

# Assuring Quality in the Management of Secondary Schools in Nigeria: Issues, Challenges and the Way Forward

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examined the issues and challenges of assuring the quality of secondary schools in Nigeria and the strategies on the way forward. In doing that, such concepts like quality, quality assurance, management, secondary education and state of secondary school in Nigeria were reviewed. Irrespective of the fact that some aspects of education may be considered as improving, reviews have shown that students' ability for practical curricular activities are deteriorating showing that quality of our educational system is poor and not assured. The challenges of assuring quality among others were observed to be; increasing school enrolment, ineffective teaching and learning process, the poor motivation of teachers, lack of educational resources, lack of quality control and poor funding to schools. To overcome these challenges the paper observed the following strategies as the way forward; adequate funding, adequate equipment and facilities, provision of incentives to staff, provision of qualified manpower, effective supervisory system, improving on teachers' level of training etc. When these are done it is believed that the quality of the educational system would be achieved and assured. Therefore efforts must be made to assure quality in the secondary school system in its totality consisting of quality teaching for quality products.

**KEYWORDS:** Quality, Management, Secondary School, Quality Assurance

## INTRODUCTION

Secondary education is that education that students receive after primary education and before tertiary education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, FRN, 2004). The position of secondary education shows that it is a link between the primary and tertiary education. As Ibgudu and Ipalibo (2017) rightly stated, secondary education plays consumer and producer roles to primary and tertiary education respectively. According to the FRN (2014), the broad goal of secondary education shall be to prepare the individual for useful living within the society and higher education. The above broad goals of secondary education have specific objectives set for the totality of the development of the child to fit into society. In specific terms, secondary education among others shall;

- Inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence
- Provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development

The question remains, what level of quality assurance is given to this important aspect of the educational system? As Oluwuo and Odunade (2011) rightly posit, quality has to do with consistent provision and utilization of good and high standard resources to foster effective teaching and learning in every stage of the educational system. Are there therefore good and standard teachers, materials, and facilities that can

be harnessed towards the achievement of educational goals and the production of quality output?

Most often rather than having quality products we often see products from secondary schools with little or no evidence of required technical and vocational skills. A good education that is of quality contributes to economic growth, improvement of employment prospect and the generation of income for sustainable development of the individual and the nation. For qualitative education to be achieved, the teacher, facilities and finance must be adequately available and efficiently utilized. As Olantunji (2010) rightly argues, the problem with the educational system in Nigeria revolves around poor quality in the operational base of the system. Assuring quality in the management of education therefore requires not only an adequate but urgent, attention.

There seems to be a whole lot of challenges facing quality assurance in the management of secondary education in Nigeria. Most schools lack some of the basic necessities for assurance of quality. The challenges and strategies of assuring the quality of secondary education therefore become the focus of this paper. However, in an attempt to do that, some concepts were looked at such as quality, quality assurance, the concept of management, secondary education and state of secondary school.

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### Concept of Quality

In any organisation, quality is something that cannot be toiled with. Quality is concerned with measuring up and ensuring conformity to a predetermined specification. Quality has been variously described as a measure for excellence, quality as perfection, quality as value for money, quality as customer satisfaction, quality as fitness for purpose and quality as transformation. Quality is the ability or degree with which a product, service, or phenomenon conforms to an established standard and which make it to be relatively superior to others (Osaat, 2013). With respect to education, quality implies the ability or degree to which an educational system conforms to the established standard and appropriateness of the inputs available for the delivery of the system. Arikenuyo (2004) posits that quality in education is to be judged by both its ability to enable the students to perform well in standard examination and relevance to the needs of the students. Quality in education is associated with the monitoring and evaluation component of the school system to see whether the outcome is good and of the intended standard. Quality in education is that that impacts the citizenry and the relevance of that education to the life of the individual in particular and the nation in general.

### Concept of Quality Assurance

Two major things are important when talking about quality. Quality is controlled and assured. Quality control involves weeding out parts that are below standard. It dictates deviation from the set standard. On the other hand, quality assurance is a before event process that involves preventing faults or deviation from occurring in the first place (Okorie&Uche, 2004). Quality assurance refers to the processes and procedures that monitor different aspects of a service, detect, correct and ensure that quality standards are being kept.

Obioma (2012) defines quality assurance as an all-encompassing concept which includes all inputs, process and actions through which the quality of education is developed, improved and maintained. It is the planned and systematic activities implemented in a system so that excellence requirements for a product can be fulfilled. Quality assurance describes all the planned and systematic actions necessary to assure that a product or service will satisfy the specified requirement.

Tama (2006) refers to quality assurance as the processes which provide a systematic and efficient method for gathering, analysing and maintaining information on the quality characteristics of products, the source and nature of defects, and their immediate impact on the current operation. Ajayi and Akindutire (2007) posit that quality assurance is about consistently meeting product specifications or getting things done the first time and every time. From the ongoing one can deduce that quality assurance in education is the processes of monitoring, assessing and evaluating all aspects of the education activities with a view of improving the products of the education system. In fact, quality assurance is a management tool which aims at improving the quality of the educational system ranging from the input, process and outputs being the products. Babalola (2011) sees quality assurance in education as the controlling and raising the quality of education above a certain level, thus ensuring that minimum standards of education are achieved or exceeded as envisaged by various stakeholders. Quality assurance is a

holistic method of identifying and resolving the problem within the educational system in order to ensure continuous quality improvement.

Nwagwu, (2003) lists some fundamental indices of quality assurance in education. These include;

- Quality of school leavers
- Class size and teacher-student ratio.
- Availability of qualified teachers
- Discipline and character formation.
- Time utilization and management
- Recreational facilities
- School curriculum, teaching and learning facilities
- Others are;
- Availability of conducive classroom for learning
- Availability of well-equipped laboratory etc.

### Needs and focus on quality assurance in the educational system

Different authors have looked at the needs of quality assurance in different perspectives depending on the individual interest. Ehindew (2004) posits that quality assurance focuses on;

- Learners entry behaviour characteristics and attributes including some demographic factors that can inhibit or facilitate their learning
- The teacher entry qualification, values, pedagogic skills, professional preparedness, subject background, philosophic orientation
- The teaching-learning process including the structure of the curriculum and learning environment.

The National Educational Assurance Policy in Nigeria specifies 8 components of quality assurance standard which are;

- Learner achievement and standard
- Learners welfare and participation
- Care guidance and support
- Leadership and support
- School community relationship
- Learning environment
- Teaching and Learning and
- Curriculum.

Munachi (2006) stated that the major needs of quality assurance in the educational system in Nigeria are;

- Ensuring and maintaining a high standard of education at all levels
- Assisting in monitoring and supervising education
- Determining the quality of teacher input
- Determining the number of classrooms needed based on the average class size.
- Determining the level of adequacy of the facilities available
- Ensuring prudent and judicious utilization of financial resources available

From the above, it can be deduced that quality assurance focuses on the totality of all the activities that are conducted to achieve or maintain a certain acceptable quality level. It is a management strategy aimed at ensuring the totality of the combination of some indispensable variables such as quality teachers, instructional materials, infrastructures, favourable teacher-pupil ratio, pupils' classroom, instructional supervision etc. No wonder FME (2010) sees quality assurance as being focused on the monitoring, assessing, evaluating as well as objectively as possible all aspects of school life including its setting, what is provided, resource

utilization as well as communicating the outcomes to all concerned for consistent improvement.

### **Importance of assuring the quality of the secondary educational system**

Quality assurance involves all the processes that contribute to the success of the end-products of the school quality which serves as determinants of graduation based on the standard of excellence. The importance therefore cannot be overemphasised. As Okwuosa (2007) rightly posits, the major importance of quality is to ensure the internalization of effectiveness and efficiency of which without the educational system become meaningful and non-proactive.

Multon (2008) opines that quality assurance encourages the employment of teachers based on merit as it is a demonstration of professional knowledge and skills during the recruitment test process. Olantunji (2010) also posits that through the effective use of quality assurance strategy, sound and employable school graduates will be produced.

Another great importance of quality assurance as posited by Ikwuelo (2004) is that it creates room for improvement and modification. This could be through professional development programmes, mentoring, supervision which could improve the capacity of teachers and impact positively on their knowledge and skills.

### **The concept of management**

The concept of management could mean different things depending on the context of usage. Management can be seen as planning and organising human and material resources in a way that ensures effectiveness and efficiency in an organisation. In this paper, management is directed at the achievement of organisational goals most advantageously in terms of the use of organisational resources. Management here therefore is a task that has to be performed. However, as a task, somebody must direct the activities of others so that the task is carried out. Based on that management as rightly posit by Akinwumiju&Agabi (2013) can be seen as the body of personnel at the policymaking level in an organisation. In the educational establishment for example it is the position occupied by the Ministers of Education, school heads, subject heads etc. who direct and control activities of other members towards the achievement of educational goals. Asodike in Iluene (2017) defines management as the skills the manager or leaders adopts to utilise human and material resources to achieve predetermined organisational goals. One of the management skills is that of assuring quality in the sense of assuring that, qualities of these resources that are coordinated to achieve a definite goal are not undermined.

### **The State of Secondary school management and quality assurance**

The responsibility of managing education in Nigeria is shared between the three tiers of government, the federal, state and local governments. Statutory bodies are established by the government for the management of schools in the country. These are Federal Ministry of Education (FME), State Ministry of Education, Local Government Education Authorities (LEAs), Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUPEBs). While the Federal Ministry through its agencies manages some federal secondary schools, the state ministries of education through its agencies manage state secondary schools. A close look at the

functions of these educational agencies as stipulated in FRN (2014) shows common things among them which are;

1. Prescription of minimum standards as well as setting and maintaining uniform standards of education in the country
2. Provision of broad educational services in Nigeria
3. Establishment and maintenance of an efficient inspectorate service for monitoring and maintaining standards at all levels of education below tertiary levels.
4. Organisation of supervision and inspection of all educational institutions
5. Development and dissemination of curricula and instructional materials
6. Capacity building for teachers
7. Financing of Education etc.

The issue, therefore, is the level of commitment on the parts of these agencies to ensure that all these functions are carried out to achieve the quality of our secondary education in the country. There have always been debates on whether the quality of education is rising or falling. In Nigeria experience, for instance, Babalola (2011) posits that irrespective of the fact that some aspects of education may be considered as improving, nevertheless, students' ability for practical curricular activities may be said to be deteriorating as facilities for such courses as woodwork, metalwork etc. are in more bad shape and less generally available now than before. This implies that quality management of our secondary education in Nigeria to a high extent is not assured. What then are the challenges?

### **Challenges facing Quality Assurance in Nigerian Secondary schools**

Major strides have been made in introducing quality assurance department in our schools, the reason being to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools. However, a good level of quality has not been achieved. Assuring Quality in Nigerian secondary schools is being faced with a whole lot of challenges. The following are some of them;

#### **Increasing school enrolment:**

The issue of increasing enrolment cannot be counted out in the issue of assuring quality in secondary education. Most often the available resources are not commensurate with the available students. In most cases, there are always overcrowded classrooms which cannot give room to achieve the quality of teaching and learning

#### **Financial problems:**

Financial problem is another serious factor militating against quality assurance in the management of secondary education. Infact, according to Babalola (2011), there is a critical shortage of financial resources for the inspectorate and the inspectors specifically.

#### **Poor motivation of teachers:**

The poor motivation of teachers to cater to the teeming population of students is another challenge facing quality assurance in secondary schools. Salaries of teachers have always remained stagnant without increment, promotion and implementation of the promotion. This is evident in some of the states in Nigeria. Rivers state in Nigeria for instance has not been able to give increment to their teachers since 2013 till the time of writing this paper. In the presence of all these, teachers resort to embarking on strike actions as a way of forcing the hands of government for better packages.

### Lack of quality control:

Quality control is one of the strategies to achieve quality assurance. According to Oluwuo and Odunlade(2011) quality has to do with school's inspection, monitoring and control. Enough is not achieved in this area. Most often funds are not made available for an effective supervisory system well funded to monitor the activities of both the teachers and the students to assure quality in the system. There are poor supervision practices in the system. This cannot enhance quality assurance.

### Lack of educational resources:

Educational resources are facilities are material resources which enhance effective teaching and learning. These include buildings, structures, equipment, textbooks, furniture, recreational facilities etc. They constitute vital inputs which are capable of achieving good results. Most often these facilities are lacking and many at times not adequately provided. As Fasasi (2006) rightly says that the effect of this poor supply of facilities is shown on the poor conducive atmosphere for knowledge and skill acquisition.

### Ineffective teaching and learning process:

In the absence of adequate provision of resources such as textbooks in schools, the resultant effect is poor teaching and learning. In the face of this, quality cannot be assured.

Others include according to Sofoware (2010) are;

- Administrative issues
- Political instability
- Negative attitudes
- Wastages
- High level of corruption in the system
- Insincerity in the implementation of tasks etc.

### Strategies for achieving quality assurance in Nigerian schools

To achieve quality assurance in Nigerian secondary schools the following can be done;

#### Adequate funding:

Adequate fiscal allocation should be provided by the government in line with the 26 percentage recommended by UNESCO to provide needed resource materials. If this is done necessary materials that will lead to quality teaching and learning will be provided.

#### Adequate equipment and facilities:

Adequate provision of equipment and facilities should be provided to enhance quality assurance in secondary schools

#### Provision of qualified manpower:

If quality is to be assured in secondary schools then the government should make provision of qualified manpower (teachers) in quality and quantity to meet up with the number of subjects taught in secondary schools. When these qualified teachers are provided and encouraged to adopt and improve on new method and techniques in classroom teaching and learning, then quality can be assured in the system.

#### Improving teachers' level of training:

Teachers should be given the opportunity to improve on their level of training. When this is done they would be exposed to modern trends of their profession as it would help in assuring quality.

#### Provision of staff incentives:

School managers should provide incentives to workers especially the teachers. When this is done it will lead to

encouraging and rewarding quality work performance by staff.

### Effective supervisory system:

There should be an effective supervisory system well funded to monitor the activities of both the teachers and the students to assure quality in the system.

### Elimination of corrupt practice:

The management of various secondary schools should increase their efforts at assuring quality through the elimination of corrupt practices and the creation of ideas for innovative practices that will increase quality assurance in their schools.

### Conclusions

Secondary education is the education children receive after primary education and before tertiary education. It is that education which is aimed at preparing the individual for useful living and higher education. At the end of secondary school, the student is expected to excel in some talents, opportunities, acquire some technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development. To be able to achieve this implies that there should be quality secondary schools in its totality consisting of quality teaching for quality products. Therefore efforts must be made to assure quality in the secondary school system.

### Suggestions

- The government should give priority to ensuring the quality of secondary school system given to her citizens by giving adequate funding
- Employment of teachers in quality and quantity adequately motivated to work.
- Encouraging training and retraining of teachers to adapt to new methods for teaching and learning.
- The government should provide facilities and materials for quality teaching and learning.

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