

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS: A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR FOR SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACY.**

**DR ENE INYAMU EGWA**

*enegwa@yahoo.com*

*DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS*  
**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, OJU, BENUE STATE**  
**NIGERIA**

### ***Abstract***

*This paper takes a look at quality assurance in Nigerian tertiary institutions: a significant factor for sustainable democracy. Within the content is a cursory look at strategies for quality assurance in tertiary institutions. Among these are: modification of the curriculum, strategic planning, accreditation to tertiary institution and her programmes, human resource availability, information and communication technology adoption and effective supervision. All these are vital in ensuring quality education on which the sustenance of democracy lies. The development of any nation depends on the quality of its education hence, conscious effort should be made to ensure quality at every level .*

### **Introduction:**

Nigeria is endowed with robust human and natural resources which depends on education for its development, exploration and exploitation hence, education is the most indispensable tool for the development of any nation. As some countries in the world hanker for democracy and its sustainability, there is a need for an uneven attention to be given to the educational sector because it is the bedrock for national transformation and economic growth. Poor quality education constitutes a barrier to political, social and economic transformation.

In Nigeria, formal education is provided at three significant levels. The lower basic education, the upper basic education and the tertiary education. Tertiary institution or higher education has been described as the system that provides post secondary school courses and also engages in research (Scott, 2005). Nigeria sees tertiary education as the “education given after secondary education in universities,

colleges of education, polytechnics and monotechnics including those institutions offering correspondence courses” (FRN, 2004:36).

The primary aim of the tertiary institution is to awaken or quicken the human potentials. These potentials according to Ojo (2007) are developed through:

- i. enculturation and progressively equipping the individual, the socio-cultural skills that should enable one to fit neatly into one’s immediate society.
- ii. acculturation, progressive exposure to outside influence from which one can intelligently borrow to expand the horizon provided by one’s immediate society.
- iii. intellectual skill acquisition, for the pursuit of self-development through the acquisition of knowledge in a variety of forms and by a variety of means.
- iv. affective traits development, progressively improving on the imbibe attitudes, values, and other behavioral traits that facilitate one’s relationships with fellow human beings as well as one’s capacity for continuous self-employment.
- v. manipulative and psychomotor skills development, progressively awaking the physical powers of the individual, and progressively working towards a perfect coordination of activities of the body with those of the mind.
- vi. inculcation of lifelong learning skills (also called learning-to-learn skills), a constellation of activities, habits, mind-set, etc that predispose one to develop the spirit of inquiry and a perpetual thirst for knowledge.

These important points mention are inter-related and have no terminal point. Therefore, they must all work together for the all-round development of the individual and who contributes to the larger society.

Babalola & Adedeji (2007) noted that the wealth and poverty of nations depends on the quality of higher education. Those who are poorly educated live a life of a quiet desperation consequently submit to the deceit of politics of patronage, thugry which poise threat to sustainable democracy in Nigeria. It is in line with this that this paper will look at strategies that will enhance quality assurance in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

The Nigerian government in the bid to ensure quality in tertiary institution established commission like the National Universities Commission (NUC) National Commission for Colleges of Education, (NCCE), and National Board for Technical Education (NABTE). These commissions and Board are mandated to ensure quality education in Nigeria tertiary institutions.

According to Uchendu, Akuegwu & Nwi-ne (2006) quality is seen as the degree of excellence while quality assurance is seen as a system for assuring that quality of output meets the required standard all the times. It therefore imply that a product has to conform to a specification or requirement. Quality assurance is a retroactive action used to determine the quality of a product or a system after processing and during which wastages would have occurred and what is left is to reject or battle with rectification in a like manner. Similarly, Uchendu et al (2006) stated that quality assurance is the action taken in the schools system (tertiary institution) to determine that the standard of education is maintained in terms of the inputs, processes and output.

Quality assurance in tertiary institutions can be carried through various means; internal (within the system) and external control measure, checks and balances by regulatory agencies. Quality in education is determined by the performance of students in public examination and the quality of performance of the graduate in their jobs. When the standard of education is compromised, a lot of issues like tertiary institution turning out graduates who can barely defend their certificates, indiscriminate award of contract at tertiary schools, employment of mediocre among others come to play in the political dispensation.

Some of the strategies for enhancing quality tertiary education are discussed below:

### **Modification of curriculum in tertiary institutions**

The curriculum is expected to respond positively to modern trends of event through emphasis on innovative knowledge and skills which are variously referred to as 'daily living skills, survival skills and life coping skills' (Njoku 2003:3) The world is not static in nature but dynamic and change is a constant phenomenon in the world, therefore, the education industry which is the most dependable for interpretation and adaptation of the constant changes in the world turn out a lot of graduates every year who are expected to identify and solve problems, establish good working relationships with others and organize and manage themselves responsibly, collect and evaluate information, communication in different ways, use science and technology effectively and the capacity to develop a consistent world-view (Udosen 2003:75). Courses are modified and new courses are introduced to enable student acquire life long coping skills through science processes which include observation, experiment, generalization and prediction. The modification of the curriculum enhances the holistic development of cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains

for quality productivity and meaningful integration into the society for sustainable living. The introduction of courses like general studies (GST), entrepreneur education, vocational education among others are indices of curriculum modifications in tertiary institutions.

### **Accreditation of tertiary institution and their programmes**

The phenomenal growth of tertiary institutions in Nigeria are unparalleled anywhere in the African continent. The growth has been in terms of increase in students population and then number of tertiary institutions themselves. These citadel of learning which are means of social mobility, self-development and skill-acquisition are expected to play major roles in the fulfillment of Nigeria philosophy of education through training and research to ensure quality of their institution. It is therefore imperative for faculty members, facilities, the examination and grading system to be subjected to scrutiny by a team of professors in that discipline, selected from different tertiary institutions by the different commission or board like NUC, NCCE, NBTE, who are charged with responsibility of monitoring the activities of the various tertiary institutions. The accreditation exercise is usually carried out every two-five years. During the exercise, the programmes that are irrelevant are eliminated while programmes that are relevant and of good quality are given full accreditation status.

### **Strategic Planning of Programmes**

Another strategy for quality assurance in Nigeria tertiary institution according to Etuk (2006) is strategic planning of programmes. Etuk stated that strategic planning requires that heads of departments, deans of school/faculties state the objectives of their academic programmes, its contribution to economic development with regard to their graduates in terms of their capabilities when they are out of school. They should also use Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis to access their programmes. Strategic planning in tertiary institutions will attract funds from government and other agencies if the programmes are relevant and given accreditation. Funds has been a very crucial and fundamental concern to the government and managers of tertiary institutions. Strategic planning of programmes can induce generation of revenue from both internal and external sources, since government alone cannot fund their tertiary institutions sufficiently, it is imperative for these institutions to adapt strategic plans to earn her sustenance.

### **Availability of Human Resources**

A very fundamental issue in assuming quality in the educational sector is the quality of human resources available. It is worthy of note that the unprecedented influx of academic personnel into tertiary institutions through *god fatherism* pose both strength and threat to these ivory towers. It is strength when the human resources available have potential, talents and abilities which are used in combination with other resources to produce quality output. On the contrast, it is a threat when these potential, talent and abilities in combination with other resource produce mediocres, or constitute a brooding habitat for touts, prostitutes, armed robbers among other vices on which students are highly vulnerable, as the teachers' performance according to Madumere-Obike (2004) determine quality of students. Chukuma (2001) revealed that there is general dissatisfaction from employers of graduates with regard to their professional skills, key abilities such as critical thinking, problem solving and time management skills. A survey of the Nigeria teachers in Nigeria tertiary institution shows the level of dissatisfaction among the teachers Tanji (2001). Employment into universities should be on merit and their wages should commensurate wiith their output if quality is to be assured, in tertiary institutions.

### **Adoption of Information & Communication Technology**

Another laudable area of need in ensuring quality in tertiary institution is the adoption of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Information is an indispensable part of the contemporary world, not only has it brough about rapid technological, economic tranformation, and globalization, the tertiary school system depend on it to cope with the worldwide information need. Within the school system, ICT adoption promotes teching and learning for instance,in recent times,. The multimedia internet-based technologies have provided opportunities for teaching and learning at a dsistance. ICT also facilitates the management information system (MIS) into the administrative processes, on-line libraries provide access to current books, journals and other information resources through global networking. A study by Ige (2002) on computerization of MIS and administrative effectiveness in Nigeria Universities holds that MIS has helped to facilitite decision-making for effectiive administration, classroom and individual students management, resource management and generation of data. It also helps to generate additional information concerning problems, opportunities and challenges inclusive also, is its contribution to the development of on-line screening and registration of students.

ICT can be used to ease the load of supervision, evaluation and appraisal of students and teachers. The management task, removal of wastages and quality cannot be achieved without application of ICT in all areas of school application.

### **Effective Supervision**

Effective supervision of activities within the tertiary institutions should be enforced in order to attain quality assurance in tertiary institutions. Supervision involves the use of expert knowledge and experience to oversee, evaluate and coordinate the process of improving teaching and learning activities in school. Close monitoring and supervision of teachers pulsates them to implement educational policies, and reforms. Based on these supervisions, recommendations are made such as provision of adequate facilities and human resources. Supervision creates awareness of sound education philosophies. Igwe in Egbo (2007) describe supervision as a process that the policies, principles, rules, regulations and methods prescribed for the purpose of implementing and achieving the objective of education are carried out. Teachers are influenced, stimulated, coordinated, commanded to carry out their assigned task in order to maintain standard. For quality education to be realized at the tertiary levels of education supervision is highly crucial as it boosts the morale of teachers.

### **Conclusion**

Sustainable democracy can only be achieved if an uneven attention is given to education to ensure its quality seeing that it is the bedrock of any transformation and sustainability. In order to ensure a peak performance by these institutions of higher learning there is need for modalities that will enhance quality output since the Nigerian government has relied on academic dons to come out with reforms in every sector ranging like Charles Soludo who presided over Central Bank of Nigeria, Prof. Jega who presided at the electioneering, Prof. Akwunyili led the battle against fake drugs and many others. The educational sector is the largest enterprise whose functions remain indispensable. It is the centre for research, human resource development and highly dependable to proffer solutions to global needs therefore, quality assurance in this industry cannot be compromised.

## REFERENCES

- Babalola J.B & Adedeji, S.O (2007). Revitalizing quality higher education in Nigeria: options and strategies in Babalola, J.B. Akpa, G.O., Ayeni A.O. & Adsedeki S.O. (eds). Equity and quality in higher education NAEAP.
- Chukuma, F.C (2001). Human resource development in tertiary institution in Africa; issues concerns and directions. In Akubue A.U & Enyi D. (eds) Crisis and challenges in higher education in developing countries. A Book of Reading Ibadan. Wisdom publishers ltd.
- Egbo A.C (2007). Effective supervision quality in education in the university. In Babalola, J.B., Akpa, G.O., Ayeni A.O., Adedeji, S.O (eds) Access, Equality and Quality in education NAEAN publication.
- Etuk, G.K. (2006). Quality assurance in Nigerian universities: implication for management ICT education in Nigeria Journal of Education Administration and Planning NAEAP 6 (1).
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). National Policy on Education. NDERC Abuja
- Ige, N. (2002). Computerization of management information system (MIS) and administrative effectiveness in Nigeria University: A case study of University of Ibadan. Journal of Education Research Development 4(1)31-33
- Madumere-Obike, C. (2004). Managing staff for quality assurance: the secondary education sector. In Ehiazu, B & Muo, O.(eds) Education system. Port Harcourt Mercury International Publishers.
- Njoku, J.E (2003). Acquisition of life-coping skills. The future direction. In Nigerian Journal of curriculum studies 10 (1) 22-27.
- Ojo, L. B. (2006). Total quality management and productivity improvement amongst teachers and learners in private school secondary schools in Lagos state, Nigeria. A postfield report presented at the department of educational management, University of Ibadan. Nigeria. February, 2006.
- Scott P. (2005). Higher Education. In Microsoft Encarta encyclopedia washington, DC Microsoft corporation.
- Tanji, M.E. (2001). A psycho-social investigation into the relationship between the working conditions of lectures and their output: the case of Yaounde. In Akubue A.U & Enyi D. (eds) Crisis and challenges in higher education

education in developing countries. A Book of Reading Ibadan. Wisdom publishers ltd.

Udosen, A.E (2003), A study for laij sound foundaion for permanent literacy curriculum studies 10 (1) 71-76.

Uchendu, C.C; Akuegwu, B.A & Nwi-Ue, F.D (2006). Quality assurance in the management of federal and state owned tertiary institutions in Imo State. In Nigeria Journal of Education Administration and Planning NAEAP 6 (1)