Quality Assurance: A Mechanism for Effective Management of Secondary School for Improvement

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Abstract

This paper examined the Quality Assurance as a mechanism for Secondary School improvement in Kwara State. Some of the vital issues discussed in the paper are: the concept of quality assurance, problems of quality assurance, and quality assurance as a mechanism for improving secondary school administration. The paper concluded that quality assurance mechanism, if properly utilized could be a proper means of improving secondary school system and which will further enhance Student Academic Performance. The paper thus suggested that Government through the State Ministry of Education should energized its quality assurance unit through proper funding and necessary logistics required for monitoring of secondary schools. The principals of school should not limit their administration to offices but rather thorough supervision of instruction as internal quality assurance manager for school management and improvement.

Introduction

Education is the most valuable tool for human growth and development. It is the development of the totality of an individual in terms of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. Education enables an individual to effectively explore his environment. Federal Republic of Nigeria, in National Policy on Education (2013) states clearly that the

government recognizes education as the greatest investment that the nation can make to bring about civilization, modernization, development and socio-economic progress. It is a preparatory ground for human development, where career abilities are groomed and potential and talents discovered and energized. The hopes of every country of the world to develop human capital for effective functioning of the society are hinged on education, being an instrument of change and sustainability. Secondary education is the gateway between primary and tertiary education in Nigeria. It is at that level that individuals take the courses subjects that would qualify them for professional of vocational programmed at higher level of education.

In Nigeria, public discussions frequently focus on educational standards. The public's unhappiness becomes more prominent following the annual release of National Examinations Council Senior School Certification Examination results. Student out comes do not match the government and parental investment (Akinsolu, 2010). All stakeholders are concerned about why the system is turning out graduates with poor results. To them, it is questionable whether or not teachers in the public secondary schools, who are considered to be the most important factor in the effectiveness of schools and who are the determinant of a child's education that are competent to teach effectively. The National Policy on Education states that "No Education system can rise above the quality of teachers in the system" (FGN, 2013). Hence, there is need for quality control in recruitment of teachers into secondary schools, and quality assurance of the recruited ones for general school improvement.

There is a need to focus on teacher's adequacy and competency in respect to their pedagogical practices (Rodgers, 2001). In support of the aforementioned scholars, Ekwesili (2006) institutionalized the Private Public Partnership (PPP) and School Based Management Committee (SBMC) to manage secondary education and to promote school effectiveness since students' success depends on the amount of learning that takes place in the classroom and other related activities that a teacher performs in schools. Similarly, Lassa (2000) and Guga (1998) claimed that education cannot be provided by just anybody, it requires a teacher who plans and delivers the lesson or instruction in such a way that objectives can be achieved. An uncertified teacher cannot prepare students for School Certification Examination because it is unlikely that they could pass. Corroborating this, Owalabi (2007) stated that government should find all possible means to retain veteran and experience teachers who are still willing to serve so that they can contribute their wealth of experience to improving the system. In the light of this, quality assurance could be seen as a veritable tool for stimulate teachers, to perform efficiently for school improvement.

Concept of Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance (QA) is a generic term that can mean different things to different people and group. To a layman, QA relates to the way goods are produced and services

rendered to ensure that the goods and services delivered are perfect with little or on faults and at very high standard that meets customers' satisfaction. In addition to its being cost efficient.QA is seeking to achieve high standard of any organization.

Quality Assurance to the production function of all levels of institutions. It is the management of goods, services and activities from the input stage, through processes to the output stage of production. Quality was seen as a degree of excellence, while quality assurance was regarded as a mechanism for assuring that the quality of output meets the required standard at all times. Ijaiya (2001) was of the opinion that quality assurance is a retroactive action used to determine the quality of a product or a system after processing and during which wastages would have occurred and what is left to reject or battle with rectification.

From the above assertions, it is pertinent to note that quality assurance is the action auction taken in the school system to maintain the standard of education interms of inputs, processes and output. Quality assurance is vividly considered as a vital and useful school-based developmental tool and a means for providing necessary mechanism for accountability. At the school base level, quality assurance deals with how schools ensure the quality of their educational provision, in so doing discharging their obligations to safeguard the value and standard of their offerings. Quality assurance provides all stakeholders in education with a guarantee that institutions, programmes and graduates meet acceptable standards.

Inferring from the foregoing discussion, QA in education can be described as a regulatory programmed to guarantee, maintain and continuously improve the quality of academic performance based on specific guidelines and constant assessment of the whole system. Such task can be perceived as a pro-active plan that strives for excellence in education. It emphasizes consistency in standards and a commitment to shared responsibility that leads to the effective and efficient goal attainment. An activity in turn determines the value placed on the products of an institution through a commitment that aspires to the highest possible standard in response to expectations and within resource constraints while shriving continuously for improvement in response to changing circumstance Walkin (2002). These definitions relate QA to any activity and not just goods and services only. It means more than mere perfection of goods and services to satisfy customers' needs at barest minimum cost. It is defined as a systemic management and assessmentprocedure adopted by institutions in order to monitor performance against objectives and to ensure the achievement of quality output and improvements (Jaiyeola and Atanda, 2005). Fadokun (2005) described QA as covering all practices and procedures that ensure the maintenance and improvement of academics standards. According to Harvey (2008), QA in education refers to the mechanism for ensuring an appropriate learning process, be it a degree of control over what is permitted as educational experience, ensuring that institutions comply with basic requirements and are

accountable to stakeholders. This definition narrows down QA in education as concerned with only the inputs based upon specific standards and guidelines as agreed upon by stakeholders. Thus, giving the impression that QA is a terminal affair that occurs only once at the beginning of a programme rather than a continuous process.

Harvey (2008) considered QA as a philosophy and process in which all the functions and activities of an institution are systematically and scientifically treated equally, planned controlled and implemented. Fadokun (2005) further explained that it is a continuous and dynamic thing, and the process and strategies adopted change with time. It is systematic and scientific because it operates on a framework. Other authors such as Ijaiya (2001) and Fadokun (2015), viewed QA as the output product dimension. The input, process and output dimension of QA as concerned with the provision and utilization of resources (human and material) and their impact on the final product (graduates), their employability and ability to contribute to individual and societal growth Okebukola (2010), while emphasizing this dimension (input, process and output), opined that QA focus on the following.

1. Learners entry behavior, characteristics and attributes including some demographic factors that can inhibit or facilitate their learning;
2. Teachers' entry qualifications, values, pedagogic skills, professional preparedness, subject background, philosophical orientation, among other;
3. Teaching/learning process including the structure of curriculum and learning environment; and
4. Outcomes which are defined for different levels in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes and relevant instruments to asses these objectives. National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and Commonwealth of Learning (COL) clarified further that QA in its broadest term covers all the policies, structures, processes and activities put in place to define, assure and enhance quality in the academic programme. Such quality practices are basically aimed at capacity building within an institution for pursuing quality improvement leading to stakeholders' satisfaction. Walkin (2002) observed that everyone in the enterprise has a responsibility for enhancing the quality of the product or service in an institution. Such a proactive plan usually covers services of activities such as quality planning, quality control, quality audit, quality management, quality enhancement, quality assessment, total quality management and quality culture. Quality Assurance thus implies an avoidance of non-performance by pre-empting failure through proper planning, execution, monitoring and evaluation.

Problem of Quality Assurance in the School System

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 Olatunji (2001), 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 can be obtained, such as school building, purchase of equipment, payment of teachers' salaries and allowances 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 Nation Policy on Education.

Inadequate facilities

School facilities are the material resources that facilitates 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 most of the nation's secondary schools, teaching and learning takes place under a most unconducive environment, lacking the basic materials and thus hindered the fulfillment of educational objectives, as better quality assurance could not be put in place

Low staff morale:

Teacher 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 Ajayi 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 student in public examination and many more seen suggest that teachers have not performing their job as expected. Fadipe (2003) posited that 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 enhance through regular internal and external supervision. Ayodele (2002) argued that secondary schools are presently supervised by two categories of people, viz (i) internal supervisors-the within-the school, supervisors as principals, vice –principals and heads of departments: (ii) external supervisor-the outside-the school, supervisors as the formally designed 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 principal have been discharging their duties as internal supervisors, the external supervisors (inspector 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 change 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 Jaiyeola 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 issue 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 deliveryin the system which as well hinder effective quality assurance.

Quality Assurance as Mechanism for Managing Secondary School for Improvement

School administration involves managing, administering the curriculum and teaching, pastoral care, discipline, assessment evaluation and examination, resource allocation, costing and forward planning, staff appraisal relationship with the community, use of the practical skills necessary for surviving the polices of stich system such as decision-making, negotiation, bargaining, communication, conflict handling, running meetings and so on. School management thus entails planning, organizing, directing, supervising, and evaluating the school system. Therefore, for quality assurance of secondary school, the administration in the school and Ministry of Education should involve in most of these activities. The school

principal must ensure all his efforts are directed towards efficient and effective teaching and learning in the school so as to be able to produce quality output. 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 whose shoulders rest the entire administration, success or failure of the school. The principal identifies 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, 2008).

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 services 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-Government Organisation for fund raising activities for quality assurance.

Provision and Maintenance of Physical Facilities

Principals must be fully concerned with physical environment and other facilities around the school. Dilapidated building, leaking roofs, abandoned projects, over-grown trees and lawns, dingy and dark buildings and the likes have demoralizing effects on 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.

Principal as a Motivator:

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 teaching-learning process. Motivation enhances job performance and thus school improvement.

Principal as Curriculum and Instructional Supervisor:

The functions of the school principal as a supervisor include: obtaining and making available for teachers all educational information; visiting classroom often to observe the 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 to this change and the principals are expected to deploy the managerial skills in adapting to this change and effecting it is the school system. The principal is the key-supporting agent for change.

Effectiveness can be best defined as the degree to which objectives are achieved and the extent to which targeted problems are solved. In contrast to efficiency, effectiveness is determined without reference to cost and, whereas efficiency means "doing the thing right", effectiveness means" doing the right things". The term "Effective" owes its origin to the name given the highly destructive booms dropped on industrial targets in Britain during World War II. It is still used in many large organization and can still be used to today to help translate vision and strategy into objective and then, through measurement, assessing whether the strategy and its implementation are successful. Efficiency on the other hand is being effective without wasting time or effort or expenses; able to accomplish a purpose; functioning effectiveness; people who will do nothing unless they get something out of it for themselves are often highly effectiveness person. Both concepts are imbedded in the improvement.

In economics terms the concept of efficiency can easily be defined as the relationship between inputs and output, whereby economics efficiency is increased by a gain in units of output per unit of input. This can occur by holding output constant and decreasing input or by deriving greater production from the same level of input. In relation to education it then implies that various educational outcomes can result from a variety of different combinations of inputs such as teachers, buildings, class size, curriculum, etc. The problem that confronts economist and educators, however, is how to mix the inputs in then right proportions to achieve the most efficient outcome. But the problem is further compounded when we ask ourselves. "What output should we measure?" Sheenan (1973) believed that it is very difficult to specify a unit of output

"because educational systems so often in practices have no single well defined functions, so also they haveno single well-defined indicator of output.

Clearly, education serves many outcome and some of these cannot be measured by using econometric techniques of orthodox economic theory. For the typical profit-maximizing firm, it is possible to put money values on the inputs of the production process and, in turn, assess its efficiency. Therefore, in a firm the right or maximum efficiency is achieved when the price of the resources used to make the commodity is equal to the marginal cost of producing it, that is, (P=MC). In education, this is not feasible since many of the outputs are not quantifiable in terms of market prices. Historically, though, there have been efforts to increase educational efficiency. For instant, during the early nineteenth century and elaborate British system of tutors and monitors, the so-called Lancastrian system, was used in an effort to boost school output (Tyack, 1994). Similarly, in the early twentieth century, American schools were greatly influenced by the then prevalent scientific management movement founded by Frederick Taylor. The hope was that Taylor's principles of scientific management, which were popular in the manufacturing sector, could be applied to schools in order to enhance learning and reduce costs. In order to explicate the problems inherent in the measurement of educational efficiency, it is necessary to recognize quality assurance as a mechanism for improvement is the school system which capable of enhancing both efficiency and effectiveness of teaching and on the overall school system.

Conclusion and Suggestion

The roles of the school principal at assuring quality of the system ranging from administration to professional functions. As the school principal manage the educational resources efficiently, they are also to effectively control the teachers and the students for school effectiveness. The need for quality assurance in secondary schools include the following to:
- Ensure and maintain high standard and quality of education in the school system.
- Improve teaching and learning in the school system
- Ensure effective and efficient monitoring of the school activities
- Assess the quality and standard of curriculum of the school system and
- Finally, quality assurance serves as an indispensable component of quality control strategy in the school system.

Suggestions

In order to utilize quality assurance as a mechanism to raise the stand of education and improve the school system, the following suggestions were made:

- The school principal should ensure and use quality assurance outcome at the end of the year to evaluate their managerial roles and also as a basis for school improvement.
- The principal should involve all stakeholders in the school system as agent of quality control aimed at overall school improvement.
- Supervision of instruction must be carried out by the school principal from time to time check mate the laziness and affordable absentism of teachers from class room.

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