

PROMOTING QUALITY ASSURANCE IN NIGERIA SPECIAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract

Every educationalist who is academically minded is expected to plan and execute quality educational programme and services to the learner, if quality output and performance are envisaged. Not only that the educational quality must be maintained and promoted for sustainability of quality output and performance. To this effect, the paper addressed the keys to success of quality, which emanates from the family, school, society and numerous factors that could help to promote quality assurance in special education institutions. The factors include proper identification and programming, proper placement, capacity principle, adequate teachers provision of instructional materials, availability of facilities, supervision of policy makers and team, interdisciplinary team involvement, provision of fund among others. The paper is optimistic that if the above factors are promoted, quality in teaching, learning, output and performance in schools will be assured.

Keywords: Promotion, Special education, Special need, Student, Teachers.

Special education is a unique instruction rendered to unique students through interdisciplinary team for well being of children with special needs and at no cost to their parents. Special education has key features emerging trends and innovative practices that make special education. Special such practices involve making students responsive to education and individualized to meet each student's unique learning needs, increased accessibility to society and education data based practices and frequent

monitoring of progress. Through which monitoring teachers are informed about the progress of student and effectiveness of their instruction.

Most of their success in teaching and learning evolve from identification, programming, placement and evaluation of programme of each individual student from these activities the students special needs are detected and systematically handled by teachers. However, those practices are not done or properly done due to some factors, such as lack of teachers, experts or specialists, facilities diagnostic facilities and so on, quality of teaching and learning is in doubt. Special education in Nigeria is not left out among other institutions that are battling with quality assurance in education.

However, quality assurance involves the provision and maintenance of the conditions determined to guarantee a high standard of the outcomes and products in education. Quality assurance connotes all the measures taken to ensure that the educational system is better and able to meet the needs of each society (Igborgbor, 2012). Quality assurance means all the procedures, processes and systems that support and develop the education and other activities of the higher education (Kontio, 2012).

In line with the above concepts of quality assurance in institutions, Oladipo, Adesun and Oni (2009) conceptualized quality assurance as the relevance and appropriateness of the education program to the needs of the community for which it is provided. They further asserted that it is the arrangement made or the mechanism put in place to maintain the degree of excellence of an educational product or services. Quality assurance involves services of operational techniques and activities which include all actions taken for standards to be met (Onyesom and Ashibogwu, 2013). The concept of quality assurance is all demanding on the part of the stakeholder to target excellence and determine to produce high standard of education in various institutions of learning, special education in particular. Furthermore, Okoro (2015) noted that for quality to be assured in various higher institutions, that factors such as adequate funding, effective monitoring, evaluation, review of programme, commitment of quality staff, use of quality course materials, effective assessment, development of staff as well as standardization of requirements for intake of students must be put in place. Schools with special need children are expected to create, teach, apply, disseminate quality assurance and services which would help in developing individuals and the society through gainfully employment offered to graduates from special education schools.

Research in school and classroom shows that school environment did not promote quality teaching and learning. The facilities are grossly inadequate especially as regards to provision of educational materials trained care-giver/teachers (with relevant skills) and a stimulating environment.

In agreement with the above observation, Anioke (2011) notes that most Nigerian schools lack modern teaching facilities, laboratories, workshops and instructional facilities to impart the knowledge and skills needed to maintain quality education in our school system. Not only that, qualitative teaching staff is also very crucial to impart the knowledge and skills to students. This is very important because no education system

can rise above the level of its teachers. The teachers are producers of characters and skills which reflect in their students. Hence, wellbeing of the nation rest on the quality of teacher which will invariably affect the citizen of the nation. The new Millennium Development Goal re-echoed that instructional technology is the key to educational quality. Every teacher needs to study teaching techniques, subject area, disability, individualization accommodation and skills for collaboration in the classroom to enhance quality assurance in special education.

In agreement with above researchers availability of assistive technology in special education is a great equalizer for individuals with disabilities that might help for full participation in school, work and community. Individuals with mobility, hearing, vision impairment, cognition and perception limitations could improve, maintain and increase their functional capacities. The assistive technologies include portable voice synthesizer, e-book computer and bold print Braille, mobility devices such as electric wheel chair and so on (Onu, 2008). There have been many educational meetings, conventions and conferences on how to better the condition of education in Nigeria but none has actually stepped into how well educational system could and should be expected to perform. An applauds to Nigeria government who has approved education for all. This has made it possible for much exceptionality to avail themselves the opportunity to learn. However, the disturbing question is how laudable is the quality of education of exceptionalities as to produce self reliant, independent individual or semi independent individual as their case may be.

However Okeke (2001) listed and reviewed the state of special schools prior to involvement of government as thus:

- Gindiri school for the blind in Mangu local government area of Plateau state, established in 1953, Nigeria Training Centre for the Blind, Ogba-osho, in Osun state, owned by Dr. and Mrs. R.C. West of Baptist Mission. The centre as established in 1958.
- Special Education Centre, Oji River, in Enugu state Mr. and Mrs. A.F.C. Savory of the church Missionary Society (CMS) to cater for the patients of the leper colony established the school in 1958. The centre caters for the deaf, blind, psychically and mentally handicapped.
- Ibadan mission school for the deaf, which was later merged with the Ibadan School for the Deaf, was established in 1960 by Dr. Andrew Foster (a black American) who was regarded as the father of deaf education in Nigeria.
- Pacelli school for the Blind: The then Catholic Archbishop of Lagos, Bishop Leoh Taylor, Spearheaded the establishment of this school in 1962. The school was however, founded by the Irish sisters in the same year and was meant for offering full academic programmes for the blind of primary school age. The Anglican Diocese of Lagos for the purpose of providing primary school education for the physically impaired who have been neglected and segregated from regular schools established Atunda Olu school for physically handicapped children in 1965. Okeke (2007) reported that it was only on 20 November, 1975 that the various government of the federation

decided to become more meaning fully involved to build on the foundations that had been laid by missionaries and voluntary agencies. Government interest that made the Federal Executive Council approve the federal/state Rehabilitation programme for Nigerians who have disabilities may have been propelled by the 1971 United Nations resolution. In retrospect, a one time Head of State, Major General Muhammadu Buhari in a nation wide broadcast, on 6 March 1984, stated that the Federal Military Government “proudly associates itself with the United Nations avowal that the years, 1983-1992, should be regarded as the decade of “Disabled persons” the head of state’s statement appeared to have coincided with an earlier stated purpose of the International Year of Disabled Person (IYDP) as declared by the United Nations.

In line with the above retrospective account, it appears that government involvement in education of exceptional persons have made life better for this group of Nigerians. The benefits of government involvement in education of exceptional person were enlisted by Mba (1982) in Okeke (2001) as follow:

- *Many Nigerians including handicapped people were awarded scholarships to study special education overseas.*
- *The Federal Advanced Teachers College (Federal College of Education) (Special, Oyo/was established in 1977).*
- *The Special Education unit of the University of Ibadan was upgraded to a full department*
- *The University of Jos established a Department of Special Education within the Faculty of Education.*
- *A special Education unit was established in the Federal Ministry of Education.*
- *The Nigerian Education Research Council (NEDRC) established a section of Special Education*
- *Many states established special schools while others took over existing ones.*
- *The National Policy on Education published in 1977 included for the first time a whole section on special education and has since remained so irrespective of its revised editions of 1981, 1989, 2004 and 2013.*

From the foregoing benefits derived from government involvement it shows that light has starting shining in the education of exceptional persons nevertheless there still remains areas to be harnessed, hence the need for promotion of quality assurance in special education schools. Quality in education is a determinant factor on how well one can achieve a set goal in life. This should be a concern to everybody in the country, not just to government but to families, schools and the society.

Primary Factors for Quality Assurance in Teaching and Learning

In line with the above, Nmon (2012) noted that family is a group of persons related by ties of blood or adoption constituting a single household. The family plays important roles inculcating school readiness in students in order to enhance quality assurance. The family enforces learning in their children through encouragement to

learn, teaching their children at home for literate parents, those that are not literate or disposed to teach their children arrange extra lesson class for their children and provision of student's requirements.

Families are expected to discourage their children from misconducts in schools such as playing truancy in school that is skipping classes or not being in school while teaching and learning are going on and examination malpractice. Families should maintain high level of integrity when it comes to examination practices in schools. In line with the above, Dawon (2014) stated that parents should demonstrate high level of integrity in families. Through refusal to support their children for examination malpractices, impersonation during examination, discourage microchips and other forms of examination malpractices. Ohwovorine (2013) also stated that parents should be firm and consistent in their words and actions. When parents in various families maintain firmness consistency and frown at examination malpractices quality output and performance will be assured in schools and society.

Schools also have part to play to enhance quality assurance in school system. There is a saying that effectiveness and efficiency of any organization depends on the head. This lies on the fact that better performance of the schools depends on the management activity of the school or institution. The attitude of school management or stakeholders invariably is likely to affect teaching and learning, output and performance of teachers and students. For instance school management that condones examination malpractices is not doing good to quality assurance of the school. Schools are expected to properly handle the issue of examination malpractices in order to maintain the standard and quality in special education schools. Teachers in special education schools are expected to upgrade their knowledge through in-service training. When the teachers are updated they will be properly positioned to render qualitative service to exceptional student concerned.

Adepoju (2000) stated that in higher institutions, the public is unwilling to support their operation financially in the society, the citizens are expected to support quality assurance through donations and award to schools to help build infrastructure or restructure existing ones in schools. Not only that scholarship award is a welcomed gesture to best students in any level to spur others to do better. These patriotic activities are expected in order to promote standard and quality assurance in special schools.

The government agencies have also tried to promote quality assurance through education for all children with special need. This policy has availed many children with special need the opportunity to embark on education, but how well and how much have they achieved their educational goals ranging from self care, communication skill, safety and health skills, mobility and orientation skill, vocational skill among others.

The Millennium Development Goals report 2005 acknowledged that quality assurance in education is yet to be adequately addressed in terms of teacher curricular, teacher support teaching and learning materials (Abani, Igbuzor and Moru 2005). This implies that Nigerian educational system needs to promote their standard in order to attain

quality assurance in schools and special education system in particular. This is the focus of this paper.

Promotion of Quality Assurance in Special Education System

1. **Proper identification and programming:** Identification and programming are very important in special education. Identification of needs of a child is not an easy task, this is because some learners have multiple needs hence the specialists must apply multiple assessment tools in order to identify the need of the learner. However, when efforts are geared towards screening diagnosing assessment or pinpointing an individual problem area, identification is being carried out. Hence identification is a systematic process which is done to detect need or problem of individuals for proper planning. Programming is also a systematic arrangement of special education activities for identified need of an individual. For proper programming of a special need individual specialist/experts are expected to get involved in planning the programme aimed at setting the objectives, contents, place implementation and evaluation at the end of programme. These twin activities (identification and programming) in special education, if properly done will promote the quality of special education rendered in various institution of special education in Nigeria.

2. **Proper placement:** Proper placement of a special need student ensures quality teaching, learning and efficient output. When a student is properly placed in an activity it enhances the interest of the student to instructions and activities taught by teachers. Proper placement spurs the teachers to teach because the students could actively participate due to the fact that he or she is where he or she is supposed to be. Placement of a student in a school depends on the need or problem identified in the individual concerned. No wonder, Reynold (1962) Onu (2008) developed a cascade system of educational placement options and services for exceptional persons. From his explanation of the cascade system, there are differences in the number of students involved at each level. Succinctly, if quality educational placement options and services are done, needs and problems of special education students will be alleviated and quality special education and services ensured.

3. **Capacity principle:** Accommodating a specified number of students per sessions in proportion to available facilities/teachers will promote quality special education system. The students will have enough facilities to learn with and teaching is assumed to be more effective and efficient with small number of students.

4. **Adequate teacher:** Qualified teachers in special education institution will promote quality teaching and learning and verse versa. Instituting special education in higher learning will lead to production of qualified manpower in special education that will be absorbed in the labour market or employed as teachers of special education

5. **Provision of instructional materials:** Instructional materials are inevitable in quest of quality assurance in special education. Instructional material is a must for some special need students with hearing impairment to enable them comprehend instructions and services rendered to them though government has provided a few in some institutions but more instructional materials are needed since the education for all has increased the number of students attending schools. Furthermore, provision of these needed instructional materials doubtlessly will promote quality of special education in institutions.

6. **Availability of facilities:** Infrastructural facilities such as classroom, examination hall, workshop and laboratory hall equipment stores, play ground, convenience and barrier free environment cannot be excluded in matters of quality assurance in special education system. Availability of Braille, wheel chair for physical and health impaired. Enrichment of academic environment with skills and equipment to carry out the skill such as shoe making, bakery, fishery etc though government, has provided schools with some of these facilities but more efforts should be made to motivate them by providing more to support the existing ones.

7. **Supervision by policy maker and team:** Special education system or institutions should be supervised by the policy makers and their team of least once in a year. This will help them to revisit their statement to a particular need/problem of the special education, such reconstruction of statement for better teaching and learning ensures quality special education for all students with special needs.

8. **Interdisciplinary team involvements:** Interdisciplinary team refers to involvement of specialists or experts in various field of learning in identification/programming, evaluation and placement of special need student. More interdisciplinary team, more quality education and services to a special need student. Such interdisciplinary team includes doctors, nurses, teachers, counsellors among others.

9. **Provision of funds:** Issues of funding in any institution remains a crucial matter. To attain quality special education system in any nation, government, patriotic citizens and non-governmental organizations are expected to sponsor or fund special education schools, bearing in mind the glaring different needs and problems encountered by individual special need student. Special education system should have special yearly financial allocation in order to promote quality in special education system in Nigeria.

10. **Empowerment of staff:** Staff including teachers/lecturers, caregivers, interdisciplinary team and all non teaching staff. Empowerment refers to inducement or strengthening the staff through increment in salary level, building of staff quarter, repairing and maintaining existing ones, incentives in the form of in service training scholarship awards estera. However, these mentioned laudable activities tend to boast the morale and performance of staff, invariably promoting the educational quality of teaching and learning.

11. **Provision of free barrier environment:** Proper construction of teaching and learning environment spurs learning in the heart of learners. When the atmosphere and environment in general are conducive for teachers and students via provision of passages, connecting buildings, smooth pathways for those of them using wheel chair and clutches, estera teaching and learning are promoted.

Conclusion

Quality education should be the heart beat of every educationalist if optimum performance should be expected from learners. Special education existing with few facilities should also join the match to quality education. Not only that, the promotion of quality in special education will spur families with special need children to engage their children in learning. The society is not left out, there will be quality services both in academic and vocational skills rendered to society from many that are gainfully employed sequel to quality training.

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