

Principals' Quality Assurance Techniques for Enhancing Secondary School Quality Education in the 21st Century

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Abstract

The aim of secondary school education encompasses the acquisition of knowledge and skills producing graduates prepared for higher education and become valuable members who will help in the growth and development of the nation in all ramifications. Despite this laudable aim, the products of secondary schools are turned out half-baked becoming liability than assets due to poor standards resulting from the defective educational system. Hence, this aim would be achieved through employing principals' quality assurance techniques in secondary schools. Hence, this paper discussed principals' quality assurance techniques for enhancing secondary school quality education in the 21st century in Delta State, Nigeria. The paper will create awareness of quality assurance techniques to the principals who occupy a vital position and play a central role in the delivery of secondary school curriculum to ensure quality education. This paper identified and discussed the concepts of quality and quality assurance highlighting its functions in bringing about quality education in our secondary schools. It also highlighted the quality assurance techniques employed by principals for achieving quality education in secondary schools. This paper concluded that for principals' quality assurance techniques to be effective for the attainment of educational objectives there should be collaboration with education stakeholders and parents. It also made some useful recommendations to include adequate funding, provision of personnel, instructional and infrastructural facilities by government to enhance quality education in secondary schools.

Keywords: Principals, Quality, Quality assurance, Techniques, Secondary schools, Enhancing, Stakeholders,

INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of secondary education encompasses the acquisition of knowledge and production of graduates who are prepared for higher education, and become useful members of the society with intellectual competencies to help in the growth and development of our nation as well as meeting the international standards when compared with other graduates globally.

Despite the awareness of the laudable objectives of secondary school education by principals and teachers, it is surprising that students performance in the Senior School Certificate Examination conducted by the West African Examination Council is correspondingly low (below 40%) in Nigeria and 30% in Delta State. Thus education stakeholders and parents need to do something positive in order to remedy the secondary education system for better performance and productivity. The accomplishment of the laudable educational objectives hinge on quality assurance techniques which deals with effective coordination and control of teaching and learning activities by the school principal. As an administrator, the principal occupies a vital position and plays a central role in the delivery of secondary school curriculum to ensure quality education. The ability and power of the principal in conjunction with the teachers to plan, implement, monitor, evaluate and review educational programmes and activities

will promote sustained progress in the teaching-learning process which in turn leads to the accomplishment of secondary school educational goals.

The need for efficient quality assurance techniques in secondary schools by principals is centred on the assumption that human beings are naturally lazy, dislike work and enjoy pleasures more than work (Anad, 2004). This is counter-productive to the realization of educational goals, hence the school principals should set good standards which all teachers must strive to achieve in the delivery of quality teaching which involves continuous assessment of learners, classroom management, record keeping, promoting discipline and effective development of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learners.

In order to pursue quality instruction and students performance/productivity, it is important to have efficient control mechanisms put in place to achieve the set educational objectives. The principal being an instructional leader is expected to device appropriate measures to ensure that both teachers and students comply with the laid down rules and regulations guiding the teaching-learning process for effective performance. This will make the teachers to be dedicated, committed, and goal oriented with high expectations for the achievement of secondary school

educational aims and objectives. According to Harvey, and Green (2013), quality is based on how efficient the teachers are, how adequate the instructional materials and facilities needed for teaching and learning are, how well prepared the graduates are to meet the challenges of life and solve the problems in the society, thus assuring quality in education.

In Nigeria, there is no formal accreditation document meant for secondary school education. Every state has its own control from the state government and to give a clear picture of how quality secondary education programmes are being measured in the country. However, in Delta State, the Post Primary Education Board is responsible for coordinating, controlling and implementing policies.

Concept of Quality and Quality Assurance

Quality is a diversified concept, which encompasses how learning is organized and managed, the content of learning and the level of achievement in terms of outcomes and what goes on in the learning environment, (Materu, 2007). Quality assurance refers to the planned and systematic actions necessary to provide adequate confidence that a product or service will satisfy given requirements for quality (Borahm & Ziarati, 2010). Quality standards are critical and depend on effective policy planning, implementation and monitoring.

Quality assurance is an important component of successful internationalization and mechanism for building institutional reputation in a competitive local and global arena, and necessary foundation for consumer protection (NUC, 2007). Quality is the degree with which a phenomenon conforms to an established standard that makes it to be comparatively superior to others. In education, it implies the degree with which an educational system adapts to the established standards and suitability of the inputs accessible for the delivery of the system. Quality assurance in education therefore means the pertinent and suitability of the educational programme to meet the needs of the institution and achieve the set objectives (Fadipe, 2009). Quality assurance is the systematic review of educational programmes to ensure that acceptable standards of educational scholarship and infrastructure are being maintained (Ijaiya, 2011). It is however, better and more rewarding to take steps to prevent failure and wastage in secondary schools, hence the need for quality assurance which is preventive rather than corrective.

Quality assurance agents are groups of individuals assigned with the responsibility of positive execution of educational policies and programmes, implementation and evaluation for the purpose of continuous quality assurance and maintenance for the

production of relevant and employable graduates for the society. These agents for quality assurance are concerned with, teaching and learning, students' assessment, staff development, curriculum/courses and physical resources. Quality assurance is not only concerned with the existence of these resources but should ensure that they are coherent and interrelated (Birzea, Cecclini, Krek, & Vrkas (2005). They stated that a good quality assurance system in educational institutions should carry out the following functions:

- Define specifically the purpose and nature of education provision, by identifying the gap between quality and how it may be measured.
- Give responsibility and authority to ensure quality to school heads and teachers.
- Create and control a good accountability system for daily work in school administration for the attainment of high standard (Birzea et al, 2005).

The framework for quality assurance according to them is in three states as follows:

- *Institutional Level:* This level should develop a conducive school climate for quality education.
- *External Quality Assurance:* Is made up of school inspection; accreditation and evaluation.
- *Internal Quality Assurance:* Is concerned with the academic programme and development which depends on a continuous daily activity with designed guidance.

The component of a quality assurance system is made up of nine parts based on these three framework discussed earlier. The components are interrelated influencing one another (Birzea, et al, 2005).

The issue of quality is uppermost in educational sectors all over the world, stakeholders and parents are anxious to see that educational institutions deliver what they should deliver which in return produces desirable outcomes. Therefore, quality assurance refers to the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the various aspects of the educational programmes and policies to maximize the possibility of achieving its goals.

In education, quality emphasizes teachers competence, creativity and commitment, and how educational administrators organize school activities in order to realize the full potentials of all personnels in educational institutions. It is the appropriateness and relevance of resources available for the achievement of educational goals and priorities, hence quality in education whether primary school, secondary school, or tertiary institutions require adequate inputs and output (Onyedinachi, 2011). To ensure standards in these areas, academic institutions require qualified teachers who are well motivated. They also require quality students, conducive physical environment, well-equipped laboratories, workshops, libraries, instructional materials in the

ideal quality and quality as well as funds for research and community service (Wokocha, 2009).

In a deliberate effort to ensure quality in Nigerian educational system, the Federal Government established institutions to monitor the quality of education at various levels. The Universal Basic Education Board was established for the primary and Junior Secondary Schools, Ministry of Education for Senior Secondary Schools, The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and National University Commission (NUC) for Universities. In 1985, the Federal Government promulgated decree No. 16 on the minimum standard for primary and secondary schools nationwide. The aims of the decree are to:

- provide guidelines on general and specific principles of inspection and monitoring of schools.
- provide tools for evaluating the efficiency of school management.
- guide proprietors in providing fund for their schools and
- use the guidelines for accrediting the schools.

In order to put the guidelines for primary and secondary schools in operation, the National Council on Education (NCE) and the Joint Consultative Council on Education (CCE) constituted a sub-committee in 1988 to work out the details of its operations. This committee was reconstituted in 2001 which eventually formulated a 15 item guidelines on minimum standards for schools nationwide. Some of the items include the minimum number of pupils per class, pupil-teacher ratio, minimum number of lesson periods per week, teaching qualification etc. The successful implementation of these guidelines requires a comprehensive collaboration between the supervising institutions and the schools themselves. The role of the teachers and that of the schools in this regard is so vital that Odijide (2007), further emphasized that the principal's responsibility for ensuring quality assurance rests mainly with the teachers and the educational institutions themselves.

Techniques of Quality Assurance in Education

The techniques used for quality assurance in education include: monitoring, evaluation, supervision, inspection, quality control, access and equality.

Monitoring: Is referred to "an ongoing process by which stakeholders obtain regular feedback on the progress being made towards goals and objectives" (United National Development Programme, 2009). Monitoring is an essential source of information for programme evaluation.

Evaluation: Is the assessment of collected information in order to determine the value of

judgments and/or generate knowledge to inform decisions about future programmes. Evaluation may be formative, providing feedback for improvement, or summative, assessing merit or worth. It may be internal conducted by programme staff such as monitoring and evaluation officers in development programmes, or external, conducted by outside evaluators who provide third party validation of special interest. Monitoring and evaluation are used by governments worldwide to improve school systems as they play integral role in the holistic transformation of education. Monitoring and evaluation can help transform educational programmes and measure quality indicators toward educational outcomes, increase stakeholders participation, and empower school leaders and teachers to build and sustain transformation in schools. As each educational system is unique, evaluators should be prepared to vary their evaluation approach based on the purpose and context.

Supervision: Supervision is a way of stimulating, guiding, improving, refreshing, encouraging and overseeing certain groups with the hope of seeking their cooperation in order for the supervisors to be successful in their task of supervision. Supervision is essentially the practice of monitoring the performance of school staff, observing the advantages and disadvantages with the aim of using befitting and good techniques to ameliorate the deficiencies while still improving on the advantages thereby increasing the school standards and achieve educational goals.

Inspection: Inspection could be described as the critical examination and evaluation of a school (Ojelabi, 2011). Through inspection, necessary and relevant advice may be given for the improvement of the school. Usually, inspection involves an assessment of available human and material resources in an institution in order to establish how far the institution has met prescribed standards, it is more of an assessment rather than an improvement induced exercise (West-Burham, 2004).

Quality Control: The issue of quality control cannot be over-emphasized. It is one of the techniques for establishing quality assurance in the educational system at all levels. Ojedele (2007) stated; that quality control should be the concern of the country in its drive towards technological and scientific development.

Access and Equity: Ojedele (2007) asserts that the trend of students transiting from the junior secondary school to other levels of education has not been encouraging as it has been falling short of the expectation. He further said that, the issue at the tertiary level presents a situation that calls for concerns in terms of variation in access at the Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education and in terms of gender disparity. Implementing

quality assurance techniques in education engenders a successful administration in the school.

Classroom Management: Classroom management is a quality assurance technique used by principals to achieve quality education in the school system. Krause, Duchesne and Bochner (2013) view a classroom as where teachers create enabling environment for students to know how to use the available time and resources, and also cooperate with their class mates to achieve quality learning. Here, the role of the teacher is to maximize learning and minimize disruptions by fostering among students' attitude of trust, tolerance, acceptance and co-operation. In this regard Carter and Carter (2011) came up with three goals of classroom management, first, to create and maintain a highly supportive learning environment, second, to promote a safe classroom community that will maintain students' interest, motivation and involvement in the learning process, and third students are allowed to establish relationship openly and to set targets for themselves. However, it is observed that rules and daily routines provide students with the enabling environment to work and interact with each other in teaching-learning process which eventually produce quality education.

Principals Quality Assurance Techniques Employed in Schools

Quality assurance techniques used by principals are the procedures followed to accomplish quality in secondary school education. These include creating a conducive teaching learning environment, ensuring teachers and students punctuality, good record keeping and storage of such records, monitoring teachers and students movement during teaching learning process; ensuring that the school has standard teaching materials; equipment and laboratories; supervising the teaching and learning process; inspecting teachers lesson notes, registers and scheme of work; ensuring that discipline is maintained; evaluating both teachers and students performance; and ensuring the implementation of the school curriculum.

Giofiye (2016) conducted a study on analysis of teachers' factors in quality assurance in Delta State Secondary Schools, his findings revealed that marking students' attendance register, prepare lessons in line with the scheme of work, complete scheme at the end of the term, good record keeping, create conducive environment for learning, are some teachers' factors in quality assurance in Delta State Secondary Schools.

Abdulrahman (2014) in his study on principals' administrative process techniques for the achievement of quality standards in secondary schools in Kogi State, discovered that principals' planning techniques for quality assurance in

secondary schools include preparation of school time table on time; making proper arrangements prior to any external examination; taking regular attendance of staff members, staff delegation of duties and encouraging staff professional growth by undergoing on-the-job training like seminars, workshops etc. He further observed that the principals' coordinating techniques for quality assurance are ensuring that every teacher is working towards the attainment of school goals, and making sure that various departmental needs are forwarded by subject coordinator for inclusion in the school budget.

CONCLUSION

Secondary school education needs many changes and the principal as an administrator holds the key position to bring about such changes while can be effectively carried out through quality assurance techniques. From this study the quality assurance techniques of principals include creating a conducive teaching and learning environment; making sure that there are adequate infrastructural and instructional materials which will facilitate the teaching and learning process; ensure that teachers and students are punctual to school; ensure adequate record keeping and storage; monitoring, evaluating and supervising both teachers and students activities; make sure that discipline is maintained by ensuring that good disciplinary measures are put in place; and ensuring that the curriculum of secondary school be implemented for quality education to emerge.

The study concluded that the quality assurance in secondary education is a function of collaboration of all stakeholders, principals and teachers and even students who are at the receiving end to ensure good standards, producing intellectuals that will help in the labour market and in the development of the nation in all ramifications. It also highlighted that proper use of planning, organizing, coordinating staff and students, and proper funding techniques by school principals will enhance quality assurance in the school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Arising from the study, recommendations were made as follows:

- The government in collaboration with education stakeholders should provide adequate infrastructural and instructional facilities that will enhance quality education.
- The best intellectuals should be employed as principals and teachers for adequate impartation of knowledge that will bring about quality education.
- Principals as school administrators should employ quality assurance techniques for the attainment of our laudable secondary educational aims and objectives.

- There should be compressive collaboration between the supervising institutions to ensure the effective implementation of quality assurance guidelines and policies.
- There should be monitoring and evaluating of how these quality assurance techniques have been employed by principals for effective outcome and productivity.
- Principals as quality assurance agents should concentrate more on adequate supervision and monitoring of teaching and learning process to ensure quality secondary education.

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