
FALLING STANDARD OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: A REFLECTION ON SOME CRITICAL OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES BY THE COLLEGES OF EDUCATIONS IN BENUE STATE.

By

Titus Terhemba Iortim

*Department of Physics,
College of Education, Oju,
Benue State.*

Abstract

Education is accepted by nations worldwide as the bedrock of social, economic and national development. Unfortunately, the standard of education in our country, Nigeria, has been falling over the years as exemplified by the mass failure in public examinations and poor quality of graduates from the nation's tertiary institutions. This paper examined some quality control mechanisms available to colleges of education in Benue State and reflects on how the operators of the system work with them to churn out the quality of graduates thrown to the labour market. It abhors laxity in handling malpractice cases, over admission, unprofessional practices by academicians. The paper encourages enforcement of quality assurance tools like, probation timely and conclusive students' registration among other things

Education is considered by all nations as the bedrock of human's social, economic and national development. In fact, countries that are concern with their long term development continue to pay important attention to their educational systems in terms of quality access and relevance to economy. Unfortunately, the standard of education in Nigeria rather than improving is observed by many people and groups to be falling. Of course, the falling standard of education in Nigeria is obvious. It is reflected in the high rates of cancelled papers, withheld results, and the number of candidates that fail external examinations like WAEC, NECO and JAMB (Committee, Revitalizing Nigeria Tertiary Institution, (CRNTI; 2013 Yusuf, 2006). At most education forums like seminars, conferences and workshops, participants take turns lamenting the falling standard of education in Nigeria. In one of such workshop aimed at finding ways to revitalize Nigeria's tertiary education, it was stated that, in Nigeria, almost on a daily basis, the nation is confronted with the falling standard of education as exemplified in the mass failure in public examination and poor quality of graduates from the nation's tertiary institutions (CRNTI, 2013). Educational supervising bodies like NUC, NCCE, NABTIC etc has severally reviewed their curriculum in an attempt to arrest the trend, yet when most of the student sit for external examinations, the percentage failure keeps

increasing. Teachers of such examination candidates are not better. For example, primary school teachers were found to be unable to write their even names in full (Yusuf, 2006). This is not an exaggeration. In a teacher recruitment exercise conducted by the author in September 2015, a graduate of one of the Colleges of Education in Benue state who wrote her application letter in the comfort of her room astonished the panel of interviewers when he could not correct her wrong written name on the application letter she submitted earlier. The study conducted by UBEC in 2005/2006 academic session in some schools in Benue state report, among other weaknesses, that some teachers lack mastery of subject taught, some perform poorly with respect to lesson notes writing, use of teaching materials, participation of pupils in lesson and home work for pupils (UBEC, 2006).

To say that the standard of education in Nigeria is falling indicates that education in Nigeria has a glorious past. To reverse or halt the trend requires stake holders to come together and ask the correct questions, find the accurate answers and courageously confront the problems with its solutions. To the author, some of the questions to be asked are; what went wrong with the system and at what point? What are the contributing factors? Are the internally quality control guidelines diligently observed or followed by all? How has the operators of the system (administrators, lecturers and students) contributed to the deteriorating quality of education in the nation as it is observed today?

This paper sought to examine some quality control mechanisms available to the colleges of educations in Benue state and reflect on how the operators of the system work with the guidelines to churn out the quality of graduate roaming the streets. It is believed that this will awaken the consciousness, of all that are involved, of some existing control measures that are often ignored but are important to fully achieve the goal and mandate of teachers and educational institutions.

Formal education is the direct responsibility of the teacher even though there are several other stake holders that are almost equally involved. In fact, most of the time, when the topic is considered, what quickly come to mind is the politician and funding. But the trend is now changing towards examining the direct operators of the system like the teachers. The colleges of education whose core mandate is to train the teachers are most crucial in the formation and quality of teachers and education of a nation. After all, no educational system can rise above the level of the quality of its teachers. Unfortunately, compatriots in the Ivory towers are only alert to the standard of education with emphasis only on funding which translated to provision of infrastructure, equipments and bumper pay and so shun the standard of the final output of the system in terms of integrity (Kumbin and Rwat, 2006). Rather look somewhere else for who to blame we should note that the state of affair of education is a direct serious indictment on teacher education in Nigeria. For example Azeez in Okai (2003), observed that even though NCE holders are fast replacing grade two holders, this growth and development in staff intellectual up-liftment to meet our educational desires does not reflect in the quality of primary education as such. Teachers and educational institution must often look inward, examine and review the processes of imparting knowledge. Educational

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institutions should manage the internal systems and address the moral issues raised therein. Ngun, A, A; Mwolchet, S. A and Dakok, P. A (2006) also share this view. In their words, educational institution most from time to time conduct a critical self appraisal putting itself on a moral and ethical scale and find out the extent to which it is been favoured by the balance of socially acceptable conduct.

Conceptual Framework

Education is the bedrock of economic development. In its broadest sense, it provides the backdrop against which development acquires its meaning (FGN, 2012). Hornby (2002) defined education as a process of teaching, training and learning especially in schools to improve knowledge and develop skills. Education is a form teaching and learning as conducted through schools and other institutions. Education is the tool for social transformation as it is for economic development which is the more reason why countries continue to pay important attention for their educational systems in terms of quality access and relevance to economy. An educational institution of any kind is supposed to be concerned primarily with the shaping of humanity with moldings their characters, their abilities and their world views in such a way that they become desired members of the society so as to shape society Popkin, (1981). In Nigeria and in Benue state in particular, the mandate of the teacher training programme at the NCE level is to produce quality teachers for the Basic Education sub-sector.

Standard on the other hand is defined in Encarta dictionary as the level of quality or level of excellence attained by somebody or something or the level of quality or excellence that is accepted as the norm or by which actual attainments are judged. Hornby, (2002) defined standard as a level of quality which is acceptable by the people. Professional standard refers to a minimum set of knowledge, skills values, attitude, conduct, right, privileges and obligations expected of a professional (TRCN, 2010). Quality education also mean the significant changes that are constantly taking place in a fast changing world as these changes also affects the quality of teachers, the quality of evaluation procedures, the quality of morale and the quality of administration and management (Yusuf, 2006). In recent past, education acquired by learners is no longer acceptable by the society as attaining the level desired. The falling standard of education in Nigeria therefore connotes that the quality of the process of teaching in Nigerian schools has come down below the acceptable level. The importance role of the teacher as the kin-pin quality of education is clear. The teacher is the primary tool for the overall development of the society. The society will therefore hold the teacher accountable for the declining knowledge and skills observed. While it is true that what is observed today about education in Nigeria is simply a reflection of the collapse of the democratic entity of the society called Nigeria, academicians must endeavour to remain the hope of the society by appraising and purging herself of chronic defects. Teachers must ensure that they are of high quality themselves since they are the determining factor for national development. Their quality has been described as the most important key to improving pupils/students learning achievements that is for example more strongly related to academic achievements than any other variable or increase in teacher salaries Rivkin *et*

al, in Wokocha (2013). In his submission, Emeka (2013) stated clearly that, the quality of education should be more important than any other sentiments

A Reflection on the Rules and Operational Guidelines of the Colleges

The bulk of people in school are children and youths that are energetic and inquisitive. They are very ambitious to attain their physical and psychological needs like hunger, sex, love/lust, social satisfaction, leadership etc. This group of people is characteristically emotionally immature, and hence is found to be overdoing things out of over-zealousness (Chibueze, 2003). Hence, schools always lay down some rules and regulations to be followed and prescribe appropriate reward for obeying or disobeying the rules. Most of these rules and regulations are found in the students and information hand book that is usually handed to the students at the point of registration in the first year in school. (It is important to mention here that some information in the book addresses academic issues concerning the academic staff but academic staffs are not given). Some of the quality control guidelines and other practices in the institutions which affect the quality of education are hereby discussed.

Admission of students This is the entry point to the college for all students. Admission of students into the college is mainly an administrative issue handled by the management. Academic staff conducts the aptitude test for some of the students but the rest is an administrative affair. Anaeke, (2003) correctly faulted some of the ways management go about this. According to him, the poor admission policy, which admit “the bearer” without reference to the requisite entry qualification makes it possible for square pegs to find themselves in a round hole and hence cannot perform effectively. Talking about admission into tertiary institutions in Nigeria, Emeka, (2013) stated that, admission of students, for example, mostly happen through the VC and the VC’s (in this case, the Provost) list is known to be the most important of the admission list, of course with many interest parties to be settled, entry qualification and quotas might also be compromised. He added that this would not stop here as the self interest would result in lecturers being persuaded from the top to award under-performing students with sufficient grades to pass through the system. This is the beginning of poor quality of the end product because ‘garbage in garbage out’.

Both the quality and quantity of the students admitted affect the standard of education. First, the quality of the students admitted. It is a common knowledge that most of the senior school examination (SSCE) centres are “miracle” centres. These are schools that characteristically have few students in the lower/junior classes but a great number of students registering for the SSCE in the schools because they have perfected in malpractice such that all students that register with the school pass the examination provided they pay their ‘fee’. Candidates from such centres parade good results that they cannot defend. Even at that, some only manage to pass. Most of the candidates seeking admission into the colleges fall within this category. Some of such students gain admission into the colleges through the special lists like the provost list, registrar’s list, commissioner’s list, etc. These lists usually do not go through any admission process. Sometimes, students that actually passed through the admission processes but were

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found wanting are still offered admission because the department or college want their fee or because the department is 'endangered'. Thus, most students in the colleges have no business being in the colleges in the first place.

Secondary, apart from the poor quality of students admitted, the departments, college and even government encourages over admission for the sole purpose of revenue generation. Azeez, in Ochai (2006) shared this view too. According to him, over admission of students for the purpose of generating funds through school fees is a common features in some state owned institutions of learning. This over admission put so much pressure on both human and material resources. First among these is the staff-student's ratio. A staff-student ratio of 1 to 1000 or even more is common. This is against the NCCE recommendation. This is counter productive and unacceptable because there cannot be any effective class control, content delivery or critical evaluation. It forces academic staff to resort to the traditional method of teaching (i.e. lecture method) which is staff centered instead of the modern and effective techniques. Under such circumstance, Chibueze (2003) observed that, there will be no eye-to-eye contact between the lecturer and each of the students. An over-crowded class is a caveat for delinquent students to take to deviant behaviours including truancy and membership of secrets cults. Anaekwe (2003) puts it thus; over-crowded classrooms are not conducive for effective teaching and learning for in such class, students idle away their time and enjoy the comradeship of the devil in clandestine activities. Schools management should therefore be mindful of who is admitted and how many is admitted for these greatly affect the quality of graduates.

Registration of students This is a process of recording and documentation of necessary information and payment of prescribed fees with academic office, departments, schools and students affairs division by the students. This process provides the important statistics for effective management at all levels and in all session in the college. The time allocated for students registration exercise in the colleges of education in Benue state is of serious concern. The schools calendars usually have a time frame for registration, but what is observed is a year round registration where the students move from bank to bank and from office to office to register even when lectures, tests or even examination has commenced. This obviously affects the students, lectures and lecturers in many ways. Apart from the fact that the students missed their lessons, test etc, their attention is divided and their concentration reduced. Students keep moving in and out of the lectures to meet a registration officer whom they hear that is on seat at the time. At the end, they go back to lecturers demanding for "make-up" test. Again, the different unit or department that needs the information usually does not have them in good time to enable them plan very well. For example when a department has no good idea of the number of candidates for an examination, the number of answer booklet and the question paper prepared always fall short of the number of candidates for the examination. Very often, there is no time to run to the copier and so students are made to share question papers. Students usually take advantage of this inefficiency to commit all kinds of malpractices. Others protest the denial of having a question paper for themselves. According to Nwana in Jimih-kadiri (2003), the way and manner examination are conducted in this country

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do encourage students to cheat. In some cases, many students are made to share insufficient examination materials thereby gaining opportunity to work together. This is completely against the guidelines for the conduct of any examination and this is affecting the quality of the graduates. Management of the colleges should therefore address this defect immediately.

Duration of graduation Related to all-time registration as stated above is the unending duration of graduation of NCE programmes in the colleges. NCE courses are designed to last for a minimum of three years and a maximum of five years. This is clearly stated in the students information handbook of College of Education Katsina-Ala (2010) thus; the duration for obtaining NCE is a minimum of three academic sessions of two semesters each and a maximum of five academic sessions. This means that any student who has not passed the minimum required credit prescribed in the curriculum standard for the course within this period is assumed to have withdrawn and cannot be presented for that certificate. Students, however, seem to be unaware of this and the colleges do not enforce it. Some students come back several years after their programme duration has expired to register and write “carry-over” or “update” or “sort out” their result. This is not correct and unacceptable practice that must be stopped. Certificates issued to such ‘students’ constitute the bulk of what is paraded by most working class which the society observed to be below standard.

Examination malpractices Examination malpractice is defined variously by different people but the one that best fit this work is by Onkeke in Jimoh-Kadiri (2003). Onkeke defines examination malpractice as any act carried out before, during and after examination which is against the rules set out for the proper and orderly conduct of the examination. Many people, including staff (some HOD’s and examination officers are the major culprits) and students, at different times and places, for so many wrong reasons, contravene the examination rules. Examination malpractice is indeed threatening education. Jimoh-kadiri (2003) posited that as a result of examination malpractice, academic excellence has been relegated to the background such that halve baked graduates have being pushed to the labour market with its devastating effect on production.

Mal-practice at all levels in all forms is abhorred by all people. The Colleges of Education in Benue state are not exception and indeed, their misgiving to examination malpractice is expressed in their entire student information handbook. In other to ensure compliance, the colleges always form examination monitoring committees every semester. Among other terms of reference, they are required to monitor and give report of the conduct of the examination and make recommendations to management about staff and students involvement in examination malpractice. This is a good approach in curbing examination malpractice in the colleges. The problem is that the report of the committee usually does not see the light of the day even as the committee members risk their lives in the process. So, this is rather encouraging malpractice since the students now know that they will not be punished even if they are caught. Some students are defiant at it because it cannot go beyond the examination hall. This is really unfortunate.

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It is the position of this paper that all malpractice cases must be looked into and the culprit be appropriately punished as at when due if students and staff must strictly obey rules and regulations guiding the conduct of examination. This will go a long way in ensuring the sanity of the certificates in the hands of graduates.

Hostel accommodation for students The state of infrastructure in the colleges of education in Benue state is in a very poor. Most of the important components of a school are just not there. On top of the list of infrastructure that is lacking in the colleges is hostel accommodation. A high percent of the students in the colleges are staying in shanties among the host communities. For example, in one of the schools with over ten thousand students, there is only one –forty-eight student capacity hostel for female students only. This is as good as saying the school has no hostel accommodation for her students. The effect of this on academic is obvious.

Probation enforcement Probation is the status granted to a student whose academic performances fall below an acceptable standard. The Colleges of Education in Benue state pegged the probation CGPA to 1.0. This means that any student whose CGPA at the end of a session falls below the minimum of 1.0 will be placed on probation. According to the colleges' student information handbooks Katsina Ala (2010) and Oju (2013), a student will also be placed on probation if she/he has carry-over in courses amounting up to 10 credit loads in a particular session. During this period of probation, the student is expected to sit-up, work hard and improve on his/her academic performance. A student on probation registers all the courses for that session and participates in all academic activities including but not limited to lectures, quiz, test, assignments, field trips and practical works. At the end of the probation period, if the student's CGPA is still below 1.0, he/she is required to withdraw from the college by writing. Such a student can apply for re-admission at the end of the session. The duration of NCE is pegged at a maximum of five years or five sessions as the case may be, it therefore implies that, no student can be on probation more than two times. Of course, probation cannot be from back to back.

Probation is obviously a noble academic sanctity policy. It is designed to ensure that all candidates that gain admission into the colleges of education in Benue state continue to work hard to justify the O' level result in their favour and the admission offered to them. Most importantly, it is a sure way of ensuring the standard of the certificate that is given at the end of the programme. This is because students whose academic output falls below standard in the school will not proceed and will not be issued certificates or even testimonials. In this way, they will not have anything with which to practice. This will eliminate their negative contribution to the observed standard of education.

Regrettably, the colleges are not implementing or enforcing probation. There is no record to show that students whose academic results are below standard are placed on probation in the recent past. There are however records showing that many students' academic standing falls below the CGPA of 1.0 or has up to 10 credit load carry-over in a session. More so, there are many certificates issued to candidates even after spending more than five academic sessions. Most of the observed incompetence of certified

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teachers can be attributed to the failure to enforce this aspect of academic regulation. This is indeed a serious administrative lapse that needs to be looked into quickly.

School of Continuing Education create space for working class citizens (particularly practicing teachers) who for some reasons do not have time for lectures during the regular academic sessions. Most of the students taking up admission in this programme are those that are caught up with the need for promotion and are given time limit to upgrade their qualification or be relieved of their job. This programme is well intended. Whether it is approved by the NCCE or has a different admission or course guidelines from the regular students programme is in doubt. What is clear is that the students' information handbook is silence about this programme.

Going by the guidelines of Colleges of Education, Katsina-ala (2010) and Oju (2013) one is eligible to be awarded NCE only if he /she satisfy the prescribed admission requirements. Since their admission and registration/requirements is not prescribed in any of the students' information handbook, it is hope that the students admitted are of good standing. However, it is observed that because of the incessant strikes etc, the schools do not usually have vocation long enough to receive any meaningful learning. Records shows that most of the time the programme is on when the regular students are in session. If sentiment is removed, it becomes very obvious that, this programme is not effective and should be scraped.

A new and more damaging trend of the programme is the introduction of the registration (in this programme) of some regular students that failed some of their courses in the regular session. It is also in doubt if the governing body, the NCCE, approved this practice. Do these students really participate in all learning activities like continuous assessment, CA, 75% lecture attendance as prescribed by the NCCE guidelines? In terms of quality of education, what is the rationale for this practice? Without any prejudice, this paper is in support of the call for the scrapping of the long vocation courses offered by the colleges of education in other to save the standard of education.

Academic Board Academic board in the colleges of education play the same role senate plays in the Universities. The board which has the provost as the chairman and the registrar as the secretary has a direct control of the board. Other members of the board are all deans, all head of department, HOD, coordinator of Continuing Education, post graduate diploma in education, PGDE, student industrial work experience scheme, SIWES and teaching practice, TP. Others are the college librarian, college examination officer, College of Education Academic Staff Union, COEASU, chairman and secretary as well all chief lecturers. This board meets from time to time to decides on academic matters. For example, they must seat, scrutinize final result and satisfy that it meet the requirements and approve it before it can be said to be an authentic result of anybody. At the end of academic board meetings in which final results are considered, one often hear some HOD complaining of the board's worry on "poor" result when the percentage of pass in the result of some departments is perceived to be low while other departments are hailed because their final departmental result record high percentage of passes. A blunt commendation of 'good' result and condemnation of 'bad' result at the facial

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appearance is unacceptable. Instead, one expect that all the extreme results (high percentage of failed or passed) be probed into in other to find what others do to record that magnitude of failed or passed, as the case may be, so as to learn from each other and correct what was not done right somewhere. In this way, the academic output will be sharpened for optimum standard.

A close look at the pattern of the result shows that most of the departments with 'good' results are from the social sciences while the departments that are usually scolded for 'bad' results are in sciences. Though the NCCE policy requires that a higher percentage of students be admitted in the sciences, the colleges of educations in Benue state admit higher number of students in the social sciences. One of the question that easily comes to mind is that 'is teaching and learning, and conduction of examination more effective in an over-crowded class'?

Ironically, whenever the students are observed together during TP, the science students' performances, in terms of mastery of subject, eloquence, content delivery and method, are always found to be more impressive. They are actually often rated higher in all areas by all the supervising staff. Why is the field work result so different from the class work result? The board is expected to set up an ad-hoc committee to investigate the results where a student- of physics/chemistry, for example- passes his chemistry with distinction but record high credit load carry-over in physics. Ignoring this kind of skewed result or blaming/hailing one department is tantamount to encouraging/shielding mal-practice. The board needs to do more in her role of control and monitoring of academic activities. The boards should note that, if the feedback from the society is anything to go by then, most of the graduates from our schools in recent past are unemployable.

Some rules and guidelines are designed to be enforced by the academic staff so as to enhance active participation and progressive monitoring of students work in each course. Prominent among these is 75% attendance of students at lectures and 75% coverage of content.

Having 75% attendance of student at lectures required that at every lecture, the lecturer in charge takes attendance of all the students and record same. This is a good way of preventing truancy and lecture apathy by students and most importantly to encourage student presence at lectures in order to help them actively participate in all academic activities of the courses. The quiz, tests, assignments etc are evaluative measures meant to ensure participation and academic progress of students. In practice, there are some serious challenges to the lecturers in implementing the 75% attendance. One of the problems usually encountered is the over-crowded classes. The number of students in a class is almost always more than what the lecturer can effectively control even in delivering his lecture. Take, for example, a class of 500 students or even 100 students that is to last for one hour in a lecture hall that was already occupied by another group of students of about the same size. It usually takes about 10 minutes for the students that were inside to come out and about the same time for the group outside to go in. This means that 20 minutes of the 60 minutes is already spent in what is called reaction time. An attempt to take any good attendance will therefore live no time for the

lecture. Another problem usually encountered in such a large class in taking attendance is monitoring of the attendance list. When papers are passed round for attendance, the students present in the class usually write the names of their friends. This is evidence when the list is scrutinized. Some students' names appear many times.

Even at that, it is observed that lecturers who always attempt to take attendance, encourages lecture attendance and active class participation by students but using lecture attendance to determine eligibility for examinations poses a serious challenge now particularly because of the large class size, few lecture halls and non availability of support staff.

At least 75% coverage of course content is the requirement to be fulfillment by lecturers. If this percentage coverage is achieved by all lecturers in a school, it will translate to 75% of the NCE coverage which an A on the grading scales. This is no doubt a good measure of knowledge acquired by the graduate. Of course students are expected to go beyond the class work in other to be versatile. The question now is, whose duty is it to check compliance to this requirement? Is there any record to show that lecturers who do not cover 75% of their coursework are reprimanded or call to order? It should be noted that lecturers are also human being with all the human deficiencies and weakness and so if they are not monitored, they are bound to perform below standard particularly now that they are not sure of their wages at the end of the month. After all said and done, it is important to note that the 75% course coverage or even more is possible if all factors affecting academic programmes like inadequate lecture halls, short or truncated academic calendars occasioned by strikes, protests, numerous public holidays etc are out of the way. But with the interference of these uncertainties, smooth and accurate planning and delivery of academic content becomes a problem. It should be noted that a disciplined, determined and hard working staff can put in more effort to cover his work so as to satisfy his conscience first and then the NCCE requirement. Lecturing is a noble profession and its sanctity must be sacrosanct. The practice where the whole course content is presented in a 3 or 4 hour stretch is an abomination and must be condemned. Those lecturers that always endeavour to comprehensively cover their work in spite of the odds are highly commended.

Ethics and morality in teaching The teacher is the most single determinant of what take place in the classroom. While there are some operational guidelines that could be observed, there are very many obvious loopholes in practices that call to test the morality and personality of an individual. Some of these include but is not limited to lateness to lecture halls, absenteeism, arbitrary rescheduling of lectures, teaching method, victimization, tribalism, nepotism, familiarity, diligent marking of test/examination script and trading of marks. It takes a man who is well trained and ethical to be upright in all her professional dealings.

Ethics is the voluntary human actions in determining what is good, right and to be done or wrong, bad that is to be avoided so that man's life could be a enhanced. The problem is that the correctness or rightness of certain behavior or action of persons depends on the person, place, law or time involved. In other words, what a person or group of persons may consider right maybe actually wrong in some places, persons,

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laws or times. That is why the government has what is called the civil service code or code of conduct. But how many academic staff has access to this document? One expects that orientation and teachers professional standards be given to each academic staff as soon as he resumes duty. But neither orientation nor such a material is usually given. This give room for staff to decide what he/she wants or can practice. Of course as expected, most of the time, the line he/she chooses to toll is at variance to the established norms or standards of the system.

Perhaps, this informs the suggestion by some people that some moral psychology be infused into the curriculum of all higher institutions. Already, primary and secondary schools curriculum now has civic education as a subject of its own. This is encouraged if professional teachers at all levels should be reliable, responsible and ethical. This is even more desirable now that society has besieged parents with demands that most parents becomes so involved in seeking for daily bread at the expense of the family upbringing. They now send their children to school, not only to be educated but, to be kept busy and 'safe' in school environment while they (parents) are away from home. A typical example of this scenario is witness daily in private schools in particular where parents take their little kids to school by 7.00 am and come back for them by 8.00 pm. Such children may grow up to be academically sound but morally defected if the schools has no good moral lessons to fill in the parental gaps. Irony

The paper encourages academic staff to always take attendance in order to check absenteeism by students. Ironically, it is the academic staff that do not often attend their lectures. When they do, they are late for the lecture without apology. Most often because of the lecturers 'heaven-may-care' approach to class attendance, many students become habitually truants, idling away their time on irrelevancies and waiting for examinations time to cause their havoc (Chibueze, 2003). Apart from the fact that this behaviour frustrates the students and discourages the students from always attending such lecturer's class, it makes the young minds believe that this attitude is correct and so they will practice it at their time of practice. This could become a recurrent evil that will do the teaching profession no good.

As teacher trainees, academic teachers teach the students the different and modern methods of teaching. It is not enough for lecturers to 'teach' the students these methods while they adapt and stick to the lecture method because they are called lecturers and perhaps because of the convenience of the method for the usually overcrowded classes in our schools. They should be able to lead by example by using these methods of teaching themselves so that the students learn the correct way of using these teaching methods from them. It is no longer acceptable for teachers to preach 'do what I say but not what I do'

Another issue of serious concern is the script marking exercise. Considering the number of students per staff and the requirement by NCCE that at least three continuous assessments be given per semester, it is said that some lecturers do not always mark the text and examination script themselves. Again, considering the way some obviously dull students passed some examinations, one wonders if the award of marks is truly only on the basis of merit and not any other consideration. Worried about this unfortunate

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practice, Ochai, (2003) averred that, over the years, the need for hard work, serious learning, honest assessment and pride of one's capability have given way to negotiations, compromise, settlement in cash and kind (sorting out result), victimization, sexual harassment and threat. These cannot guarantee quality graduates at the end. All academic staff should better brace up, pulled up their sleeves and face their job squarely. The end of over-populated classes is not insight considering the present population growth rate and cost of training a child in public schools coupled with government and management desire to generate revenue.

The Way Forward

If it is true that no educational system can rise above its teachers and if education is truly the bed rock of national development, then it is incumbent on academic institutions to beam their search light on every aspect of the system in order to constantly upgrade and be at par with the globe and current trend. Operational, weaknesses, loopholes, inefficiencies etc on the part of management and operators like academic staff should be identified early enough and nipped at the bud. Administrators of our tertiary institutions should consider quality assurance as a continuing, active and integrative process for maintaining quality rather than simply a system of evaluating and error detection and elimination.

Educational administrators must as a matter of important place quality of their graduates above all other considerations. Beginning with admission of students, admission into the institutions should be purely based on merit first and foremost. Then, the merited students should be admitted based on the availability of human and infrastructural resources. Admitting more than the carrying capacity of the school breed indolence and cultists, encourage malpractice, frustrate staff and hard working students and the students are easily manipulated to demonstrate or riot. If anybody (staff or students- no matter how highly placed is found guilty of examination malpractice, he/she should be made to face the full wrath of the law. Shielding offenders or delaying the course of justice when it has to do with examination malpractice is unhealthy and dangerous to educational development of our nation. The registry need to urgently assign personnel to quickly compute and compile students result to determine academic records per semester and make appropriate recommendations. All time registration affects students and staff performance. The schools should always strictly adhere to registration periods as spelt out by the calendar. This will also compel the students to come back to the schools as soon as it is open. It is equally important that the duration of the NCE be sacrosanct. Students who really could not pass their papers within five academic sessions are unteachable and should not teach. One chronic problem of education is malpractice. The invigilation of the over-crowded classes is a serious issue that needs be looked into closely. This paper strongly suggests that no malpractice case discovered be left unpunished no matter who and how many is involved. The hostel of the students should be given attention it deserved. Experience has shown that staffs give more attention to their primary duties, work together and harder and are more efficient if

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they stay together in good quarters. Noble policies like probation should not be toiled with particularly now that the society is not comfortable with the quality of our product.

The board needs to do more in her role of control and monitoring of academic activities. The boards should note that if the feedback from the society is anything to go by, then most of the graduates from our schools in recent past are unemployable.

Institutions should ensure that those that are into quality assurance are seasoned, still have their self worth and are not of 'Jelly-fish' personalities that can be bought over by both students and staff on ground.

Conclusion

Time has come for teachers to take responsibility of what is happening at their immediate corridor. They should be very concern with society's (their customer) view of their product. The teacher is the most single determinant of what take place in the classroom and so must take the bull by the horn to reverse the ugly trend. All other stakeholders are hereby advised to give the teachers a chance to prove their worth by properly handling and fixing their own end.

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