CONSTRAINTS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN MANPOWER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

OKODUGHA, Kingsley Ebedialalu
Institute of Education, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State, Tel: +2347030715884
OLUSI, F. I. Ph.D
Institute of Education, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State
ADOMEH, I. O. C. Ph.D
Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State

ABSTRACT

One of the goals of any country's government is to address the requirements of its citizens by providing high-quality education. This is due to the fact that citizens find it challenging to find modern solutions to the day-to-day issues they face in their local community and at school as a result of the rapidly shifting global dynamics. The delivery of high-quality higher education in Nigeria is now plagued by a plethora of issues that face quality assurance. As a result, this article examines some of the difficulties that Nigerian higher education's quality assurance department faces. Clarification was provided for some of the key terminology, including higher education and quality assurance. It emerged that some of the challenges that stakeholders must manage to ensure quality assurance at the higher education level are staffing, high attrition rate of quality manpower, infrastructural decadence, non-implementation of academic briefs and programmes, inadequate funding; frequent labour disputes and university closures; and poor staff development programmes. It was determined that in order to manage these difficulties, stakeholders must fulfill their supervisory responsibilities by making sure that all educational levels maintain the suggested criteria established by higher education authorities. Furthermore, it was recommended that Nigerian universities establish an internal committee for quality assurance and monitoring in order to supervise quality control in the personnel planning, technical, and administrative departments in order to provide effective services inside the institution.

Keywords: Manpower, Quality Assurance, Constraints, Higher Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the world, there is a growing need for higher education, especially university education (Adegbesan, 2011). As a result, proactive coordination of efforts is required to satiate the public's need for high-quality education. In order to do this, the governments of the majority of countries, especially those in developing countries like Nigeria, frequently have a number of educational initiatives planned to increase access to high-quality education for people of all ages, genders, races, social backgrounds, and minor impairments. The national government of emerging countries like Nigeria has frequently pushed for quality assurance in education at all levels, including higher education.

The government must set up efficient and effective quality assurance agencies at the federal, state/federal, and local government levels to monitor and uphold standards at all educational levels below the tertiary level, according to the national policy on education (FRN,

2013). This will help to ensure learning outcomes. It was also mentioned that the coordination of supervision and inspection of all educational institutions under their purview will be handled by quality assurance organisations in State Ministries of Education/FCT Education Secretariat and Local Government Education Authorities in partnership with the Federal Quality Assurance Agency. The Minister of Education or the Commissioner for Education, as applicable, will oversee the independent operations of Quality Assurance Agencies.

The objectives of the Quality Assurance Agencies are as follows, as stated succinctly in the national policy on education (FRN, 2013): (a) set, maintain, and improve standards in all areas of the school system; (b) ensure minimum standards and quality assurance of instructional activities in schools through regular inspection and continuous supervision; (c) disseminate information on issues and challenges faced by teachers and institutions on a regular basis and provide workable solutions; and (d) encourage the dissemination of information on innovative and progressive educational principles and practices in the school system through publications, workshops, meetings, seminars, conferences, etc.

Quality Assurance Officers' main duties include: (a) conducting inspection visits; (b) sharing information about instructional materials, tried-and-true teaching strategies, and best practices; (c) gathering information about issues faced by teachers in schools and other institutions and offering advice through the appropriate authorities; (d) keeping track of, documenting, and publishing the overall standard of education in schools and offering helpful and constructive guidance; and (e) setting up meetings and workshops for teachers as needed in order to advance their professional competence.

The information presented above demonstrates that a higher education institution has to be continuously evaluated to make sure that established guidelines and standards are being followed. A licence to operate alone is insufficient. This further requires that any higher education institution that wants to expand be one that disciplines itself and establishes standards in order to meet predefined objectives. Accreditation is the process of establishing and confirming that an institution's activities are within approved bounds. Said another way, it's the process of assessing the institution's condition for quality assurance while paying special attention to a few quality indices to make sure things get off to a good start.

Unfortunately, quality assurance is sometimes seen as a one-time event that should only occur when the institution is licenced; yet, in reality, it should continue for as long as the institution is in operation. Given this, it would be advantageous for the researcher to specifically look at the limitations of quality assurance and the responsibilities that stakeholders play in making sure that quality assurance is maintained in Nigerian higher education. Thus, the remaining portions of this article were covered under the following five main headings: Conceptual Issues; Barriers on Quality Assurance in Nigerian Higher Education; Stakeholders' Roles in Quality Assurance in Nigerian Higher Education; Conclusion and Recommendations.

2. CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

There are two (2) main subheadings that address the conceptual concerns in this work. First is the notion of Quality Assurance and the Nigerian Higher Education.

Concept of Quality Assurance for Manpower: It is important to define the term "quality" before establishing quality assurance. Quality is simply the condition of "goodness" or "fitness" of an object, material, location, or phenomena. In a similar spirit, Asiyai and Oghuvbu (2009) defined quality as the degree to which the academic accomplishments and criteria met by the graduates of

a higher education institution are excellent or bad. The fact that this definition only takes into account "academic achievement" and "established standards" as indices of quality makes it extremely limited. Quality in a learning environment is viewed as a multifaceted notion that includes all of the operations and activities of the school, according to Article II of the World Declaration on Education (2003). These activities cover teaching, research and scholarship, staffing, student body, infrastructure and educational facilities, equipment, and the academic atmosphere, among other things. According to this definition, an institution may only receive the highest quality rating when it meets the requirements of one or more of the aforementioned indices.

According to the definition given above, Fadokun (2005) defined quality as having three interrelated components: (i) efficiency in achieving objectives; (ii) significance to human and environmental settings and needs; and (iii) Something more, which refers to the pursuit of excellence, innovation, and the promotion of creativity. These three constituent elements, in his opinion, are critical to the measurement or description of quality. This further demonstrates that when instruction at an institution is of a calibre that satisfies established requirements, the institution may be considered to be of high calibre since it effectively accomplishes its objectives and is relevant to the needs of people and the environment.

As a result, staff planning and development quality control and quality assurance in manpower are related. It makes room for the procedures that generate the final goods. Ajayi and Adegbesan (2007) conceptualised quality assurance in manpower development as being linked to accountability, indicating that workers' effectiveness and efficiency in contexts, missions, and stated objectives are the reason behind their focus on making the most out of educational systems and services. The definition provided indicates that quality assurance for manpower development in education pertains to the continuous provision of resources that meet high standards in order to facilitate efficient teaching and learning throughout the whole educational process. It involves methodically keeping an eye on and assessing every facet of a project, service, or facility in order to increase the likelihood that the system's minimal requirements for quality are being met.

Quality assurance, according to Okebukola (2015), is a catch-all term for a wide range of initiatives aimed at raising the calibre of the system's inputs, processes, and outputs in higher education. According to this definition, quality assurance includes curriculum, students, faculty, equipment, facilities, and the quality of the instructional resources that are readily available for use in the classroom. It may also be seen as the designs intended to raise the calibre of an organization's operations, curriculum, and student results. The aforementioned demonstrates that quality assurance prioritises development in addition to using student and school data to track academic progress towards predetermined goals. Additionally, it emphasises keeping administrators and staff accountable for carrying out their primary roles and obligations in order to assist schools' self-management through collaborative review and self-evaluation. It facilitates the creation and exchange of best practices as well as the execution of regional and local plans. To guarantee quality assurance in education, everyone has a part to play (Ojerinde 2017). The establishment of minimum standards for teacher qualifications, institutional teaching quality, and expected student academic achievement, as well as the creation of a more stringent management process for education, are essential components of quality assurance in education. This will enable the sector as a whole to create stronger operating policies and procedures that are well-documented and strictly followed. This will eventually mature into a comprehensive higher education management system that is consistent with global practices.

Quality assurance in education, as explained by Babalola (2016), is the proactive method of guaranteeing the calibre of inputs on the teaching-learning process, student academic accomplishment, and school atmosphere before problems go out of hand. Therefore, high-quality educational institutions should have high-quality students, faculty, facilities, curricula, and government policies as inputs. They should also have high-quality processing of these inputs from the start of an educational programme to its conclusion, as well as high-quality assessment of the entire teaching process. Nigerian higher education institutions implement both internal and external quality assurance systems, as mandated by accrediting organisations and the institutions themselves, to guarantee uniformity across all institutional operations.

The procedures leading to the establishment of universities and their programmes, programme accreditation, admission of qualified candidates into Nigerian universities, institutional audits by visitors, periodic monitoring and evaluation of the state of universities, and cooperation with professional bodies for efficient university education quality assurance are among the regulatory mechanisms associated with external quality assurance in Nigeria. To encourage and promote quality in the delivery of university education, certain creative concepts were embraced in order to firmly establish the external quality certification process. These include, to name a few, the development of physical structures and facilities, the Nigerian Universities Research and Development Fair (NURESDEF), curriculum reform and review, the Nigerian Universities System Annual Review Meetings (USARM), connections and cooperation with national and international development partners, and linkages and collaboration with experts and academics in the diaspora (LEAD).

Conversely, internal quality assurance refers to procedures used by the University Assessment, upkeep, and advancement of quality within the institution. Delivering a high-quality university education ought to be the natural outcome of any university management procedure. The internal processes begin at the time of university acceptance. All institutions have minimal admission standards that are frequently listed as the foundation for admittance, and admissions committees are typically in charge of handling the procedure. The numerous contributions from departments and faculties ensure quality. This guarantees that applicants who do not fulfill the minimal standards won't be accepted. Strict internal criteria govern how suggestions for new programmes are made. They originate from the Department and are reviewed by faculty boards and the senate. In this manner, all pertinent contributions and questions would have been raised and answered. Universities also periodically examine their curricula in addition to doing routine monitoring. Monitoring takes into account a program's effectiveness in achieving its objectives as well as students' achievement of the desired learning outcomes. At the conclusion of an academic year, the programme team evaluates its own performance, a task often carried out by the department offering the curriculum. Reports from external examiners, comments from faculty and students, reports from any professional organisation that accredits the curriculum, and comments from previous students and their employers are all possible considerations in the process. To guarantee ongoing efficacy, it could lead to changes in the curriculum or in the way assessments are administered.

Higher Education in Nigeria: All tertiary level structured learning activities are included in Nigeria's Higher Education system. The 2013 National Policy on Education defined higher education as any education provided for correspondence courses, including sandwich and distance learning programmes, in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics, and any

other institution. The goals of higher education are to: i) contribute to the growth of the nation by providing advanced, substantial personnel training; and ii) foster and implant moral principles necessary for society to survive. iii). develop students' comprehension skills and help them become more aware of their surroundings. (local and external). iv) acquire intellectual and technical abilities that might help students become resourceful and valuable contributors to society; v). to strengthen and fortify national unity; vi). to stimulate grants and community services; and vii). to advance institutions and understanding on a national and worldwide level.

In addition to its stated aims, which indicate that the primary goals of higher education are national development and the production of labour force, the definition of higher education in Nigeria is that it is the post-secondary education level. In order to successfully achieve the above listed goals of higher education, stakeholders must clearly recognise the obstacles or limitations facing higher education in Nigeria.

Constraints of Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Nigeria

Numerous obstacles facing higher education have made it difficult to ensure quality in Nigerian higher education. Among these difficulties are a lack of employees, a high rate of attrition among qualified workers, unfavourable working conditions, deteriorating infrastructure, a failure to implement academic programmes and briefs, insufficient funding, recurrent labour disputes that result in university closures, and subpar staff development initiatives. These difficulties are covered in brief below:

Staff shortage: One significant issue that has affected quality assurance in Nigerian tertiary institutions is personnel. We cannot have good education, quality assurance cannot be attained without good education, and we cannot hope for a desirable change in the world without an adequate number of inspiring, knowledgeable teachers to lead teaching and research activities in schools. Okoro and Aguguam (2017) pointed that effective teaching is essential for ensuring quality, which is necessary for social change, social transformation, and national advancement. One cannot overstate the value of instructors. Nigerian higher education institutions lack enough lecturers to effectively manage teaching and learning activities, despite the fact that professors are essential to receiving a quality education. The worrying problem of staff scarcity stems from the difficulty higher education institutions face in generating and retaining qualified labour for the workforce. These institutions are tasked with developing high-caliber labour for the workforce. For example, the majority of Nigeria's universities and polytechnics, especially the private ones, lack the number and calibre of academics needed to effectively manage their teaching and research programmes. Clearly, this issue has tarnished Nigeria's quality assurance goals.

The issue of a shortage of qualified personnel is made worse by the fact that most indigenous public universities, which have a dearth of qualified personnel, struggle to share manpower with their private counterparts due to a lack of experienced academic and administrative staff (Bamiro, 2016). The majority of the time, these issues are not caused by a lack of professors at all; rather, they are a result of the lecturers who are available, the majority of whom appear to be too young and inexperienced to perform substantial academic and administrative tasks. As a result, the few academics that are available are severely overworked, and some schools still lack the lecturers needed to staff their courses, which prevents them from receiving full accreditation from the relevant organisations. The private higher education institutions have been encouraged to intensify their staff development initiatives in order to address this issue and facilitate the junior staff members' healthy advancement within the system. Furthermore, a number of institutions have

been urged to place a greater focus on postgraduate education, particularly the first generation public universities like Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) in Ife and the University of Ibadan (UI) in Ibadan.

High attrition rate of quality manpower: Brain drain, or the high attrition rate of qualified labour, is a major issue affecting the calibre of higher education in Nigeria. In comparison to the absence of research centres in Nigerian universities, brain drain has resulted in a deterioration in quality assurance and research outputs from higher education institutions in Nigeria. Research improves instruction and learning, but the calibre of education delivery is jeopardised when highly qualified and experienced faculty members leave universities (Asiyai, 2016).

Talented academics have been leaving large numbers of universities for other economic sectors during the past few decades. Some of the rare gems who may have become professors have entered the political or economic spheres or moved on to other fields where they can provide superior services. In the words of Ekong (2016), many young and experienced academics are leaving Nigeria for more lucrative and demanding fields in the economy, or even outside, due to their unhappiness at not being able to find employment in higher education. There are less opportunities for senior academics in Nigeria to oversee novice researchers due to brain drain, which has an adverse effect on quality control in the country's higher education system.

Poor conditions of service: The conditions of service provided by higher education institutions are not as secure as those provided by conventional businesses. Universities are thus failing to attract the necessary number of prospective students, which seems to have an effect on quality assurance at the tertiary level. In general, people like to work in settings where job security is guaranteed. It is expected that newly created universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education would provide better services than older established universities once they establish themselves in Nigeria. They would be useful in providing a healthy degree of competition for Nigerian higher education institutions in this way.

Infrastructural decadence: In addition to human resources, the calibre and amount of material resources provided to higher education institutions determine the calibre of instruction. The absence of facilities like power, scientific labs, workshops, dorms for students, and libraries might compromise higher education's quality control. These facilities have to fulfil the minimal requirements set out by the National Council for Colleges of Education (NCCE), the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), and the National Universities Commission (NUC) in order to provide high-quality instruction. A small class size is necessary for excellent student-teacher interaction in teaching and learning. Regretfully, most Nigerian universities' lecture halls are packed, with most students listening to lectures while standing in the corridors. In addition, the majority of the nation's universities' libraries are overflowing with out-of-date textbooks, leaving a dearth of contemporary periodicals and textbooks.

The acute lack of educational facilities in Nigeria's higher education institutions has resulted in a fall in the standard of higher education in the nation. For instance, the scientific laboratories and workshops for vocational and technical education used for hands-on exercises in most universities, polytechnics, monotechnics, and colleges of education are devoid of the contemporary tools required for efficient teaching and learning. A number of academics have expressed concern about the unfavourable circumstances in Nigerian higher education institutions (Asiyai, 2015; Odetunde, 2014). In Nigeria, university students are studying in run-down structures with inadequate lighting, ventilation, and furnishings, as well as in conditions that are gloomy and incapacitating for the environment.

Many instructors even share cramped offices. The National Universities Commission conducted a need assessment survey in response to concerns about the poor quality of graduates from Nigeria's higher education institutions. The results were reported by Falayayo (2016) and included the following: a) inadequate academic calendar issues resulting from staff unions' industrial action, which was based on low salaries, wages, and welfare; b) only about 30% of Nigerian students have adequate access to classrooms, lecture halls, laboratories, and libraries; c) there is a deficiency of libraries in terms of currency and number of books, journals, and electronic library support facilities. Establishing a robust library is a must for an academically successful university. This explains why prestigious colleges throughout the globe, including Harvard, Cambridge, and California universities, have a large collection of intellectual resources that are necessary to support teaching and high-caliber research while maintaining a healthy quality assurance system.

Non-implementation of academic briefs and programmes: Owners of institutions are required to create an academic brief before to starting to offer higher education. This is a crucial document that serves as the foundation for both the academic programme and the physical expansion of the school. It includes the academic style, organisational structure, philosophical goals and objectives, and the institutions' potential for expansion. Therefore, it is important that the Academic Brief's content—which aligns with the university's three primary missions of teaching, research, and community service/extension—be the foundation for all institutional development, both academic and physical. Using the academic brief created to direct higher education institutions in Nigeria's future growth and development is a significant challenge to quality assurance. Many of them struggle to follow the guidelines in their academic brief for growth that is healthy.

Many owners of higher education institutions think that having an operating licence gives them the freedom to launch whatever course they choose, including ones that don't require accreditation or permission from relevant authorities. This difficulty has hampered quality control and, in certain situations, resulted in the launch of courses that don't adhere to the Minimum Academic Standards. As a result, these courses cannot be accredited because there is no reference document to begin the process.

Inadequate funding: The issue of insufficient finance for education has hampered the nation's progress in this area. In Nigeria, a large number of universities are unable to construct lecture halls, student residences, outfit labs and workshops, and pay staff salaries, research grants, benefits, and medical expenses on a regular basis (Asiyai, 2015). The ability of Nigeria to produce theoretical and applied knowledge in the fields of science, technology, and the humanities is critical to the country's survival in the twenty-first century, as even the FGN/ASUU Re-negotiation Committee (2009) recognised. As a result, the committee reached a consensus regarding the necessity of a logical and scientific process for determining the funding requirements to start the revitalization of the Nigerian university system. The Nigerian government has not demonstrated sufficient commitment to provide enough finance for higher education, despite all efforts.Regretfully, the federal government of Nigeria has broken a lot of its pledges to provide sufficient funding for higher education institutions (Okoro & Aguguam, 2017). This has had a significant negative impact on quality assurance in educational institutions and produced "wishy washy graduates" who are ill-equipped to compete competitively in the job market or with their graduating counterparts from other nearby countries like Ghana, South Africa, and many more.

Frequent labour disputes and closures of universities: Staff union disagreements and consequent institution closures have an impact on quality assurance. This is due to the fact that

staff productivity and the accomplishment of educational goals and objectives are impacted by institution closures. Asiyai (2015) found that a few major factors that contribute to the recurrent labour conflicts include inadequate financing, non-implementation of ASUU/FGN or SSANU/FGN agreements, low budget, a lack of autonomy and academic freedom, and subpar staff working conditions. For example, the federal government of Nigeria failed to carry out the deal struck with the Academic Staff Union of institutions since 2009, leading to the closure of the institutions on July 2, 2013. Since the 2017 Memorandum of Action (MOA) has not been implemented and the 2009 deal with the federal government has not been renegotiated, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) started an indefinite strike in November 2018. Despite assurances, pledges, and renegotiation between the federal government and the ASSU body, no significant progress has been made, which is regrettably interfering with the academic plan of Nigeria's higher education institutions.

This implies that, in the case of a strike suspension, the length of an academic semester must have been significantly impacted, leaving university employees and students with little to no time to finish their theoretical and practical assignments. It is anticipated that the coursework for a semester will be spliced between a few weeks where academics will be forced to cram lectures in order to make up for the time lost to strikes by the relevant university authorities. The accomplishment of quality workforce development through higher education in Nigeria is further threatened by this kind of academic rush, which does not bode well for quality assurance. Amadi (2017) already submitted this job. He said that the productivity, standard, and quality of the system's output decreased with the degree of crises, disturbances, and antagonism.

Poor staff development programmes: In Nigeria, the majority of universities do not have staff development programmes for employee training and retraining. Academics and non-academics alike will benefit from a vibrant, ongoing staff development programme that helps them define and alter their values, behaviours, attitudes, and skill sets. They increase their knowledge base in this way, which makes them more capable of doing tasks quickly and effectively. Because what we know today is just enough for today, staff development is crucial. In this era of exponentially increasing knowledge and the emerging knowledge-based economy, every country should prioritise staff development. Strong staff development programmes are necessary, according to Peretomode (2016), because several Nigerian higher education institutions' postgraduate courses are lacking. He contended that lecturers at universities are unfamiliar with the features of the educational landscape and have never been required to develop their own educational philosophies or perspectives on teaching and learning. To reinforce this claim, Kolawole (2017) pointed out that it is evident that a doctoral degree is insufficient for genuine study given the rise in phoney scholars in Nigerian higher education institutions following the very quick development of higher education.

Peretomode and Chukwuma (2017) found that there was a substantial correlation between the productivity of lecturers and manpower development. They went on to say that the fall in the standard of tertiary education in Nigeria was due to a lack of staff development initiatives. In a similar vein, Adeogun (2006) pointed out that a worker who is not taught and given ongoing retraining in the most recent advancements in his or her area would quickly lose relevance to the company. Several scholars have reported on the deficiencies in Nigeria's teacher education programme (Ajayi, 2017), which calls for additional teacher training if quality in higher education is to be attained in the nation. Junior lecturers are not exposed to new ideas, facts, theories, and

research findings in higher education because they are not given the opportunity for retraining and are not mentored by professors.

3. CONCLUSION

The government, which has remained Nigeria's primary funder and regulatory body for topics pertaining to higher education, was found to be unable to satisfy the needs of the country's higher education system. The government cannot handle all of the problems associated with education and continue to support it. This is why it is so much more efficient for industry and higher education institutions to work together on research and development projects. It was argued that educational administrators at universities in Nigeria have to make significant sacrifices in order to advance quality assurance in higher education.

Internal stakeholders include academic staff, non-academic staff, university administrators, deans of faculties, directors of institutes, heads of departments, and boards of governors of universities. External stakeholders include the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND), the Federal and State Governments, and the National Universities Commission (NUC). It has been discovered that these bodies bear the primary responsibility for leading the charge to demonstrate their commitment to quality through improved fund donations, institutional policy making and reforms, participatory decision making, donations of health facilities and textbooks, construction of access roads to institutions, and other related issues.

4. SUGGESTIONS

The suggestions that follow are:

Policies that support industries in the real sector to help finance institutions that conduct studies or training of students in real-world fields required for manpower and national development should encourage collaborative efforts by government, business sectors, civil society, and academia. This might aid in reimagining Nigeria's higher education system to provide higher-quality instruction, research, and community services.

Higher education institutions in Nigeria should hire as many teachers as there are students in order to alleviate the staffing gap. Institutional rules have to be updated to place a greater focus on lecturers' efficacious teaching methods in order to provide higher-quality instruction. Additionally, better service conditions, the availability of basic infrastructure, virtual libraries, information communication technologies, and internet access should all be used to create an atmosphere that is supportive of employees. This would improve their work ethic and enable them to provide high-quality services.

To ensure efficient service delivery, Nigerian higher education institutions should establish an internal quality assurance and monitoring committee to supervise quality control in all academic, technical, and administrative departments.

The Nigerian government should place a high priority on education by spending the recommended 26% of its budget on education, as recommended by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), in order to help revitalise the higher education system. This will help address the challenges of a high attrition rate of quality manpower, poor conditions of service, infrastructural decadence, inadequate funding, frequent labour disputes, and university closures. To make this easier, the Nigerian federal government should adopt a strategy on how the private sector should actively contribute to the development of physical facilities and financing at Nigerian universities in order to raise the calibre of higher education.

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