how to ensure that there is effective learning among their students be guaranteed by following the laid guidelines.
4. School administrators should pursue to follow up what the teachers under their jurisdiction are doing to ensure that quality assurance is carried out to the latter.
5. Education stakeholders should collaborate with government agencies in charge of this functions to ensure that the third party presence helps to determine whether the right thing is being done or not and to also encourage all parties involved to continue to maintain quality assurance programmes in the secondary school system

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