

Original Research Article

Quality assurance in teachers' education in Kwara State: Challenges and the way forward

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Abstract

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Education may be described as a process of teaching or instruction received; a process of training and improving one's test and life standard. Education is equally the bedrock of every society and a tool for nation building. In recent times, quality education was brought to focus owing to the neglect and mass production of educated people without regards to set standard, procedure and process in education. Quality education is said to be the right of every citizen, not a privilege that may be granted or withheld by who ever is in-charge to provide it. Therefore, for quality education to be achieved, it is important to know that the principal factors must be in place, these include: the teacher's, learning environment, and the students. The importance of quality assurance in the educational sector as initiated by Common Wealth of Learning (COL) is not without many daunting challenges. This paper assesses, and reviews some factors and subsequently classifies teachers in Kwara State into four classes based on quality indicator. The classes are: Teachers per excellence, the charlatan in teaching profession, the mediocrity teachers, and the quack teachers. The challenges of training and maintaining quality and qualified teachers by any country in Africa should be anchored on the existence of the above class. The suggested classification was occasioned by unemployment situation in Nigeria which renders teaching profession the last resort for all job seekers. The writers also review other areas of challenges militating against quality assurance in teacher education in Kwara State. Recommendations are made and conclusions drawn.

Keywords: Challenges, Quality Assurance, Teacher Education

INTRODUCTION

Quality education is said to be the right of every citizen, not a privilege that may be granted or withheld by who is in-charge to provide it. For quality education to be achieved, it is important to know that the principal factors must be in place, these include: the teachers, the learning environment and the students.

Many times, it has been seen that limitations in terms of growth and global competitiveness are being propelled by the operations and output of the educational system and this has been traced to the quality of teaching and learning in schools. It has been observed that teaching and learning have declined due to ineffective and inefficient monitoring, evaluation, inspection and super-

vision (UNESCO, 2000).

One major trend in the development of education in many countries is the effort being made to institute a reform in the inspectorate system. The responsibility for school inspection and supervision was seen as that of external actions and quite often, inspection and supervision were seen as synonymous. However, it has now been realised that they are not only different, but also inspection visit by external actors alone however frequent are not enough for the achievement of the objectives of school inspection (UNESCO, 2000).

According to Act 16 of 1985 (FGN), quality standards in education have been the responsibility of the Minister

of Education which he executes through the Federal Inspectorate Services (FIS), carry out her functions through various forms of inspections of schools below tertiary level. It also provides national guidelines for inspection, accreditation of schools and supports States to develop their own inspectorate services.

The deficiencies and weaknesses which have been found to be a clog in the wheel of the inspectorate services elsewhere are presently quite evident in Nigeria generally as well as in Kwara State in particular. For example, it has been observed that there are no uniform standard expression guidelines for formal and non-formal institutions nationwide. All along, different states and federal inspectorate services have been using different instruments for school inspection leading to incongruence in inspection departments while in others, they exist only in name and the country has continued to rely mainly on the Federal Inspectorate Service (FIS) to provide leadership in the area of school inspections.

In practice, the responsibility of monitoring and evaluation of schools was seen as that of people outside the school, and quite often limited to inspectors alone. However, it has been realised that monitoring and evaluation cannot be left to external agents alone no matter how frequent these evaluation are done. The opinion of other stakeholders – teachers, pupils and parents are relevant. Moreover, the top down approach to the formulation and application of inspection policies tended to create friction between evaluators and teachers. This makes schools receive the recommendations from evaluations with some degree of apathy and a feeling of helplessness. In addition, the general clamour for an improvement in the quality and standard of education can no longer be ignored (West-Burham, 1994).

On its parts, the Federal Inspectorate Service has continued to cling to the inspection methodologies it copied from the United Kingdom (UK) model, fondly called Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) whereas this system has been undergoing fundamental changes since 1980s. Thus, the Nigerian inspection practice has continued to be characterised by the traditional inspections. Useful as these efforts are, they have failed to stop or even slow down the rapid erosion in the quality of education offered in schools. However, owing to the constant neglect in recent time by successive government to the educational sector, there have been rapid increase in the establishment of private schools and institutions in Nigeria which has adversely affected the quality of education and in turn, retarding the development of nation. The objective of this paper is to find out the quality assurance in teacher education in Kwara State, how it is organised and what improvement has it brought to education sector in the State.

The Concepts of Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is a holistic term, which is directed toward education as an entity. It entails the supplier and consumer and the various activities put in place to produce quality products and services (Mkpandiok, 2007). To further examine this concept meaningfully, three approaches to the definition of quality shall be used. These are the reputational approach, the outcomes approach and the total quality approach.

The Reputational Approach

This approach sees quality as exceptional and it is seen as exclusive. It is something that some have at the exclusion of others. It is distinctive and intuitive recognisable. This approach regards quality as excellence, it is a standard attained in our education sector.

The Outcomes Approach

This regards quality as efficient production. Here, there are no absolute standards but specifications. The quality of a product is measured by the extent to which it meets customer's specifications. This approach is more related to practices in industry.

Total Quality Approach

Here, quality is seen as value added. How much value has been added to the abilities of students? For instance, who have passed through the system regardless of their ability levels.

These are different views of quality when you put together. However, we can accept that quality with regard to the output of teacher education is "the level of excellence in performance on the strength of the quality of the context, inputs, process transaction and output" (Onocha, 2002). This shows that to attain or assure quality in output, a lot quality inputs and processes would have been made. Quality in output does not come by chance. It requires carefully planned and deliberate efforts.

Quality assurance, in its broad sense, is any action taken to prevent quality problems from occurring. In practice, this means devising systems for carrying out tasks which directly affect product quality. A simple example of quality assurance is a cooking recipe. A recipe is a system for preparing a particular dish. It describes the ingredients and utensils necessary to prepare the food, the method of cooking it, how to test when it is ready, how to store it, and how to serve it. Cooking to a recipe produces better and more consistent

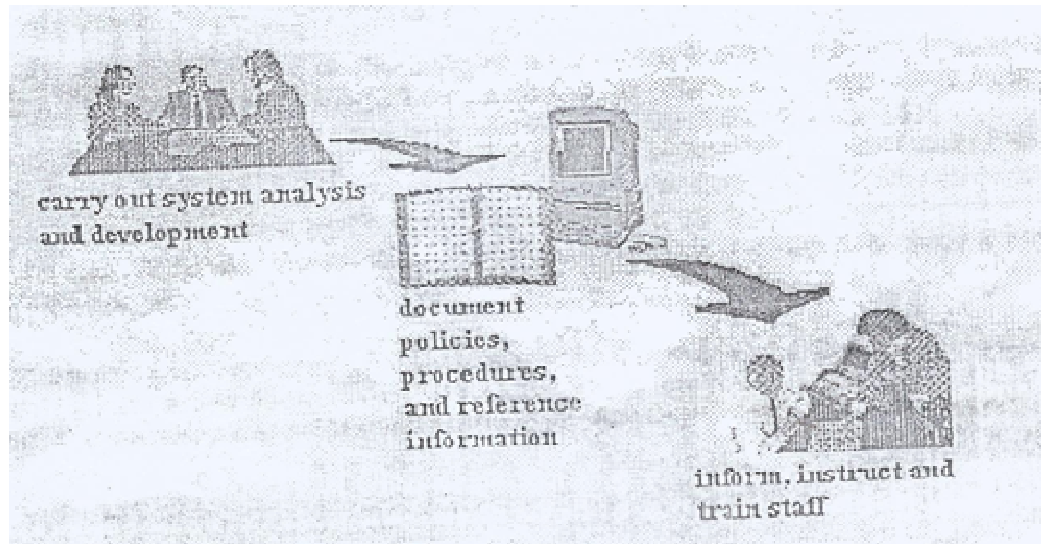


Figure 1. Organizational system

results. And the same applies to using systems in other situations.

To implement systems for an organisation you need to carry out three basic steps. First, develop the system, second, document it (this takes the form of policies, procedures, and reference information) and third, inform, instruct and train staff to use it (Evans, James, R. 1994). This process is illustrated below: Figure 1

Education Quality Assurance in Nigeria is a paradigm shift from the former practice of school inspection to a monitoring and evaluating process that provides a new operative mode of evaluation. It ensures that evaluation processes and practices are carried out according to set standards that bring about improvement in teaching and learning. Thus, the process is open as the same quality standards and indicators are made known to all stakeholders

These innovations in inspection activities go under terminologies as: whole school evaluation, school self-evaluation or self-review. All aim at producing a good school or an effective school. What then is a good school? It is a school which knows what its standard should be, asks itself whether it has attained them, and if not where it has reached on the scale and what it should do to close the gap. It is a school whose head has a well articulated plan of what the school should be doing and who also motivates the pupils, staff, parents, the community and the proprietor to join hands in reaching the goals. In fact, this kind of synergy should be the driving force of the innovation.

Meaning of Quality Assurance

The general meaning of quality assurance is very applic-

able to the production function of teachers. It is the management of goods, services and activities from the input stage, through processes, to the output stage of production (Onocha, 2002).

Quality assurance aims at preventing quality problems and ensuring that only conforming products reach the customer. The characteristics of an effective quality assurance mechanism are:

- An effective quality management system
- Periodic audit of the operation of the system
- Periodic review of the system to ensure it meets changing requirements.

Quality assurance is a total, holistic process concerned with ensuring the integrity of outcomes. This places the responsibility for quality with the factory (Education) and thus is expressed through its relationship with its customers. Quality assurance recognises the autonomy of organisations and seeks to enhance their capacity to operate in a responsive way.

Quality Assurance in Teacher Education

Education is a tool for nation building. Teachers are the drivers of education in all spheres of life, be it capacity building, training and retraining programme, all manners of learning, teachers take the front stage. Therefore, it is very important to take teachers' education and breeding of teacher very important in terms of quality assurance. The subject of quality assurance is a very important matter in the sphere of higher education. In all higher education, teacher education occupies central stage because it takes care of macro educational system. It is the teachers' education that is assigned the task of producing and modelling the teachers for nursery,

primary and secondary education. Education of teachers is not only responsible for the improvement of school education but also for preparing well qualified teacher who are professionally competent committed, resourceful, confidence and reproductive to meet the demand of the society. Therefore, a high quality teacher must imbibe the four pillars of education:-

- i. Acquisition of occupational skill and competence to deal with various situation and team work.
- ii. Development of one's personality and inability to act with greater autonomy, judgement and personal responsibility.

Ajayi and Adegbesan (2007) argue that, quality assurance is related to accountability both of which are concerned with maximizing the effectiveness and efficiency of educational systems and services in relation to their contexts, of their missions and their stated objectives. In his own definitions, Ehindero (2004) says quality assurance focused on the following:

- i. Learner's entry behaviour, characteristics and attributes including some demographic factors that can inhibit or facilitate their learning.
- ii. The teacher entry qualification, values pedagogic stalls, professional preparedness, subject background, philosophical orientation, etc.
- iii. The teaching/learning processes including the structure of the curriculum and learning environment.
- iv. The outcomes, which are defined for different levels in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes including appropriate and relevant instruments to assess these objectives.

Fadokun (2005) sees quality assurance in education as a programmed, an institution or a whole education system. In such a case, quality assurance is all these attitudes, objectives, actions and procedures that through their existence and use, and together with quality control activities, ensure that appropriate academic standards are being maintained and enhanced in and by each programme.

The Major Constraints Facing the Inspectorate Division or Unit in Kwara State: Situation Analysis

School inspection is carried out with the intention of maintaining and improving on the quality of learning and teaching, it is supposed to improve all factors that affect teaching and learning in our school system. Inspection is carried out by an external agent. Section 11 of the National Policy on Education (NPE) 2008, specified the following goals of Federal Inspectorate Service:

- Set, maintain and improve standards.
- Ensure quality assurance, through inspection and supervision.
- Provide teacher and other institutional support.

- Promote dissemination of information on innovations in pedagogy through publication, meetings, seminars, conferences, etc.

The extent to which the inspectorate service achieves these goals is a matter of concern to all.

The trend in inspection at a practical level in Kwara State is currently not providing schools, education official or the public with the service that is required because it has been:

- Inspectorate centred.
 - Faults finding.
 - Faults reported in descriptive terms to policy makers.
 - Ill equipped with baseline/scale for assessment of data.
 - Improving institutively perceived deficiencies in the education culture.
 - Low level of implementation of inspection recommendation.
 - Poorly kept inspection records.
 - Production of data that was not meaningful for policy formulation.
 - Merely diagnostic and not curative.
 - Outdated inspection formats and schedules currently not in line with modern instruments.
 - Tension between the control and appraisal function of the inspector, whereby some inspectors see their work largely as administrative – process enforcement rather than evaluatory and advisory.
 - Lack of adequate transportation so that inspectors either have to use their personal cars, school bus, where this is available or travel by public transportation system.
 - Lack of office equipment when to produce reports due.
 - Inadequate staffing in the headquarters and zonal offices. For example, Inspectorate Harts of the ministry has only 21 inspectors, 21E, Kaiama has only 2, Lafiagi 4, Ilorin 8, Omu-Aran 5 and Offa 4.
 - Poorly defined rules and responsibilities such that very few officers are fully aware of what inspectors are supposed to do. They do not have individual job description and the generic job description is so comprehensive that an inspector could be doing almost anything of a professional nature and feel that it fell within the legitimate scope of job.
 - Lack of training or refresher courses for inspectors. Most former teachers, vice principals or principal receive little or no orientation or training upon becoming inspectors.
 - Lack of co-ordination between the different inspectorate units involved in inspection, supervision and support (Kwara State Ministry of Education).
- The various inspectors, supervisors, monitoring officers and other education officers rarely work together, or inform each other of the results of their visit or share their reports.

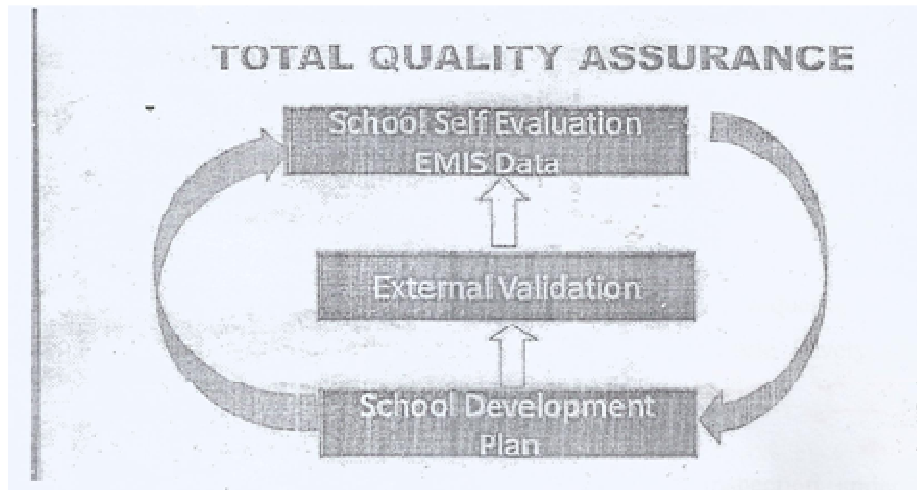


Figure 2. Total quality assurance framework

As a result of these problems, it is not surprising, that overall inspectorate service is seen as ineffective in making substantial contribution to the development of quality in schools in the state. This is not to say that individual inspectors do not do good work, rather than what they are able to do is in most cases quite inadequate as a response to the problems that exist in the schools.

In view of all what has earlier been mentioned above, the state recognises that the current inspectorate service in the state is not fit for the purpose of achieving its aims for the reform and does not provide necessary support required to schools that will bring about meaningful improvement in education delivery. Therefore, the Kwara State government decided to review and reform the structure of the inspectorate and the management systems, and put in place programme to strengthen staffing, school planning and have greater control over resources in such a way that inspectorate capacities of the State Ministry of education will be based on an intention of shifting from “inspection” to “Quality Assurance” by harmonizing the various inspectorate organs into a Quality Assurance unit (Kwara State Education Strategy Plan) ESP 2009 – 2018. (Figure 2)

The 10 Most Important Characteristics of the New Style Quality Inspection/External Evaluation

1. Judgements will be made on the quality of education a school provides in terms of its impact on learners achievements.
2. Self-evaluation will be an important component of inspection/evaluation. Schools will be trained in self-evaluation.
3. Inspectors/external evaluators and schools will use the same evaluation schedule to make judgements.

The schedule asks for judgements about a range of aspects of school life to be graded according to effectiveness. The schedule covers all schools at all phases below tertiary.

4. Inspectors. External evaluative and schools will moderate their grading using the pitched judgements.
5. There is an agreed set of quality standards to be revised as and when appropriate to which schools can aspire.
6. All quality inspections/external evaluations will be carried out by trained, assessed and accredited inspectors/evaluators wherever and whichever school they take place. Accreditation can be gained by suitably qualified and trained individuals whether they work for Federal or State inspectorates.
7. Inspectors/external evaluators will follow a strict code of conduct.
8. Inspection/external evaluation reports will be public documents.
9. All inspection/external evaluation activity will be quality assured to determine that everyone works to the highest possible standards and follows the guidelines so that every school in Nigeria has a similar experience.
10. There will be a nationally determined frequency for quality inspections/evaluation: with a three – five year cycle (Every Child Counts .Report of Inspectorate Component, 2008).

Six Indices that Produce Quality Education

As guiding principles, as we have seen above, inspection under the quality assurance system must be concerned with system to measure and improve the performance of all aspects of a school, identifying its strength and

weaknesses with regards to quality, in six main areas, namely:

- Student standard of achievement
- Quality of leadership and management
- Quality of teaching and learning
- Quality of the curriculum
- Quality of the care, guidance and support given to students.
- Outreach with parents, students and community.

The DFID funded CUBE Project has been providing the state with technical assistance required to take the institutional analysis, review and redesign inspection instruments and develop appropriate training programmes and materials for inspectors.

Establishment of Kwara State education Quality Assurance Bureau (EQAB)

The Bureau will be the only organ responsible for carrying out inspection and monitoring of schools in the state.

Vision

To support the improvement in the quality of educational provision in all schools below tertiary level.

Mission

To ensure that quality education is provided for every child through collaboration with other stakeholders by

- Supporting and validating each schools own self evaluation
- Inspection of schools on a regular basis
- Carrying out regular monitoring of schools
- Providing advice to schools on school management, administration and the curriculum.

Functions

- Assisting the school to maintain and improve standards especially in teaching, learning and students achievement in school.
- Ensure uniform standards and quality of instructional activities in schools through regular inspection and supervision.
- Obtain information on problems and difficulties of teachers and institutions and offer practical solutions to them.
- Disseminate information on innovation and progressive educational institutions and estimate information on school management, the curriculum, textbooks and teaching materials and examinations.

- Monitor and advise on the provision of proper and adequate physical facilities in educational institutions.
- Monitor the performance of teachers and educational institutions in accordance with all round standard performance indicators.
- Advise teachers on the learning and teaching techniques appropriate to the subject of speciality.
- Prepare inspection report on a standard format.
- Deliver the best possible service to the schools in accordance with an agreed and overarching code of conduct.
- Submit regular report to the Honourable Commissioner for education on the general quality of education in the state.
- Publish annual reports for members of the public and stakeholders (Every Child Counts .Report of Inspectorate Component, 2008).

RECOMMENDATIONS

According to Ehindero (2004) to ensure a high quality assurance in teachers' education in Nigeria, it is important to re-introduce institution responsible for the training of non-professional tertiary teachers. To ensure total quality assurance in teacher education in Nigeria, the following must be the content objectives:

- Every class, up to junior secondary to be taught by a qualified and competent teacher with a minimum of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), and a minimum of a first degree in relevant subject(s) in the senior secondary school.
- Every learner should be able to participate fully in the class activities with the support of the teacher.
- Every learner should be continuously assessed to ensure that sufficient progress is being made.
- Every school should have a school development plan which is based on rigorous self-evaluation and spells out the areas for improvement.
- Research into new teachers education technologies to ensure increase in teacher's efficiency.
- To give support to teachers for greater improvement in their pedagogical skills.
- The school provides a safe working and learning environment for learners and teachers.

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the quality assurance in teachers' education in Kwara State, the indicator of quality, the production function of teacher education and the effort of State government to ensure quality education in the state. Even though the government still need to sanitize teacher education in the State because it is still evident that the mode and criteria for selecting the trained teachers lack standard, integrity and competence thereby

leading to mass production of unqualified teachers, charlatans and mediocre in teaching profession. Assurance for quality education is a total and entire process concerned with ensuring credibility and integrity of products.

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