



Quality Assurance and Quality Education in Nigeria: How They Can Help in School Improvement

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Abstract: In contemporary times, Nigeria's education system has been perceived as substandard, ineffective and inefficient, hence, the much discussions on quality. Quality assurance was introduced into the Nigerian education system in order to help raise the standard of Nigerian education and restore its fallen quality. This is the reason why all educational stakeholders are interested in quality assurance and quality education. Nigerian schools need to improve in all ramifications including teaching and learning, research and community services. Whenever there is school improvement, then one will be sure that quality education has been achieved and can be sustained to a large extent. Nigerians on regular basis dream of living in a country where quality education is attainable where the graduates from schools can be innovative and creative where graduates create employment opportunities for themselves through engaging in entrepreneurship activities and so on. All activities of the Nigerian government and the general public including educational reforms and policies are geared towards achieving school improvement. Quality assurance and quality education in all ramifications can help in achieving school improvement if attained. These are the crux of the paper.

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INTRODUCTION

The purposes of quality assurance in schools are to improve the standard of Nigerian education, make education functional, effective and efficient and to achieve quality education. This is

the reason why Adegbesan^[1] listed the following as need for quality assurance in Nigerian schools:

- To serve as indispensable component of quality control strategy in education

- To ensure and maintain high standard of education at all levels
 - To assist in monitoring and supervision of education
 - To determine the quality of the teacher inputs
 - To determine the number of classrooms needed based on the average class size to ensure quality control of education
 - To determine the level of adequacy of the facilities available for quality control and finally
 - It would ensure how the financial resources available could be prudently and judiciously utilized. All these are anchored on achieving quality education and by extension, attaining school improvement
- In 123 low and middle income countries almost 200 million youths have not completed primary education (lower basic education and middle basic education level schools-primary 1-3, 4-6), 58% of these are female
 - At least 250 million primary school-age children around the world are not able to read, write or count well enough to meet minimum learning standards including girls and boys who have spent at least four years in school

These are also challenges not only in Nigeria but in other parts of the world that need proper attention. Quality education with access, equity and quality can help in solving the above problems. This study aims at looking at the various ways quality assurance and quality education can help in school improvement.

The need for quality assurance for quality education and school improvement cannot be overemphasized. This is because of the yearnings of all Nigeria's educational stakeholders for the achievement of quality education and school improvement. Thom-Otuya and Inko-Tariah^[2] have stated that the situation of Nigerian educational system and quality is becoming worrisome as her policy is more focused on the quantitative than qualitative aspect of institutional development. Government has recently increased the quantity of higher institutions in the country without giving attention to the carrying capacity, learning conditions and the budget allocated to existing higher institutions. This is also the same situation with lower basic education level schools (primary 1-3), middle basic education level schools (primary 4-6), upper basic education level schools (JSS 1-3) and senior secondary schools. With concentration on quantity how then can school improvement be achieved without effective quality assurance and ignoring of quality?

Conceptual clarification: The importance of conceptual clarification in every academic paper whether empirical or opinion cannot be overemphasized. This is the reason why Mezieobi and Ihemadu^[4] averred that "with conceptualization of terms, readers can understand a writer's perspective". For Anugom^[5], "clarification of concepts for every write-up is extremely the most important part of the write-up. No one can reasonably understand an idea without the idea propagandist giving clear definitions of the concepts that make up that propaganda or the intentions behind the propaganda". According to Anugom and Mezieobi^[6], the beginning of the success of every write-up is making the readers to understand its concepts. For the above reasons, three concepts will need clarification. They are quality assurance, quality education and school improvement.

The problems/challenges that have hindered the effective quality assurance activity and the achievement of quality education for school improvement abound. They are unavailability of funds adequate enough for quality assurance and quality education, non-chalance on the part of the Nigerian government, utilizing unprofessionals to accredit courses in institutions of higher learning, bribery and corruption and so on. Effective quality assurance and achievement of quality education in Nigeria will not only lead to school improvement, it will also have a ripple effect on the wider society through national development, sustainable development, nation-building, national capacity building, enlightenment on climate change and global warming, improvement in teaching and learning, good governance, adherence to rule of law and so on. Also, according to Anonymous^[3] estimates in the 2013/2014 Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report:

Quality assurance: According to Doherty^[7] quality assurance is a proactive approach which attempts to identify problems and deals with them immediately or even better prevent them from happening at all. For Alele-Williams quality assurance indicates the preeminence and special features that make the institution distinct from other forms of institutions. The whole essence of quality assurance is to ensure that specified policies are adhered to so as to achieve set standards and equally maintain them in order to consistently meet the needs of people. Also, Oyebade *et al.*^[8] noted that quality assurance is designed to prove and improve the quality of an institution's methods and educational products and outcomes. For this paper, quality assurance will mean a strategic process in ensuring that the standard of education in Nigeria is improved and that Nigerian graduates can stand out in any country of the world.

- Approximately 120 million children either never make it to school or drop out before their fourth year

Quality education: Quality education is a concept that has caught the interest of many scholars, hence, the

ambiguity in its definition. But Colby *et al.*^[9] defined quality education as including the following:

- Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn and supported in learning by their families and communities
- Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender sensitive and provide adequate resources and facilities
- Content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDs prevention and peace
- Processes through which trained teachers use child-centred teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skillful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities
- Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society. These definitions above are core to quality education in all its ramifications

Furthermore, Bernard^[10] described quality education as thus “in all aspects of the school and its surrounding education community, the rights of the world child and all children, to survival, protection, development and participation are at the centre. This means that the focus is on learning which strengthens the capacities of children to act progressively on their own behalf through the acquisition of relevant knowledge, useful skills and appropriate attitudes and which creates for children and helps them create for themselves and others, places of safety, security and healthy interaction”.

School improvement: The OECD^[11] has stated that school systems everywhere are thus under increasing pressure to meet the challenge of this new economy and to prepare students for a globally competitive and technologically driven world economy. School improvement depends on change agenda, for example, Louis *et al.*^[12], Leithwodd *et al.*^[13] and Marzano *et al.*^[14] indicates that there are certain elements within the system of education and schools in particular which appear to be central to successful change agenda in schools. School management, leadership, improvement, development, quality assurance and quality education are particularly important with leadership considered second only to classroom instruction. School improvement for a layman is also referred to as school development.

The link between quality assurance and quality education for school improvement: There is definitely a relationship between quality assurance and quality

education. School improvement is perceived to be the nexus between the two core concepts ‘quality assurance and quality education’ that make up this write-up. Therefore, all policies, measures, planned processes and actions through which the quality of education is maintained and developed is exposed and sustained by quality assurance. Quality education in a nutshell is the degree to which the education meets the client’s (students) needs, aspirations and demands. Quality assurance is a strategy of practicalizing quality which entails bringing out the best in the available system, making recommendations for improvement and discarding the outdated styles in education.

There are six parts of quality assurance that helps in the achievement of quality education which include:

- National coordination by an independent centre agency example is National Universities Commission (NUC) for Nigerian universities and so on
- Internal evaluation resulting in self-assessment reports
- Intermittent evaluation by external experts partially based on establishment’s self-assessment findings
- Publication of evaluation outcomes including recommendations for improvement
- Implementation of the recommendations
- Assessment of the appropriate and effectiveness of the quality assurance processes

For quality education to be achieved, quality assurance should be independently carried and this will lead to school improvement.

The various ways in which quality assurance and quality education can help in school improvement: The emphasis on school improvement is becoming overwhelming, especially in this 21st century when education has gone digital and technological. Schools are becoming computerized that everything about the school can be read, retrieved, stored and disseminated online. But these are the functions of quality assurance and quality education. Quality assurance and quality education are perceived to be the solution for achieving school improvement in Nigeria. This can be done in the following ways:

First, acknowledge and addressing overcrowding in Nigerian schools: This will include establishing more schools, making all schools equal and removing the dichotomy between schools or reducing the number of students seeking admission per year.

Second, making adequate funding of schools in Nigeria a priority: The Nigerian government should budget highly for education. This will be also the recommendation of any sincere panel for quality assurance.

Third, address the school dropout issue and over-schooling: in recent times, there are more young people dropping out of school than ever before.

Four, raise standards and quality for teachers: The teaching profession should be more valued and appreciated by the Nigerian government and the general public. This will help in making the teachers to buckle up and improve in their service delivery to their students.

Five, put classroom-running and curriculum-building decisions in the hands of the community: This will make for effectiveness and efficiency. Classroom-running and curriculum-building will be contextualized to solve problems faced by the host communities of the schools. Six, building a school community for all students: This will make the schools more conducive for teaching and learning.

Seven, trying out restorative justice, this works, and it emphasizes the need for alternative discipline methods rather than the conventional detention or suspension of students. This is believed to help in significant improvement in students' retention and success.

CONCLUSION

School improvement is as important as quality assurance and quality education. This paper has clearly agreed that quality assurance and quality education are keys to achieving school improvement. In truism, quality assurance through monitoring, inspection, supervision, feedback, recommendations and so on can assist in raising the standard of Nigerian education to be referred to as quality education. And when quality education is achieved and sustained, then school improvement is eminent. This study has discussed the concepts of quality assurance, quality education and school improvement. It also looked at the connections between quality assurance and quality education as they relate to school improvement. Finally, it looked at the various ways in which quality assurance and quality education can help in achieving school improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are apt for this paper. They are:

- Further pieces of research on quality assurance, quality education and school improvement should be carried out, published for public consumption
- Adequate funding by the government of education will highly advance the Nigerian education
- Feedback and recommendations from any quality assurance activity should be given priority attention
- Teaching and learning environments should be made conducive

- The standard of the teaching profession in Nigeria should be raised. The place of teachers in Nigeria should also be appreciated and acknowledged

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