



## **Quality Assurance: Managing Education for School Improvement**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Quality assurance has different definitions by different authors. The issue of quality assurance has become the central theme for higher education in many countries of the world and Nigeria is no exception. This is because it is an all embracing effort covering all policies and actions. Hindrances of quality assurance and strategies for improvement of quality assurance were all discussed. Theories of quality assurance management, quality assurance management practices, improvement to quality assurance were also touched. Quality teaching as a sine-qua-non to quality assurance, factors for improving quality assurance in schools was looked into. Conclusion was made in while suggestions were outlined which one of them is (1) government should as a matter of necessity vote more funds for the sustenance of quality assurance in our institutions.

**Keywords:** Quality Assurance: Managing Education, School Improvement

### **INTRODUCTION**

Quality is defined differently by scholars and the general public. Some perceive quality as the level of value in a product, something considered good or worthy in preference to others, or simply the degree of excellence of a service or activity. In the factory, the quality of a product can always be assessed against an original product or against customers' specifications. Quality in higher education is multi-dimensional and embraces all functions and activities of an university including teaching, academic programmes, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, facilities, equipment, services to the community and the academic environment. Many believe that the quality of university graduates could be measured by how well they have been prepared for life and for service to society in various spheres of human endeavour. Quality in school may also be considered on the basis of how good and effective the lecturers are, how adequate and accessible the facilities and materials needed for effective teaching and learning are, and how well prepared the graduates are to meet the challenges of life and for solving the problems of society especially in this 21<sup>st</sup> century evolution of science and technology.

### **QUALITY ASSURANCE (TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT)**

The business and public sectors experienced a quality revolution in the 1980s and 1990s (Powell, 1995; Hackman & Wageman, 1995). The revolution was termed 'total quality' or 'quality assurance' management. This inspired the establishment of International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) in 1991 with the main purpose of collecting and disseminating information on current developing theory and practice in the assessment, improvement and maintenance of quality in higher education (NUC, 2007).

Through information sharing network, inter alia, promotes good practices in the maintenance and improvement of quality in higher education, and identifies areas of research into the theory and practice of quality assurance in higher education. Total quality seems to work at ensuring that all aspects of an institution and every employee is focused all the time on meeting and exceeding customer requirements (West-Burnham, 1994). TQM is a process that moves the entire organisation towards a culture of total and continuous improvement. Robbins and Coulter (1998) have identified key features of TQM to be: intense focus on customers needs; concern for continual improvement; improvement in the quality of everything the institution does; wide use of teams and task forces for finding and solving problems; teamwork and emphasis on participation. Important lessons from TQM relevant to quality assurance in education are said to be: emphasis on prevention of wastage; involvement of students, teachers, head teachers, inspectors, and parents in the quality process, and securing the right attitude and commitment of all concerned so that quality becomes the concern of all and sundry (Ijaiya, 2001).

TQM (quality assurance) deals with the practice of preventive achievements of students and the environment before things get out of hand (Babalola, 2004). It aims at preventing quality problems and ensuring that only conforming products/services reach the customer. Ebong and Efue (2005) perceive TQM as holistic in nature and directed towards education as an entity. They believe some basic determinants of TQM in education are: quality and content of instruction and curriculum; quality of students as inputs; quality and availability of recommended textbooks; quality and quantity of instructional facilities; lecturer student ratio; work load; quality of management; quality of monitoring, supervision and evaluation. Some other indices of TQM in higher education include involvement of students, staff and parents, involvement of National Universities Commission, quality teaching, programme appraisal, high staff morale and adequacy of resources.

In order to develop a TQM system in a university, Alo (1999) proposes something thus; there should be a mission statement spelling out its mission and vision; strategies should be stated explicitly on the future behaviour and performance required to attain its mission; objectives and values of the university should be stated precisely; critical success factors should be spelt out; performance indicators which will enable observers read the levels as either low or high should be established; also performance review, performance related pay (PRP), and performance improvement programmes (PIP) should be put in place and institutionalized. Performance Improvement Programme relates to improving motivation and commitment by means of non financial rewards such as training and career development, succession planning and promotion processes, as well as coaching and counseling.

The issues of quality and quality assurance have become the central themes for higher education in many countries of the world and Nigeria is no exception. Many people are concerned about the quality of the instructional programmes, knowledge generation, services and the outputs of higher educational institutions, whether the stakeholders and the societies are getting the real value for their investment in higher education. The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) expresses its disgust about the quality of university outputs in the country, which the union believes is a consequence of poor academic environment (Fadipe, 2000). The situation seems to be the same in other higher educational institutions in the country. Nigeria being a developing country depends on her higher institutions for the development of high level manpower to man the various sectors of the nation's economy. Thus, higher institutions are viewed as the institutions with the responsibility to deliver needed education in order to continue the transformation of Nigeria from an information society to a knowledge society. To achieve this, quality in knowledge production must be assured.

The concept of quality varies from that of providing a special service to conforming to standards or to fitness for purpose. Fadipe (2000) and Awogwugwu (1990) described quality in terms of the worth, appropriateness, validity and relevance of resources' available for the achievement of educational goals and priorities. This means that the quality of higher education can be described in terms of its relevance and appropriateness in meeting the required standard necessary for achieving the objectives of higher education. Fuller (1986) defines school quality as the level of material inputs allocated per student and the level of efficiency with which fixed amount of material inputs are organized and managed to raise students' achievement. Fuller's approach to the concept of school quality brings into focus what could be described as academic quality. This deals with how well the learning opportunities available to students help them to achieve their award and to ensure that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning opportunities are provided for them.

According to Campbell and Rozsnyai (2002), quality assurance is an all embracing effort covering all policies and actions through which quality of higher education is maintained and developed. Duff, Hegarty and Hussey (2000) define quality assurance as a process of demonstrating excellence and value for money. The Association europeenedes conservatoires (AEC. 2004) and Melia (1994) links quality assurance with standard. According to them, it is a collective term for the systems by which courses; qualifications and institutions, which run them, are monitored, to ensure the maintaining of fair practices and standard. Quality assurance is a regulatory mechanism focusing on accountability and improvement. It is a process of establishing confidence in stakeholders that the inputs, processes and outputs of higher institutions fulfill expectations or measure up to minimum requirements or standards. Therefore, quality assurance deals with all the policies, attitudes, actions and procedures used to ensure that the quality of higher education is maintained and enhanced through acceptable criteria (Woodhouse, 1999).

Higher institutions are regarded as the storehouse of knowledge. Unlike natural resources, which can be exhausted, knowledge is inexhaustible: the more it is used the more it multiplies and expands (Duderstadt. 2002). Tertiary institutions in the country are therefore expected to create, teach, apply and disseminate quality knowledge and services that would help in the development of the individual and the society. Knowledge is the medium of higher education. Bioch (1988) points out that we are living in an age of knowledge, in which the key- strategic resources necessary for prosperity has become knowledge itself – educated people and their ideas. For higher institutions in Nigeria to produce knowledgeable people with intellectual capabilities and sound ideas, there is need to put in place realistic quality assurance strategies in knowledge generation.

### **HINDRANCES TO QUALITY ASSURANCE IN MANAGING EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

The following factors are identified as militating against assurance of quality management of education in Nigeria.

- 1. Politics:** Education in the country is regarded as a public good. Nwadiani (1995) argues that any government in power pounces on education promising support and control. In this way the objectives of higher education, its quality control, knowledge generation variables, financial and even accreditation system are in one way or the other tied to politics. Adepoju (2000) points out that over the years there has been frequent change in educational policies in the country as a result of political instability and this constitute a problem to meaningful operation of the education system. According to Aghenta (1992), this distorted direction of education and the attendant unintended consequences affect the quality of higher education.

- 2. Lack of Public Support:** The roles of the higher institutions revolve around the core of teaching and scholarship. Through the activities of discovery, shaping, achieving, transmitting and applying knowledge, the higher institutions serve the society in various capacities. They educate the people, preserve our-culture, train professionals and certify their competence, challenge the society and stimulate social change (Duderstadt, 2000). Since higher institutions are viewed as the engines for economic growth through the generation and application of knowledge, the society expects more from higher institutions, yet they are not generous in supporting these activities. Hallak (1990) states that the public will support the type of education that will meet their needs and aspirations. But the incessant strikes and cult activities in our campuses coupled with the numerous unemployed graduates of tertiary institutions make parents and other members of the public to lose confidence in the quality of higher education in the country. It is to this end that Adepoju (2000) avers that given this state of our higher institutions, the public is unwilling to support their operation financially.
- 3. High Demand for Higher Education:** In recent times, there has been a high demand for higher education in the country resulting in a tremendous increase in students' enrollment. To accommodate this, new higher institutions have been established by both state and federal governments and the private sector is not left out. These new institutions lack quality manpower, learning and infrastructural facilities for quality curriculum delivery and research. The existence of offshore campuses and virtual institutions further compound the problems of quality in higher education.
- 4. Poor Implementation of Quality Assurance Policies:** Every higher institution has laudable objectives, policies and mechanisms for quality assurance, but the implementation is a serious problem. Most teaching staff in our institutions of higher learning are not committed to their duties and responsibilities. Some of them exhibit non-chaliant attitude towards the implementation of policies. This is typified by the conduct of academic staff that are overzealous about salary increase but are not too serious with their jobs (Maduewesi, 2005). There is the tendency of some staff to engage in examination malpractices such as extorting money from the students to award grades (sorting) and demanding sex from the female students for the same purpose-Handouts and textbooks that lack quality are imposed on students to buy because of the desire to make financial gains quickly. According to Maduewesi (2005), some academic staff exhibit academic dishonesty by tinkering with or "cooking" research data to influence output. The additive effect of all these frantic efforts by lecturers is low quality education.
- 5. Poor Infrastructural and Learning Facilities:** Infrastructures are the structural and non-structural environment of the educational institution (Odunuga & Ajila, 2000). The quality of infrastructural and learning facilities available in any institution of learning has great impact on the quality of its output. Unfortunately our higher institutions are plagued by the malaise of poor infrastructures such as lecture halls, office space for lecturers, laboratories, libraries, textbooks, teaching aids and other learning materials. This has given rise to the poor quality of instructional process in most higher intuitions in the country.
- 6. Inadequate Financial Resources:** Akpan (1999) avers that finance is an important purchasing power with which education acquires its human and material resources. The amount of money available to higher institutions in the country for the procurement of quality instructional, learning and research facilities and their maintenance is grossly inadequate. Coombs (1968) points out that money is an absolutely crucial input of any educational system. Thus, with little money or inadequate finance, the quality of education expected of higher institutions can not be attained.

## STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

The following strategies are highlighted for assuring quality in Nigeria schools

- 1. Quality Enhancement:** This involves the institutional steps to bring about continuous improvement on the effectiveness of the learning experiences of students. The major areas of students' learning experiences are the curriculum and the promotion and support of effective learning. Therefore, quality assurance should not only aim at maintaining standard and award but also improving standard. To achieve this, the students' carrying capacity principle initiated by the National University Commission should be intensified and extended to other tertiary institutions in the country. The carrying capacity refers to the maximum number of students the human and material resources available to the institution can support in order to deliver quality education. With this approach, the admission of students will be restricted and the average number of students per teacher will be reduced to manageable limit. This approach will enhance quality in the graduates as there will be an improved teacher-student relationship.
- 2. Quality Audit:** This works on the principles that higher institutions should take responsibility for self evaluation of their internal quality system subject to proper checks by an external body or agency. In quality audit, the internal quality mechanism of the institution is examined by an external body to find out the extent to which it is effective in carrying out its responsibilities for the quality of education provided to enable the students attain expected standard.
- 3. Follow-up Procedure after Accreditation:** External quality assurance should not end with accreditation of institutional programmes. A well structured follow-up procedures should be included in the report to ensure that recommendations are dealt with appropriately. This is to make sure that those areas identified for improvement are quickly attended to.
- 4. International Higher Education Networks:** Our higher institutions should participate in international higher education network programmes. These education networks undertake projects which promote quality teaching and learning. Their benchmarking projects would contribute immensely to quality management process in our higher institutions.
- 5. Collaborative Research:** Collaborative research involves more than one person working on a particular research topic. The result obtained would be more realistic than the result from one researcher and this supports the adage that two or more heads are better than one.
- 6. Adequate Funding of Higher Institutions:** Our higher institutions should be sufficiently funded to enable them discharge their functions effectively. Finance is needed not only to pay staff but also for the provision of quality teaching and learning facilities. Money provides the necessary ingredients for quality research and quality knowledge production.
- 7. Empowerment of the Academic Staff:** The academic staff are the single and most important learning resources available to most students in higher institutions. They should be given opportunities to develop and extend their teaching capacity and should be encouraged to value their skills. They should be empowered financially to carry out research by giving them reasonable research grants and sponsoring them to conferences both within and outside the country.
- 8. Stakeholder Feedback:** In this strategy, the feedback and opinions from stakeholders - students, graduates, employers and state and federal governments are considered and used in the improvement of quality assurance activities in the institution. The feedback could be collected through a periodic survey of the opinions of the stakeholders or the faculty or department could invite comments from related organizations at regular

intervals about the quality of their out-puts.

## **THEORIES OF QUALITY ASSURANCE MANAGEMENT**

### **Goal and Specification Model**

The Model sees education quality as achievement of stated goals and conformance to given specifications. The Goal and Specification Model is often used in the assessment of education quality of individual institutions or education systems in a country. It assumes that there are clear, enduring, normative and well accepted goals and specifications as indicators and standards for educational institutions (education systems) to pursue or to conform to. An education institution is deemed to be of good education quality if it has achieved the stated goals or conformed to the specifications listed in the institutional plan or programme plans. Typical examples of quality indicators may include students academic achievements, attendance rate, dropout rate, and personal developments, number of graduates enrolling in Universities, professional qualifications of staff (Cheng & Tam, 1997). This model is useful if the goals and specifications used for judging education quality are clear and accepted by all involved constituencies, and there are appropriate indicators which one can use to evaluate whether the institutions have attained the prescribed education standards. (Mkpandiok, 2009). An advantage of this model of education quality is that it enables the institution's management to focus attention on key components of education programme.

### **Resource Input Model**

In this case education quality is regarded as the natural result of achievement of quality resources and inputs for the institution. Due to the pressure of diverse expectations of multiple constituencies, an educational institution may be required to pursue different goals and conform to diverse specifications and standards. The resource-input model assumes that scarce and quality resources are necessary for educational institutions to achieve diverse objectives and provide quality services within a period of time. The education quality indicators may include high quality student intake, more qualified staff recruited, better facilities and equipment, better staff-student ratio, and more financial support from the central education authority, parents, alumni, or outside agents (Cameron, 1994).

### **Process Model**

This Model assumes that an educational institution is of high education quality if its internal functioning is smooth and healthy. The process in an education institution is a transformational process which converts inputs into performance and output. A smooth internal institutional process enables staff to perform the teaching task effectively and students to gain fruitful learning experiences easily. Important internal activities or practices in the educational institution are often taken as important indicators of quality. Leadership, communication channels, participation, co-ordination, adaptability, planning, decision-making, social interactions, social climate, teaching methods, classroom management, learning strategies, and learning experiences are often used as indicators of education quality. Process in an educational institution generally includes management process, teaching process, and learning process. Thus the selection of indicators may be based on these processes, classified as management quality indicators (e.g. leadership, decision making), teaching quality indicators (e.g. teaching efficacy, teaching methods), and learning quality indicators (e.g. learning attitudes, attendance rate) (Cheng, 1994)

### **Satisfaction Model**

According to this Model, education quality is defined as the satisfaction of strategic constituencies. The Satisfaction Model assumes that the satisfaction of strategic constituencies of an educational institution is critical to its survival (Cheng 1990) and, therefore, education

quality should be determined by the extent to which the performance of an educational institution can satisfy the needs and expectations of its powerful constituencies. In the school setting, the powerful constituencies may include teachers, management board members, parents, students, alumni, and officers at the education authorities. Since the objective measurement of quality achievement is often technically difficult and conceptually controversial, satisfaction of powerful constituencies is often used instead of some objective indicators as the critical element to assess quality in education institution. The indicators of education quality are often the satisfaction of students, teachers, parents, administrators, the education authority, the management committee, alumni, etc. If the management board demands high achievement in academic and athletic activities, the education institution can be seen to be of high quality only if these demands are satisfied.

### **Legitimacy Model**

Education quality is regarded here as the achievement of an education institution's legitimate position or reputation. Presently, educational institutions have to compete seriously for resources and overcome internal barriers, and on the other hand, external challenges and demands for accountability and "value for money" (WGES, 1994). It is hardly possible for educational institutions to continue to survive without ensuring legitimacy in the community. The legitimacy model assumes that an educational institution needs to be accepted and supported by the community in order to survive and achieve its mission.

### **Absence of Problems Model**

According to this Model, education quality means the absence of problems troubles. Borrowing the idea of the Ineffectiveness Model (Cameron 1984), it is often easier to recognize problems in an institution than to identify its quality because appropriate indicators and measurement techniques which can provide concrete evidence of quality are often difficult to obtain. Hence, instead of looking for quality in an education programme, one inspects the educational institution to check whether problems exist. The absence of problems model assumes that if there is an absence of problems, troubles, defects, weaknesses, difficulties, and dysfunctions in an education institution, this institution is of high education quality.

### **Organizational Learning Model**

Here, education quality is considered to mean continuous development and improvement. There seems to be no static factor or single practice that contributes to education quality forever. Some practices may be good at a certain time but not at another. Therefore, how to deal with environmental impacts and internal process problems is a key issue in assessing whether an educational institution can provide quality service continuously. The Organizational Learning Model assumes that education quality is a dynamic concept involving continuous improvement and development of members, practices, process and outcomes of an educational institution. The indicators of education quality may include awareness of community needs and changes, internal process monitoring, programme evaluation, environmental analysis, development planning, etc. Cheng (1997) opines that procuring scarce resources for effective functioning and ensuring smooth and healthy internal processes and fruitful learning are critical in order to achieve stated goals and produce high quality educational outcomes.

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE MANAGEMENT (QAM) PRACTICES**

Some key QAM practices in tertiary educational management in Nigeria are discussed:

**Involvement of students and staff.** Many believe that staff and students can make meaningful contributions (inputs) towards the effectiveness of an educational institution. At the tertiary level, students' involvement is evident in department/faculty students associations and

student union representation on University councils of universities. Staff unions contribute to institutional effectiveness by educating and urging members to always put in their best in their jobs. Both teaching and non-teaching staff of our universities are variously involved in the governance of the universities through council membership of their union leaders. As an important stakeholder in the university system, university employees have been described as partners in progress with management and their involvement highly priced (Ekpo, 2005).

**Involvement of Parents** Parental involvement in university governance is apparent in ways like payment of the various fees and charges levied on students and attendance at meetings and contributions to discussions on matters affecting the welfare of students and effective university governance. When a state local government area or a corporate personality e.g. Shell Petroleum Development Cooperation (SPDC), decides to build workshops, classroom blocks or lecture theatres on a university or polytechnic campus, this is parental involvement seriously needed to improve the facility/resources input of tertiary educational institutions.

### **Students Intake through JAMB**

Where good quality students are admitted into the higher institutions of learning, better results (in terms of grades of passes and competence) are more easily, likely than where poor quality students were admitted. The Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) of Nigeria is charged with the responsibility of testing and selecting students for universities, polytechnics and colleges of education 'nationwide. The role of JAMB in quality assurance management includes ensuring high quality matriculation examinations and high quality administration of the examination.

## **INVOLVEMENT OF NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION (NUC) TO QUALITY ASSURANCE**

The policy of quality assurance in universities is aimed at standardization of educational programmes in the universities in line with the policy thrust that quality assurance focuses on education for competence. Some of the mechanisms put in place by the NUC to assure quality in Nigerian universities, according to Uvah (2005) include:

- (a) Programme Establishment:** Universities are required to obtain express NUC approval following a rigorous resource verification and appraisal process before enrolling students to commence a new programme. This involves a team of NUC personnel and invited academic experts ascertaining the claims made by a university in its submissions to the Commission about its readiness with the resources to establish the proposed programme.
- (b) NUC Accreditation: Undergraduate Programmes:** The National Universities Commission (NUC) emphasis university academics and members of the statutory professional bodies who utilize the Minimum Academic Standards documents as benchmarks for the accreditation of programmes.
- (c) NUC Accreditation: Postgraduate Programmes:** Arrangements are under way for accreditation of all postgraduate programmes at the universities based not only on provisions of the guidelines but also on minimum standards that are being developed.
- (d) Ranking of Universities:** Ranking is intended to encourage those universities with top level performance in the different disciplines to strive to maintain and enhance their lead and further excel. Those at the bottom of the performance league are expected to take necessary steps to remedy the identified deficiencies, not only to improve the quality of the programmes but also to improve their rating in the league table. The aim is to encourage healthy competition in maintenance of academic quality and good governance. There is also the NUC quality support mechanisms in the nature of virtual library and Virtual Institute For Higher Education Pedagogy (VIHEP).



- (e) Virtual Library:** The project which is ICT based and now in its first phase of implementation will improve the quality of teaching and research in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria through the provision of access to current books, journals and other information resources held by global network of on-line libraries, promote scholarship, research and lifelong learning through the establishment of permanent access to shared digital archival collections, and provision of guidance for academic libraries on applying appropriate technologies in the production of digital library resources.
- (i) VIHEP:** The Virtual Institute for Higher Education Pedagogy (VIHEP) is aimed at improvement of the quality of teaching and learning in Nigerian universities. The Institute is an on-line training site where participants are able to update their knowledge and skills in educational delivery using Internet protocols as platform. The Institute which is now in the second round of its nine-module training programme has the following objectives:
- (j) To provide academic staff in tertiary institutions in Nigeria especially universities with Internet-based training on modern methods of teaching and learning in higher education.
  - (ii) To enhance the knowledge and skills of academic staff on such issues as (a) teaching of large classes; (b) effective utilization of limited resources; (c) modern methods of assessment and evaluation of student performance; (d) basic guidance and counseling techniques, (e) basic skills of curriculum development; and (f) techniques for writing grant winning proposals.
  - (iii) To share experiences among academic staff in Nigerian universities on best practices in University teaching and how to deal with such academic vices as examination malpractice, cultism and plagiarism.

### **External Examiner System**

External examiners are independent academic experts drawn from other institutions and from areas of relevant academic discipline and/or professional practice (Uvah, 2005). Their membership and presence on the assessment team of tertiary education helps to guarantee quality in many ways, for instance, lazy and careless lecturers will take time in selecting tests/examination items to ensure they are based on the approved course outlines. They will also take pains to grade the scripts since they know that another examiner will mark the papers.

### **Total Commitment to Quality Drive**

There is a dire need that the top management of a tertiary institution be committed to the quality control drive of the institution. This may be exemplified by opening a quality assurance office/unit in the institution. The office may be under the supervision of the Vice Chancellor or Rector's office, as the case may be.

### **Programme Appraisal**

The academic programmes of different departments should be appraised from time to time. Many academic departments of our universities have not seen the need to subject their programmes to regular or periodic review to determine how effectively a program has achieved its stated aims and the extent to which students have been successful in attaining intended learning outcomes (Uvah, 2005).

### **Personnel Appraisal**

Personnel or faculty appraisal is yet to be implemented in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. A faculty is a teacher in a higher institution. Joshua (2001) highlights some approaches to faculty

evaluation to include teachers achievement scores, passing competency tests, classroom observation by experts, peer, student or self-rating. Research gives support to teacher evaluation on the grounds that: classroom teaching is improved and made more effective; superior teacher performances are appropriately rewarded; selection processes are validated; there is provision of basis for career planning of individual teacher growth and development; there is provision of information and basis for personnel decisions like pay increase, promotion, or demotion, tenure and there is evidence of a school's overall performance for accountability to the public, parents and legislators (Koerin, 1980).

### **Adequacy of Funding**

The lifewire of every virile organization is funding. Higher education in 21st century Africa requires a lot of money both in cash and in other resources for effective functioning. Billions of naira are needed for buildings of lecture theatres offices, laboratories, workshops, hostels of residence for students, etc. The workshops and laboratories require costly machines and chemicals for use by students. Incidentally poor funding has been said to be the bane of Nigeria's educational planning, especially its higher education (Bassey, 2002).

### **Adequacy of Equipment and Facilities**

The university or polytechnic as a complex organization is a large-scale business organization, with various sections, units or departments. Both the teaching and non-teaching units require costly facilities and equipment for the work of the different units to progress towards goal attainment. It is a pity that certain basic teaching and non-teaching facilities/equipment in our universities are either in short supply, dysfunctional or completely non-available (Osagie, 2001, Jimoh, 2005).

### **Adequacy of Buildings and Accommodation**

Blocks of buildings are needed for accommodation of various grades and groups of workers. Rapid increases in the number of students admitted into our tertiary institutions in recent times have brought untold pressure on available buildings and accommodation. Proprietors of our tertiary institutions should see the need to provide reasonable accommodation to both staff and students, as students' achievement and lecturers' effectiveness depend to a large extent on these variables.

### **Application of Strategic Management Planning**

Strategic management planning is a process designed to move an educational institution through the steps of understanding changes in the external environment, assessing organizational strengths and weaknesses developing a vision of a desired future and ways to achieve that mission, developing and implementing specific plans and motivating that implementation so that necessary changes can be made. Some reasons for applying strategic management planning in tertiary education are that the institution needs to know its dynamics, decision-making styles and barriers to change and the institution must develop a climate that is open to change and responsiveness to the external environment while still maintaining a clear sense of mission (Andrea, 2005).

### **Internal Self-Review**

According to the Director of Academic planning and Research at the NUC, annual internal self-review for universities is at a proposal stage (Uvah, 2005). Universities are encouraged to develop a culture of quality consciousness whereby all members of the academic community would recognize and accept the need to set and attain defined levels of performance and scholastic achievement in an environment of continual monitoring and improvement.

### **Use of Task Force to Solve Problems**

Some managerial problems are better handled by teams or task forces in educational institutions. The use of task forces or teams in our tertiary institutions is very popular (Bassey & Bassey, 2008). Some of these task forces are permanent, e.g. Senate's committee on examination results preparation; while some are ad hoc in nature, like convocation committee.

### **QUALITY TEACHING AS A SINE-QUA-NON TO QUALITY ASSURANCE**

An important quality assurance variable is quality teaching. For University teaching to be considered qualitative, it is necessary that a number of things should be put in place. Some of them are: the study environment in terms of relevant facilities and equipment, the class size, the quality of students admitted and the teacher factor (his qualifications, experience, professional exposure, morale, etc). The services of a good library with current textbooks, journals and other reference materials are indispensable. Quality Research Output An important index of quality in higher education is the extent of and the quality of our researches. Low research capacities in our tertiary institutions are caused by research methods; no collaboration between fellow tertiary institution; poor dissemination of research results; no harmonized database; research efforts not in line with community needs (Etuk, Etudor-Eyo & Emah, 2010). Some suggested collaboration measures to improve the situation include exchange of trained workforce, collaboration with world-class academic institutions, funding of industry grade research in academic institutions, and forming industry-academic collaboration through the development of in-house research and development initiatives (Scherer, 2006). Suggested initiatives from tertiary institutions are that the institutions should review their curricula to re-tool their products and give them some level of competencies; institutions should promote industry-related (entrepreneurial) education; Universities should train students to develop soft skills, technical skills, writing and presentation skills; and universities should introduce courses on technological innovation management through exchange of faculty and students with universities in developed countries (Etuk & Etudor-Eyo, 2007) Students' Commitment to Hardwork Quality in higher educational institutions is influenced by the quality of students admitted from the lower levels. It has been observed that students in secondary and post-secondary institutions are no longer committed to hard work and scholarship but rather they tend to gravitate towards cultism and examination malpractice (Ocho, 2001). Where majority of students admitted into our universities are from the examination malpractice and cultism backgrounds, the institution has more work to do on the youths to get them to see the need for hardwork on their studies. Bassey and Bassey (2008) in their study identified 25 quality practices attainable in Nigerian universities. The findings of the investigation are found on Table 14.1

**Table 14.1: Perceived Level of TQM Practices in Nigerian Universities**

<b>TQM Variables</b>	<b>Mostly Agree</b>	<b>Mostly Disagreed</b>
In line with the TQM drive of this University, there is:		
Involvement of students	168(80.0%)	42 (20%)
Involvement o/ staff (teaching and non- teaching)	172(81.82%	38(18.18%)
Involvement of parents	134(63.64 % )	76 (36.36%)
Quality students' intake through JAMB	126(60%)	84 (40%)
External examiner system	189(90%)	21 (10%)
Total commitment to quality by university management	63 (30%)	147 (70%)
Involvement of National Universities Commission (NUC )	199(95%)**	11 (5%)
Internal self-review or assessment	57 (27.27%)	153(72.73%)
Application of strategic management planning	95 (45.46%)	115(54.55%)
Adequate block of buildings and accommodation	19(9.09%)*	191 (90.91%)
Adequate equipment and facilities	29(13.81%)	181 (86.19%)
Adequate funding	35(16.67%)	175(83.33%)
Personnel appraisal/assessment	76 (36.36%)	134(63.64%)
Programme appraisal/assessment	96(45.71%)	114(54.29 % )
Intense focus on students	80 (38.09%)	130(61.90%)
Continual improvement in work processes	92(43.81%)	118(56.19%)
Wide use of teams (or task forces) to solve some problems	191 (90.91%)	19 (9.09% )
Quality teaching	57 (27.27%)	153(72.73%)
Quality research output	77(36.67%)	133(63.33%)
Students' commitment to hard work	57 (27.27%)	153(72.73%)
High Staff Morale	76 (36.36%)	134(63.63%)
Quality assurance committee	38(18.18%)	172(81.82%)
Professional leadership at managerial levels	92 (43.09%)	118(56.19%)
Community involvement	94 (44.76%)	116(55.24%)
Adequate recommended textbooks/ workbooks	84(40%)	126(60%)
GRAND Mean	48.73%	

**(N=210)**

\* Highest TQM variables

\* Lowest TQM Variables

**Source: Bassey, S. U., & Bassey, U. U. (2008). Reforming Total Quality Management Practices in University Governance in South-South Nigeria, African Symposium, 8(1), 74-85.**  
[www.africanresearch.org](http://www.africanresearch.org) in Akpan (2015).

Attainable level of TQM practices in our universities was measured, as follows:

High level - 60 - 100 %

Moderate level - 45 - 59%

Low level - 0 - 44%

Overall, high and moderate level TQM variables numbered 10 (or 40%); while low level TQM variables were 15 (or 60%). The highest rated TQM variable was 'involvement of National Universities Commission (NUC)' with total respondents of 199 (or 95%) out of 210. On the other hand, 'adequacy of buildings and accommodation' attracted the least number of respondents who rated 'mostly agree', that is 19 (9.09%). The grand mean of the TQM variables under investigation (48.73%) for 'mostly agree' indicated a moderate level of TQM practices in our universities.

This work discusses the roles of stakeholders in improving quality of education in Nigeria. Internal and external stakeholders are identified and the various roles they could play in improving the quality of education are discussed. The work also contends that continuous and holistic improvement in education system requires the collaborative efforts of various

stakeholders both internal and external. Collaboration will help to trigger improvement in the education system. Such collaboration could be achieved through establishing a close link or relationship with employers of labour and other external stakeholders such other educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, private sectors. School can also collaborate with firms/industries by utilization of their technologies and expertise to influence improvement through staff training. Thus, quality can only be attained in education through cost sharing among stakeholders such as government, universities and public/private sector.

### **FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPROVING QUALITY ASSURANCE IN SCHOOLS**

It is glaring that the philosophical objectives of quality assurance are the decision of educational programme to train individuals to achieve competence in a given area of industrial production function. The focus of which, is to prevent problems, strengthen organizational systems and continually improving performance (Oyebade, Oladipo & Adetoro, n.d). Thus, quality assurance is the ability of educational institutions to meet the need of the use of manpower in relation to the quality of skills acquired by their products. With this, the quality of an academic programme becomes a universal concern. This is because the product of one school becomes another employee in another tertiary institution or other culture's industrial setting. Consequently, quality assurance has become an internationalized concept.

The NUC reported the first attempt at universalization of quality assurance in schools across the globe in 2004. The study ranked the schools in terms of their productive functions, and the relative efforts on their product. No African universities were ranked, including Nigeria. Since this development, the NUC has heightened its efforts in standardizing the quality of education in Nigeria. To establish and maintain high quality standards, the school and the NUC have a shared responsibility in addressing the following key areas, according to Adedipe (2007).

1. Minimum academic standard.
  2. Accreditation
  3. Carrying capacity and admission quota
  4. Visitation
  5. Impact assessment
  6. Research and development
  7. Publications and research assessment
  8. Structures, infrastructures and utilities
- 
1. Minimum academic standards form the baseline for entrenching quality school, since it prescribes a profile of curriculum, human resources, structures, infrastructures, equipment and associated facilities required for establishing, governing and managing the institution.
  2. Accreditation is the process by which programmes are evaluated against set minimum academic standard and institutions comprehensive academic research and development activities are evaluated against prescribed criteria (including self-vised and self-produced strategic plan (refer to Figure 2 for details).

**Figure 2:** Quality assurance drivers in Nigerian tertiary institutions adapted from Adedipe (2007)

3. Carrying capacity of an institution is the maximum number of students that the institution can sustain for qualitative education based on available human and material resources.
4. Visitation to institutions is a statutory requirement that empowers the proprietor to ascertain the well-being of the institution.

5. Impact assessment is a specialized form of evaluation aimed at finding out if the core expectations of the establishment of a particular institution are being met.
6. Research is the driving force for human development as globally determined; such research should be evidenced by publications.
7. Structures, infrastructures and utilities are essential driving force for qualitative productivity in any organization, particularly in the university system. However, Baldwin as cited by Oyebande, Oladipo and Adetoro (n.d) in his own view, highlighted the following as quality assurance checklist:
  - Institution /faculty mission and objectives
  - Teaching programmes
  - Students selection
  - Course structure and documentation
  - Teaching arrangement
  - Postgraduate supervision where applicable
  - Students
  - Support
  - Assessment / evaluation
  - Grievance procedures
  - Monitoring of outcomes
  - Research and development
  - Community service
  - Staffing issues
  - Infrastructure / resources
  - Governance

Makoju, Nwangwu, Abolade and Newton (2004) observe that the Whole-School Evaluation (WSE) concept/practice is considered as one of the cornerstones of quality assurance and one way of improving the quality of education. Quality assurance in this context refers to the monitoring and evaluation of performance of the various levels of the education system in achieving the specific goals at each level and overall objectives of the system.

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, quality assurance is very important in our educational improvement because it acts as an ex-checker in our institutions. It simply means that all institutions must pass through process for competitiveness; hence standardization. The management of education lies in the hands of all viz-z-viz government, corporate organizations and individuals. Therefore they should regard quality assurance as a “ceiling” rather than a “floor”.

### **SUGGESTIONS**

1. All institutions must embrace quality assurance as a very important tool to the enhancement of educational standard.
2. Government should as a matter of necessity vote more funds for the sustenance of quality assurance in our institutions.
3. Persons of high integrity should be appointed to maintain quality assurance in our institutions.
4. Institutions should recognize quality assurance as a benchmark for accreditation; hence encouraging competitiveness amongst equals.

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