

STRATEGIES FOR TRANSFORMATION OF TERTIARY EDUCATION TOWARDS PRODUCTIVE ECONOMY- THE ROLE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

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Abstract

No nation can develop beyond its educational standard or level. Thus education for socio-economic and political development of a nation. This paper shows the importance and linkage of education to the economic development of the Nigerian society. The quality of tertiary education as a system which serves as a mechanism of advancement in Nigeria has been with the age-long difficulties of limited access, scarce financing decreasing quality and relevance. The paper examines the reasons for the transformation of higher education system towards enhanced standard of education in Nigeria. Thus, this entails a shift to a more pragmatic approach that encourages the involvement of everybody's effort towards ensuring quality in Nigerian tertiary education. Issues in tertiary education were examined. The paper concludes that the state of tertiary education in Nigeria is poor and thus the need for new approaches to be utilized to turn the situation around for better. It thus recommended that there should be a complete overhaul of the mode of the institution, through massive investment in infrastructure, thus adequate finance in higher education is needed.

Keywords: Tertiary Education, Quality assurance, Quality education, Transformational strategy.

Higher education refers to all organized learning activities' at post-secondary education level. The National policy on education (2004) defined tertiary education to include, universities, colleges of education, polytechnics and monotechnics. Tertiary education is aimed at:

- i. To contribute to National development through high-level relevant manpower training
- ii. To develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society
- iii. To develop the intellectual capacity of individual to understand and appreciate their local and external environment.
- iv. To acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society.
- v. To encourage and promote scholarship and community services.
- vi. To forge and cement National unity.
- vii. To promote national and international understanding and interaction.

The establishment of Yaba Higher College in 1932 marked the beginning of higher education in Nigeria. This became the nucleus of the first university college established in 1948 at Ibadan. The purpose, was to produce "assistants" who would relieve colonial administrators of menial tasks. Due to problems in admission and administration, the colonial government then set up the Elliot commission to specifically "examine the principle which would guide the promotion of higher education, learning research and the development of universities in the colonies (Aigbokhan, 1988). The commission included three West Africans who traveled extensively for three months and later submitted two reports.

The essence of linking quality assurance to education is to facilitate educational transformation and enhance human productivity for quality education to be successful in any nation, all the key players of learning which include the teacher, learners, instructional materials and environment must be arranged in a cooperative way. In other words, there must be enough teachers who are qualified and effective; also, the environment must be a motivating one to the instructors and students. According to Okoro and Agunguam (2017), Nigeria has tried to confront the challenge of illiteracy, incapacitated graduates, and ignorance, this is why both policies on education and human did not limit education to a particular citizen, tribe, class, gender and religion. Even the on-going universal education was established to ensure that very Nigerian citizen will enroll into it free, and the needed education is to be rich in quality and quantity at all times.

At present, there is an increase on the funding of several private educational institutions all over the nation. People's notion remains that quality education could be gotten from private institutions. This reveals that all efforts of the government to ensure human development through education are still at cross-roads, hence the higher institutions are not yet transformed. Therefore, this paper will be examined under the following subheadings:-

- Issues in higher education,
- Concept of quality assurance,
- Efforts at quality assurance,
- Quality assurance: a transformational strategy,
- Challenges of quality assurance,
- Higher education as a key to economic development.

Issues in Tertiary Education

The need for higher education is partly based on the fact that those with higher education qualification have a better chance of securing a job in a tough market compared to those without higher education qualification. Such surpluses makes the system wasteful because training is obviously not matched to the needs of the economy (Mutuallah, 2010).

Expansion of student's enrollment has out stripped the approved annual growth rate for all universities, colleges of education and polytechnics sub-sectors of tertiary education (Ali, 2010). There has also been phenomenon growth in the number of universities from two (2) at independence in 1960 to 73 in 2012 and about 180 other tertiary institutions with student enrolment up to 24 million (universities inclusive) in 2004/2005 session only 14.55% applicant were admitted (Gboyega and Atoyebi 2012 as cited in Jones 2013). The budgetary allocation to education is not encouraging, it falls far short of expectation in a country like Nigeria. This level of funding by the Nigerian government falls far below the 26% of government expenditure as recommended by UNESCO and illustrates her poor priority index and poor commitment to education. It also explains the little progress made in this sub-sector since the 1990s. The result being the exodus of academic staff for greener pasture.

The resultant brain drain has left a serious gap in quality manpower development in the country. According to Jaji (2014), the effects of inadequate funding of the Nigerian education sector include among others:

- Inadequate and outdated library books and journals
- Inadequate scientific materials
- Non-existence fund for conferences and exchange programme.
- Inadequate resources for recurrent expenditures
- Inadequate staffing and training, poor motivation and low staff morale.
- Instability in academic calendar caused by incessant strike actions by students and teachers
- Deficiencies in curriculum and its delivery
- Cultism in student's life
- Mercenary attitude to teaching and research/
- Inadequate resources, which have led to suspension and or non-completion of capital projects, leading to overcrowded and rundown facilities, lecture halls and hostels.

The solution to these problems, which ranges from human to infrastructural, resources to economic and social, and psychological approaches (Jaji, 2004). This informed the decision of government to set up the education tax fund in 1983 under Act No. 7. This fund alone is incapable of solving the problem. Lack of adequate financing led to the establishment of the education fund (ETF). It was established by Decree in 1983 (Amended by Act 40 of 1998) with the sole objective of using fund combined with project management to improve quality of education in Nigeria. The act provides for all companies and organisations registered in Nigeria and operating in Nigeria to contribute and compliment federal and state budget allocations to education. Between the period 1999 and 2005 the ETF released funds to different levels of higher education. Although, there have been massive development in tertiary education since 1960, it is doubtful if this development has translated to equity and access to quality higher education among Nigerians. The federal government has also realized the enormity of the problem and is now taking measures to improve the condition of higher

education. The issue of quality of higher education in Nigeria must be given priority otherwise it will be difficult for Nigerian educational system to play the crucial role of supporting knowledge driven economic transformation and the construction of democratically and socially cohesive societies.

The Concept of Quality Assurance

Quality as a term has no generally accepted definition, however, quality embodies a standard of a phenomenon. The concern for quality has remained in the front burner as one of the strong reasons for positive change in education. Ajayi and Adegbesan (2007) defined quality as the totality of the make-up of a process, product or service on its performance, in customer or client's perception of that performance. It is not just the make-up of a complete product or service, rather incorporates as emphasis on the internal procedures and outputs and comprises a decline of waste and the improvement of productivity. In line with the above definition, Fadokun (2005) characterized quality by three parts:

- a) Efficiency in the meeting of its goals
- b) Significant to human and environmental settings and needs
- c) "Something more" which means the search for new ideas, the quest for excellence and encouragement of creativity.

Therefore quality in education should be based on its strength to support the sound performance of students in standard examinations, likewise being relevant to the need of students, community and society at large. Furthermore, quality assurance is linked to quality control, however, it plays a strategic role as it relates to quality control, and functions on chains of operational procedures which ensure that the prerequisite are achieved. Quality assurance spreads to accommodate the processes that produce the products. In line with this Ajayi and Adegbesan (2007) conceptualized quality assurance to be linked to accountability as they are concentrated on getting the most out of educational systems and services as it points to effectiveness and efficiency in contexts, missions and stated objectives.

From the above meaning, quality comprises all approaches, objectives, action and procedure that consolidate adequate academic standards when used appropriately in line with quality control activities. Quality assurance has been summed up by diverse authorities like Okebukola (2008) which stated that quality assurance deals with the policies, system, strategies and resources used by the institution to satisfy itself so that its quality requirement and standards are being met.

It invariably means that quality assurance has a continuous nature, prone to improvement and wide ranging appeal of quality assurance. The perception of quality assurance involves the university input-process, university out-put of students, teachers, non-teaching staff, managers, curriculum, facilities, finance, instructional materials and other resources. Ojorinde (2008) went further to include teaching and learning, research, use of time and space, students services, administration, leadership, community participation, skilled and employable graduates, responsible citizens, economic development, production of knowledge as they are extra to a process.

It is clear from the description above that standard of education being offered in school is far from being satisfactory, and unless some drastic measures are taken, a vast majority of learners within the educational system face almost certain failure. The logical question at this point is, what is the government doing about the situation?

Efforts at Quality Assurance

It is necessary to outline the government's effort at educational reforms so as not to give the impression as if nothing is being done officially to ensure quality. There is no doubt that government in Nigeria has recognized the potential role of education as critical instrument of economic development. That is why it observes in its National Policy on Education (2004, P iii) that it has "adopted education as an instrument for excellence for effecting national development". A number of steps have been taken by government to ensure quality. The following are examples:

The publication of the National Policy on Education in 1977, arising from

- ◆ The recommendations of the first ever National Curriculum Conference of 1969. This policy according to Maduwesi (2005), was revised in 1981, 1998, and 2004. The policy represents government's appreciation of the critical role of education and what it intends to use education to do.

For example, the philosophy of National education as far as the Nigeria government is concerned is integrating individuals into sound and effective citizens.

◆ In 1985, the government promulgated Decree NO 16 on the minimum standard for primary and secondary schools nationwide. In order to put the guidelines for primary and secondary schools into operation. The National Council of Education (NCE) and the Joint Consultative Council on Education (JCCE) decided to set up a subcommittee in 1988 to work out the details of implementation.

◆ In 1989, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) was established to design and enforce minimum standards for all programmes of teacher education.

◆ In 1992, the long commission, otherwise known as the commission on the review of higher education in Nigeria was set up. This commission made wide- range and important recommendations on what the educational system should seek to achieve in order to be relevant to the goals and aspirations of the society.

◆ The National Universities Commission (NUC) is also a critical agency set up to ensure minimum standards for universities in the federation.

◆ The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) is also set up for the same purpose of ensuring quality education in polytechnics in the country.

The foregoing goes to show that the government is mindful of the need for standard, but it is obvious that a lot still needs to be done.

Quality Assurance: A Transformational Strategy for Economic Development

In the 21st century, the topmost advantage of quality assurance is assured quality and, all should geared towards the assurance of quality of Nigerian tertiary institutions as a unique product. Nigeria has about 164 approved universities with various proprietary arrangements, i.e federal government, state government and private proprietors (NUC, 2018). The non-existence of internal and external quality assurance measures will lead to the disappearance of the aims of producing experienced, skilled and proficient manpower that will be in the governance of the country to be an illusion thereby compromising development drastically.

The benefits of quality assurance are unimaginable according to Okoro and Agugum (2017). As it include among other things:

◆ The upholding the reliability of programmes and the worthiness of the certificates issued by higher institutions of learning.

◆ Provide confidence to teacher themselves

◆ Quality assurance makes universities to be competitive both nationally and internationally.

◆ Quality assurance measures and strategies determine the proper aligning of a given university on a right path and the availability of the drive to develop on output and finally become better if not best.

◆ Quality assurance keeps students away from substandard quality programmes, poor curriculum delivery and from unfriendly academic environments.

Therefore, a functional system in Nigeria will bring about high quality manpower that will turn around the available resources into wealth for the nation. The country will also experience a turn-around in science and technology, which will in turn affect all other sectors of the economy. Thus the wealth of the nation will be redistributed to favour the poor populace. There will be many employment opportunities which will lead to income generation and invariably the decline in the high rate of poverty and inequality. This will further bring about an improvement in the wellbeing of the populace.

Quality education according to (Aina in Abubakar (2009:32) is a leveler of opportunities. The case in Nigeria where majority of the graduates of educational institutions search for white-collar jobs that are very scarce and difficult to secure will be a thing of the past. Quality education will bring about graduates who are entrepreneurs and self-dependent and ready to practice what they had learnt in school. These entrepreneurs will also become employers of labour. With this chain more jobs will be created and income generated. The end result is that many will be uplifted from the dudgeon of unemployment and poverty.

Conclusion

Education transformation are constantly the result and sign of economic transformation in positions in which they are to be explained. The need for change in any educational system is to be complimented with new ideas, which individuals and groups would perceive as necessary. The educational system of Nigeria is visibly poor, however, some measures could be taken to turn the tide. There is urgent need for education to be placed correctly. That is the only way to sustainable economic development. Transformational teaching entails the outspreading of our anticipations for the influence that stakeholders could have in and outside the classroom.

Recommendations

- 1.The government at all levels should show its commitment and political will to ensuring functional education through its funding, policy making, supervision and monitoring of educational projects and programmes.
- 2.Government should ensure that the objectives of the educational system is geared towards producing a total person with requisite skills knowledge and values relevant to the 21st century and beyond.
- 3.Massive investment in infrastructures at all levels of education
- 4.Enhancing student-teacher's quality through employment of professional and qualified teachers and provision of in-service training and re-training.
- 5.University law should institutionalize quality assurance for effective monitoring, evaluation, substenance and improvement of programmes and all other components and operations of tertiary institutions.
- 6.Tracking of resources to solidify proper, adequate and accountable utilization of resources budgeted for education.

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