

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN TEACHER PRODUCTION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined quality assurance in teacher production. Activities involved in the production of quality teachers for the nation were discussed to include: students' entry qualifications, qualification of teacher trainers, frequent checks by heads of departments. Problems militating against production of quality teachers for the nation were discussed to include mode of entry into teacher training institutions, delay in updating teachers' trainers' qualifications, lack of frequent checks by heads of departments. Recommendations were made to include: students with minimum acceptable qualification should be admitted into teacher training institutions. Lecturers should not delay in updating their qualifications, heads of departments should check annually the achievements of their lecturers, lecturers should monitor strictly students' attendance to lectures.

Introduction

Any educational advancement that needs to be made depends on the teacher. This is because it is the quality of teachers that determines the quality of human beings to be produced. Observing this, Okeke (1997, p.138) says, "The teacher is the central process of quality and equality in education." To that effect, FRN (2004, p.39) says "no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers." Supporting Okeke (1997) and FRN (2004), Ciwar (2005, p.1) notes that "education is nothing without quality teachers." This paper is therefore looking into quality assurance in teacher production.

Concept of Quality and Quality Assurance

The term quality has been defined in various ways. Hornby (2000, p.953) defines quality as, "the standard of something when it is compared to other things like it, how good or bad something is." Supporting Hornby (2000), Ijaiya (2001) cites Cole (1996) who defines quality as something every one considers good and wants to have. In line with the views of Hornby (2000), Ijaiya (2001), Tahir (2006, p. 10) views quality to mean: "three interconnected factors: efficiency (e.g. better use of available resources); relevance (e.g. to need and contexts); and some things more (e.g. to journey a little further than mere efficiency and relevance)." The teachers that need to teach Nigerian children are expected to be teachers of good standard who are capable of utilizing available resources; this will enable these teachers to prepare young people who will function effectively on the rapidly moving and changing society. Appreciating this, Nwachuku (2005, p.4) says:

The reformulation of our educational system will not come about by getting stuck in the past, with its good old days. The task is rather for us to formulate standards and performances that will prepare young people to function effectively on the rapidly moving and changing frontier of the future.

The question one may ask is who will prepare these young people to function effectively in the society? The answer is quality teachers, hence the need for quality assurance in teacher production. Ciwar (2005, p.2) defines quality assurance as "the practice of managing the ways goods are produced or services are provided to make sure they are kept at a high standard,"

From these definitions and explanations, quality assurance in teacher production can be seen as setting and maintaining standards for various processes and activities that lead to production of teachers in the society. Assuring that quality teachers are produced for the nation is necessary because the quality of teachers determine the quality of her product. Appreciating this, FRN (2004, p.39) says "teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development." In line with this fact. Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) is putting in place measures that could guarantee qualitative teacher education and practice at all levels of the education system, both in the public and private sectors (TRCN 2007).

These measures to guarantee qualitative teacher education by the federal government of Nigeria through her teacher education programme and by teacher registration council of Nigeria is a move in the right direction. This is necessary because production of quality teachers will enhance national development.

In recognition of the role played by quality teachers in national development, Lassa (2007 p.12) says, "the teacher in the final analysis is the key to proper development of the child and consequently to the nation." To that effect Lassa (2004) in Lassa (2007, p. 12) captures this fact about a teacher poetically thus:

But always there stands the teacher, always on stage, often in front and center.
What he knows can make a difference. What he does know can be an irreparable loss.

In order not to allow the nation to incur an irreparable loss in terms of the quality of citizens produced by the teacher, faculties and colleges of education as well as other teacher training institutions should make production of quality teachers their watchword. The nation wants the teachers to know so that quality teachers will make a difference in the life of Nigerian students for the benefit of the entire nation. The quality of teacher a nation has is very necessary because changes for the improvement and effective functioning of the society can be made through education. Appreciating this, Lassa (2007, p. 13) says, "Some countries have achieved a remarkable degree of national unity, patriotism and commitment to democratic principles through planned and systematic educational policies devoted to attainment of these values." Hence education is regarded as a very great investment, which can be achieved through good quality trainers to train other people.

Objectives of Teacher Education as Indicated in National Policy on Education (2004) FRN (2004; p.39) identifies the objectives of teacher education as to:

- a) Produce highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system;
- b) Encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- c) Help teachers to fit into social life of community and society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals;
- d) Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for the assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations;
- c) Enhance teachers¹ commitment to the teaching profession.

FRN (2004, p.40) further stipulates that, "teacher education programmes shall be structured to equip teachers for effective performance of their duties."

The following institutions are challenged with the task of providing professional training to teachers:

- a) Colleges of education
- b) Faculties of education
- c) Institutes of education
- d) National Teachers' Institute
- e) Schools of education in the polytechnics
- f) National Institutes for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN)
- g) National Mathematical Center (NMC)

Importance of Quality Teachers for the Nation

Importance of quality teacher to the nation cannot be underestimated. Observing this, Ipaye (2002, p. 185) says, "the spinal cord of every educational system at every level is the teacher when and if the teacher becomes broken; education becomes derelict and broken too."

This means that in order not to allow the educational system to be broken, every society should aspire to maintain teacher quality. In further appreciation of the need to maintain teacher quality for the nation, Ipaye (2002) notes that the teacher maintains and improves educational standards, gives educational content and context the desired and expected propagation, innovates the curriculum and gives it a new look, makes it more relevant to the needs of the society and make education meet the expectations of the nation, get it truly reflect the philosophy of the nation and makes it transmit the culture of the people.

Since teacher improves and maintains educational standards for the nation, it then becomes necessary to assure production of quality teachers in Nigeria by institutions meant for production of teachers.

Supporting Ipaye (2002) on the need to produce quality teachers for the nation, Olaitan (1985) in Kanno (2004, p.27) notes that, "well trained teachers will contribute immensely to the present and future developments of any country by educating the citizens therein."

In line with the views of Ipaye (2002) and Kanno (2004), Ojo (2006, p. 158) says, "The quality of a nation's teacher education is the benchmark for measuring the quality of education dispensed in its schools. This in turn determines a nation's development or preparedness for development."¹ The emphasis here shows that it is necessary to produce quality teachers for the development of the nation. Ojo (2006) further notes that education is power, while the teacher is the dispenser of education; as such the teacher holds the secret to that power. Ojo (2006, p. 3 61) then says, "good teachers thereafter mean good education, which in turn translates into tremendous power in the hands of the people. That is, power to transform the society into a better place." Supporting Ojo (2006), Njoku (2006, p.13) says, "education is the spring board on which all other sectors of the economy revolves for growth, national development and the role of teachers in this regard cannot be overemphasized. Teachers are therefore like candles, they consume themselves in order to give light to others." This means that for teachers to have something in them, which they can consume in order to give light to the citizens of the nation, teacher training institutions have to prepare teachers very well because no teacher teaches what he does not know.

These expressions shows that the teacher as a person who has the key and power to transform the society for better should be well equipped through training, this is because as Ojo (2006) observes teachers by the nature of their calling, are the people that inculcate societal values and norms into a nation's youths. Teachers are therefore regarded at the vanguard of bringing about reforms in a nation's polity. This means that the quality of education that teachers receive will in turn determine the quality and quantum of reforms that they can inculcate in a nation's youths.

In agreement with the views of Ipaye (2002), Kanno (2004) and Ojo (2006), Okeke (2006, p.1) notes that "quantitatively, the nation has made tremendous strides in her educational endeavours, what are deemed paramount now and in the near future for the wealthy growth, development and survival of the nation are quality teachers and quality education." This means that our teacher and education need reforms. To that effect Oniolewa (2007, p.4) says, "reforms are consistently motivated by a desire for change, an eagerness for transformation, and a conscious search for progress and development." Progress and development will be achieved through production of quality teachers. This being the case, there is every need for our faculties and colleges of education to do activities that will lead to production of quality teachers to enhance educational advancement.

Production of quality teachers for the nation is very necessary because as Lassa (2007, p. 14) notes:

Teaching is the most vital and strategic profession in national development. Without good teachers there cannot be good engineers, or good medical doctors, or good lawyers etc. if we do not have good teachers and good educational system, we will invariably have unimaginative and unpatriotic professionals of engineers that build roads that wash away after the first rain or build houses that collapse on people, doctors that kill more than they cure, accountants that embezzle treasury, and so on. Without good professional teacher, the commutative effect would be non-development rather than development and national retrogression instead of progression and development.

Activities Involved in the Production of Quality Teacher for the Nation

There are so many activities involved in the production of quality

teachers for the nation. These include:

- ❖ Student entry qualification
- ❖ Qualification of teacher trainers
- ❖ Frequent checks by heads of departments
- ❖ Attendance to lectures Curriculum relevance
- ❖ Updating lecturers' knowledge
- ❖ Provision of resources materials
- ❖ Provision of facilities

Students' Entry Qualification

For quality assurance in teacher production, student with minimum acceptable qualification should be admitted in colleges and faculties of education and other tertiary institutions meant for production of teachers. This is necessary because Okebukola (2005) had earlier observed that admissions are offered to candidates with weak passes in the SSCE who have nowhere else to go. Okebukola (2005, p2) observes that:

As a result of this intake of weak candidates many faculties of education are populated by holders of the Nigerian Certificate in Education with less than five credit-levels passes at the senior school Certificate Examination (SSCE). The teachers in the school system in Nigeria are drawn from the product of faculties of education and degree awarding colleges of education enrolling this group of candidates.

Qualification of Teacher Trainers

Lecturers' qualifications are supposed to be updated from time to time, for instance, any lecturer who was employed with first degree after three years should be expected to have his/her Masters Degree.

Frequent Checks by Heads of Departments

Heads of departments are expected to check annually number of papers submitted for publication for each lecturer in their department and the number of papers published. This is necessary because attendance to conferences and writing of papers bring about new knowledge.

Attendance to Lectures

Every lecturer is expected to be checking student's attendance to lectures. This is to ensure that students attend to lectures regularly and punctually. In this attendance register/ lecturers records, dates students took each lecture and the date the lecture ends should be recorded, this is to control the movement of students when they know that their lecturers keep the dates each lecture was delivered.

Curriculum Relevance

Lecturers are expected to make sure that their course outlines are put down and submitted at the beginning of every semester to assure quality in the content to be taught to the learners in tandem with the stipulated curriculum guidelines.

Updating Lecturers' Knowledge

To update lecturer's knowledge in the course and in the area of specialization, every lecturer is expected to become a member of professional organization e.g. lecturers whose curriculum studies are their area of specialization should become members of Curriculum Organization of Nigeria (CON). Lecturers in psychology should join the Nigerian Council of Educational Psychologists (NCEP).

Provision of Resource Materials

To assure quality in teacher production, resource materials should be provided for every student. Resource material is very necessary for effective teaching and learning to take place. Observing this, Onyejemezi (1981, p.281) says, "Any established school curriculum calls for ways and means of implementing it in order to reach the objectives at the various levels. And no discussion of the curriculum is complete without suggestions about methods and means of effective implementation. Dike (1987) describes these resource materials as alternative channels of

communication, which teachers can use to communicate ideas and make information more vivid to the learners.

Supporting Onyejemezi (1981) and Dike (1987), Ughamadu (1992, p.42) notes that, "curriculum materials are indispensable in the teaching-learning process/ curriculum implementation." To that end Abdulkareem (2001) notes that resource materials are very necessary for mobilization and utilization by human resources in order to accomplish the set goals. No wonder Babalola (2004, p. 114) describes resource materials as, "ways and means of making the teaching and learning process easy, more meaningful and understandable. To that effect, Babalola (2004, p.1 14) emphatically says, "as ingredient is to soup so also is resource material to curriculum implementation."

Provision of Facilities

Facilities which Ehiamentalor (2001) describes as those factors which enable production workers to achieve the goals of an organization should be provided in institutions meant for production of teachers in order to produce quality teachers for the nation. These facilities which include, good buildings, furniture, plants and equipment are necessary because as Ehiamentalor (2001. p.305) rightly observes, "the school is like a manufacturing organization where plants and equipment must be in a top operational shape to produce result."

Adequate Funding

To assure quality in the production of teachers by teacher training institutions, adequate fund should be allotted for teacher education programmes.

Problems Militating Against Production of Quality Teachers for the Nation

1. Mode of Entry into Faculties and Colleges of Education

Some colleges of education offer admission to students with less than five credits. When these candidates enter colleges of education, they cannot meet up favourably in their studies. On graduation, they will move to faculties of education. Confirming this, Okebulola (2005, p.2) says, "many faculties of education are populated by holders of the Nigerian Certificate in Education with less than five credit-level passes at the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE)." Another group of candidates admitted into faculties of education are candidates who have accepted to read education as the last resort when all hopes have been lost in getting admission in the candidate course of interest. Observing this, Okebukola (2003, p.3) notes that, "the apathy towards electing teaching as a profession has resulted in shortage of genuinely interested candidates into education faculties. The growing trend is to offer admission to candidates with weak passes in the SSCE who "have nowhere else to go."

2. Basing Admission of Students on Special Considerations

In some cases admission are given to students based on special considerations and not on merit. For instance, in some cases admissions are given to students because of their inclination, because they are candidates to the top officials in the university.

3. Delay in Updating Teacher Trainer's Qualification

Some lecturers delay in updating their qualification. For instance, there are some lecturers who find it difficult to update their qualifications after many years of employment; this militates against production of quality teachers for the nation.

4. Lack of Frequent Checks by Heads of Departments

Heads of departments ought to be checking frequently the activities and achievements of lecturers in their departments with regards to their professional growth. But most of these heads of departments are not checking their lecturers frequently. This militates against production of quality teachers.

5 .Poor Monitoring of Students' Attendance to Lectures

Some lecturers do not monitor strictly student's attendance to lectures. This affects the quality of students produced as teachers.

6. Inadequacy in Assuring Curriculum Relevance

Some lecturers do not write out their course outlines for submission to the head of departments and

for students use at the beginning of every semester before commencement of lectures to ensure curriculum relevance.

7. Inadequate Resource Materials

Resource materials needed for production of quality teachers are inadequate. This affects its use for effective teaching and learning.

8. Inadequate Facilities

Facilities such as plants, building, furniture and equipment needed for effective learning to take place in our teacher training institutions are inadequate. In most cases some available ones are not maintained properly because of poor maintenance culture.

9. Inadequate Funding

Fund refers to money needed for effective implementation of projects. In most cases fund allotted for teacher education are grossly inadequate. Lamenting on inadequate funding for teacher education, Gwany (2006, p.7) notes that, "it is only in Nigeria that the magic of teaching without resources¹ is expected by government and some citizens., so much that it has almost become institutionalized!" Continuing, Gwany (2006, p.87) says, "in Nigeria, education receives less per capita funding than many other African countries. The education industry is usually the first and easiest victim of budget cuts, during 'austerity', 'low profile' 'structural adjustment' and other economic reform strategies." Gwany (2006) finally observes that because of this poor funding most teacher education programmes in Nigeria are seriously deprived of adequate essential and technical appropriate infrastructure, facilities, amenities and teaching materials.

Recommendations

To assure quality in the production of teachers for the nation, the following recommendations are made:

Students with minimum acceptable qualification should be admitted into faculties and colleges of education and other teacher training institutions.

Admission should not be given to students on the person of their inclination but rather admission should be given to the students on merits. For instance, admission should not be given to students just because they are candidates to the top officials in the institutions. National Commission for Colleges of Education and Nigerian Universities Commission should monitor these discrepancies strictly at the beginning of every academic session to make sure that admission is offered to only those who are qualified. This policy if strictly followed will improve the quality of products in our institutions of higher learning, Nigeria will then be boasting of highly conscientious and efficient classroom teachers in all levels of education as well as the citizens' craftsmen and women highly skilled in their different professions

Lecturers should not delay in updating their qualifications. For instance, a lecturer employed with first degree should after three years get his/ her masters degree. This should be achieved through assessment and staff monitoring measures.

Heads of departments should check annually the achievements of the lecturers in their department. For instance, they should check annually the number of papers submitted for publication by each lecturer and the number published every year.

Lecturers should monitor strictly students' attendance to lectures. This could be done by keeping attendance at every lecture periods. Doing this will encourage students to attend lectures regularly and punctually.

To ensure curriculum relevance, lecturers should submit their course outline to the heads of departments and give same to the students before commencement of teaching; this is to ensure that what is taught to the students is what has been designed as their course content. This will also ensure uniformity and maintenance of standard by all institutions as recommended by NCCE and NUC.

Provision of resource materials should be a collective effort of teacher trainers, students and the government. To solve the problem of inadequacy of facilities, institutions should renovate their dilapidated buildings; maintain the already existing plants, furniture and equipment with their internally generated revenue. The government on their own side should check institutions from time to

time to ascertain information on the most needed facilities for each institution so as to provide such to the institutions. The government should provide adequate fund to all teacher training institutions and ensure that the fund sent are judiciously used by the institutions.

Conclusion

To produce highly conscientious, efficient, motivated, resourceful, innovative, creative and intellectual classroom teachers for all levels of education, school administrators in colleges and faculties of education and other teacher training institutions as well as teachers, students, governments, parents, philanthropist, non-governmental organizations should put their hands together.

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