

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The issue of quality assurance in education has become a matter of concern for stakeholders in educational institutions and government in order to meet the expectations of society and to improve education service delivery. This is becoming worrisome in that most of the government policies are focused on the quantitative rather than qualitative aspect of institutional development. Government has recently increased the number of higher institutions in the country without giving attention to the carry capacity, learning conditions and the budget allocated to the existing higher institutions. However, this piece of article harnesses an overview on quality assurance in English language education for sustainable national development in Nigeria. The work is a literature base paper. It addresses the need for quality assurance in English language education in Nigeria. Language in general is the only sustainable weapon that can bind a multilingual nation like Nigeria together. In the same vein, the English language occupies a very significant role in the formation of national values and integration of Nigerian nation especially in the sustainability of her society. The essence of this paper is to re-examine the structures and contents of the quality assurance principles in English language education in Nigeria, education for sustainable development, and English language as a tool for sustainability, empowerment, unity and national development. The writers maintain that if the quality assurance is repositioning for sustainable national development, it will add values and unity to the development of Nigeria society. Also, it will enable Nigerians acquire the lifelong skills, critical thinking, and problem solving needed to survive in the contemporary era.

Keywords: Quality Assurance, English Language, Language Education, Sustainable Development and National Development.

Introduction

Education is a powerful instrument of change. In various parts of the world, education is seen as the most dynamic instrument for achieving national development. It is the same in Nigeria where education stands out as the most important tool for national development. This is highly rated in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) which stated that the Federal Government has adopted education as the instrument “per excellence” for achieving national

development. Education is therefore, seen as an avenue for preparing the young for the task of successful living in the society. In describing education as an instrument of national development, the policy further includes “the formulation of ideas, the integration of national development and the interaction of persons and ideas, as parts of the aspects of education.

Education is the instrument for economic empowerment and development for sustainable economy (vuzo, 2019). One of the goals of National Policy on Education is the acquisition of appropriate skills and development of mental, physical and social abilities as equipment for the individuals to live and contribute to the development of the society. Learning both formally and informally determines the individual’s ability to contribute to national development. It therefore follows that the quality of education received by the citizens determines the level of development of any nation.

Quality assurance in language education teaching has been a prime concern in many institutions as it directly reflects on the performance of the students. In Nigeria, a recent government initiative is set to alter the landscape of the formal higher education on a massive scale, by focusing on access, quality and equity and improving quality of the nation institutions through prescribed norms and standard of accreditation. Along with the rapid expansion of English Language as a Lingua Franca, a higher level of expertise is being demanded of English Language Teachers (ELTs).

The adoption of quality assurance in education as an emerging policy in the contemporary world started in Thailand in 1990 at the World Conference on Education for all, led by UNESCO were representatives of the international community agreed that all countries should put greater effort to ensure excellence towards improving all aspects of quality in their education (Ayeni, 2010 and Dorcas, 2019). However this research paper stresses on the quality assurance in language education and education in general, benefits and purposes of quality assurance in education and overview of linguistic quality assurance in language education. The paper also emphasises on education for sustainable national development, English language as a tool for sustainable national development as well as lifelong skills for sustainable national development.

Operational Definition of Terms

Quality Assurance (QA): According to Wikipedia, quality assurance is the term used in both manufacturing and service industries to describe the systematic efforts taken to ensure that the products delivered to customers meet with the contractual and other agreed upon performance, design, reliability, and maintainability expectations of the customers. The core purpose of quality assurance is to prevent mistakes and defects in the development and production of educational delivery. Assuring quality and therefore avoiding problems and delays in the delivery of educational services to the learners. Quality assurance comprises administrative and procedural activities implementation in a quality system so that requirements and goals for an educational services or activity will be accomplished. Dorcas (2019) defined quality assurance as a systematic measurement, comparison with a standard, and monitoring of processes in an associated feedback loop that confers error prevention. This can be contrasted with quality control, which is focused on process output.

From the foregoing, quality assurance includes two principles: “fit for purpose” (the educational services should be suitable for the intended purpose); and “right first time” (mistakes should be eliminated). Quality assurance can be viewed as part of the quality

management focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled. The confidence provided by quality assurance in the educational system is in two folds- internally to management and externally to the learners, government agencies, regulators, certifiers and third parties.

The English Language: The English language in this context refers to the vernacular or mother tongue of the British people, who ruled almost three quarters of the world countries through the instrumentality of colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism (Ugboja & Ijoko, 2022). It is the official or second language (L₂) used in most of the countries formerly ruled by Britain under the auspices of Common Wealth of Nations. It is the language of politics, education, commerce, trade, religion, media and sports in the aforementioned and adopted countries.

Language Education: Language education is the teaching and learning of a foreign and second language. It has to do with language policy and planning. Language education is the acquisition of specialised knowledge, skills and other capabilities in language in a formal educational institution. It refers to the study of art of language which, in effect involves the understanding of the nature and importance of language as a vehicle for communication and insight into the processes of language development. It further includes the techniques of developing the four language skills.

Language education is a branch of applied linguistics that is more commonly used with regard to second language learning of a foreign language. The study of language education is based on the general importance of language as an instrument for human activities on earth (Haddy, 2011).

Language education and learning are so closely related that it is very rare to discuss one process without discussing the other. It is the bridge that one crosses to communicate and share ideas with people of different cultures and learn in school. Accordingly, Makiluwa (2001) stated that language education has two dimensions vis-à-vis language in education and language of education. The former refers to language taught or learn in educational system as a school subject, while the later has to do with language use as medium of instruction.

Nature is an expression of God. The whole creation has messages embedded which can only be unraveled through different perceptions kindled by intelligence and thought. There is a language of nature, of animals, of every living and non-living things. They respond to particular stimuli. To understand this language requires a refined insight. There is a communication going on in nature and to understand this requires learning and understanding. This is called knowledge. Different schools of thought including logic, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, chemistry, etc can have different dimensions depending on the language.

National Development: National development is the capacity of the country to raise the standard of living of its residents. It can be achieved by providing individuals with basic livelihood requirements and supplying them with employment, etc. Development is a process that create growth, brings in progress and positive change. Development is a healthy sign. The two aspects of development noticeable are: economic growth or increase in peoples' income and social progress includes literacy, health and the provision of public services which the concern of the paper.

Accordingly, John Vaisey as cited in Akindutire and Ekundayo (2012) defined national development as the overall influence of all human forces and the increase to the inventory of

physical, human capital, knowledge, and skill. The concept known as “national development” encompasses a lot of ground. It encompasses all facets of an individual’s life as well as the life of a nation. It takes a holistic approach to the problem. It is a process that involves the reconstruction and development of numerous aspects of a nation as well as the development of individuals. It encompasses the whole growth as well as the expansion of our societal, religious, and cultural institutions, as well as our agricultural and manufacturing sectors. In addition to this, the term “national development” refers to the improvement of an entire nation. It refers to the improvement of a country in all areas, including the political, economic, social, cultural, scientific, and material spheres. The capacity of a nation to enhance its citizens’ standard of living is an indicator of the nation’s level of development. It is possible to accomplish this by offering them the essential components of a means of subsistence, such as employment opportunities, equal status, etc.

Quality Assurance in Education

Quality assurance involves the systematic review of educational provision to maintain and improve its quality, equity and efficiency. It encompasses schools self-evaluation, external evaluation (including inspection), the evaluation of teachers and school leaders, and students assessments. Developing strong quality assurance systems is crucial to support high-quality inclusive education across all sectors of education in Nigeria. It is also important to support the implementation of the government recommendations on key competences for lifelong learning and on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the dimension of teaching.

Furthermore, quality assurance is vital to create the conditions for facilitating student mobility across all sectors, in particular through enhanced transparency and trust. Quality assurance also plays key role in supporting the mutual recognition of upper secondary qualifications and the outcome of learning. Accordingly, Europe Union (2020), a group composed of experts from EU national governments and stakeholder organization stated that, the group meets regularly to examine specific aspects of policies linked to quality assurance in education, to discuss shared challenges and to exchange best practices. The working group has provided guidance for policy makers on quality assurance for school development. It has also produced a report on supporting school self-evaluation as a key mechanism for school development.

In the same vein, in its communication on school development and excellent teaching for a great start in life, the commission has outlined areas for action to improve educational system, including through the development of quality assurance systems.

Benefits and Purposes of Quality Assurance in Education

UNESCO (2023) identified the following quality assurance to enable the members of educational institutions to:

1. bring internal benefits to the management, department, staff and the program.
2. bring external benefits to the students and the reputation of the institutions.
3. continuously improve themselves, the students and the work of the university. Continuous improvement in both the medium and outcome of the quality assurance.
4. serve accountability and accreditation requirements.

5. enhance the reputation of the educational systems, and meet external demands for demonstrating quality, quality assurance and quality enhancement.

Quality Assurance in Language Education Teaching and Learning

As a foreign language teacher, you must be fluent in the language you plan to teach. You need extensive knowledge of the grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation as well as an understanding of the culture in countries and locales where the language is commonly spoken. Excellent communication, organization, and the teaching skills will help throughout your career. Most employers require experience working with students in a classroom setting. You need experience preparing class materials, creating and grading assignments, and delivery lessons. The best foreign language teacher has real-world experience living in the country where the language is spoken.

According to Sherine (2013) a foreign language teacher works with students to learn the language. Your job duties include developing curriculum, giving presentations, grading assignments, and interacting with students on a daily basis. Your goal is to provide overall foreign language comprehension, including speaking, reading and writing in the language. Most foreign language teachers work in schools, and universities, although positions are sometimes available at government agencies and private organizations.

Overview of Linguistic Quality Assurance in Language Education

As a content owner or localisation project manager who is responsible for translation quality, you need the right tool to help linguists produce high-quality translations. The process of evaluating and providing feedback on translations is instrumental to enriching quality. Smartly provide a range of quality features to encourage translation quality-the most versatile being linguistic quality assurance (Sherine 2013).

Linguistic Quality Assurance (LQA) is incremental to the evolution of your localisation standard. LQA is a process by which human linguists review translations and, by using a set methodology or schema, determine if they contain any objective errors. Errors are grouped into categories. Examples of objective translation errors could include, but are not limited to:

1. any inaccuracy or inconsistency with your glossary, style guide, translation memory.
2. a disregard of your quality checks.
3. a disregard of instructions or information shared in an attachment.
4. inadequate spelling or grammar.
5. a translation taken out of content.

Felicia (2008) stated that LQA can be performed by internal localisation terms or outsource, and it can be evaluated from any method of translation, including human translations, machine translations or machine translations with edits. The process of performing linguistic quality assurance begins with the recording of the errors in a set of translations and ends with reporting analysis. Smartly LQA feature is influential in your localisation process. By evaluating translation quality in a scoring schema, any category with high error counts helps you identify focus areas in translation quality that need improvement to increase the standard of your translation.

Education for Sustainable National Development

Education for sustainable national development gives learners of all ages the knowledge, skills, values and agency to address interconnected goal challenges including climate change, loss of biodiversity, unsustainable use of resources, and inequality (UNESCO, 2023). It empowers learners of all ages to make informed decisions and take individuals and collective action to change society and care for the planet. Education for sustainable national development is a lifelong learning process and an integral part of quality education. It enables the cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural dimensions of learning and encompasses learning content and outcome, pedagogy and the learning environment itself.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is UNESCO's education sector response to the urgent and dramatic challenges the planet faces. The collective activities of human beings have altered the earth's ecosystems so that our very survival seems in danger because of changes more difficult to reverse every day. To contain global warming before it reaches catastrophic levels means addressing environmental, social and economic issues in a holistic ways. UNESCO's ESD for 2030 education programme aims to bring about the personal and societal transformation that is necessary to change course (UNESCO, 2023).

Vuzo (2019) opined that acting as a global advocate and aiming to strengthen capacities of governments to provide quality Climate Change Education (CCE), UNESCO provides and shares knowledge; provide policy guidance and technical support to its member states and implements projects on the ground. UNESCO encourages innovative approaches and enhances non- formal education programmes through media, networking and partnerships.

English Language as a Tool for Sustainable National Development

Obiegbo (2015) expressed that English language is a tool for sustainable development in Nigeria. He pinpointed that this can be seen in the areas of educating economic growth and as a driving force for national unity in Nigeria. Igiri et al, (2022) made a detailed explanation of the importance of the English language as cited in Ndimele (2006) which said that the English language is the language of education in Nigeria. He further explained that apart from the first three years of a child's life in the primary school that was mentioned in the National Policy on Education, the rest of the child's life in the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions, all academic activities must be done in the English language. The English language according to Obiegbo (2015) is a language of prestige per excellence and a firm knowledge of it is an assurance of climbing the educational ladder of success in Nigeria. Obiagbu (2015) as cited in Igiri et al (2022) identified the following being the importance of the English language in economic growth and empowerment, and national unity and development in Nigeria.

Economic Growth and Empowerment: economically, the English language is the avenue to sustainable national development in Nigeria. Economists in Nigeria believe that English language is crucial for economic growth and empowerment, as it helps them trade more widely on an international scale. Nigeria can do international business because we have English as our official language. English is very important when hiring a new employee. This underlines the fact that the English language skills enhance business and trade, while also improving and individual's economic conditions. An individual's economic empowerment in Nigeria is closely linked with good command of English. A wide range of business categories in Nigeria including the banking industry, and even vocational workers such as carpenters

and electricians see increased need for the English language skills. The government of Nigeria firmly recognised that English is a key element of business communication and it is essential for attracting new investment.

National Unity and Development: English language also serves as a tool for sustainable national development in the area of national unity in Nigeria. Amidst, the compounding complexity and wars in the northern part of Nigeria, the only language that still emits the spirit of oneness in Nigeria is the English language. More often than not, activities conducted in indigenous languages are seen as being ethnic or tribal, except in cultural celebration or ethnic displays. This explains why, even during the first republic and during the colonial era, when English had not attained its present level of ascending in national and international affairs, political parties were formed in the English language. However, the parties might have regional bases but the fact that they were named in English entailed their national identity. The Northern People's Congress (NPC), the Action Group (AC), the National Council of Nigeria Citizen (NCNC) after the excursion of Southern Cameroon, National Element Progressive Union (NEPU) etc, were formed to integrate all Nigeria and give them a sense of belonging Zygmunt, 2016).

The Impact of Good Governance in Language Education for Sustainable Development

There is a linear relationship between good governance and a functional language education. There cannot be a functional language education where a country's resources and power are not well utilized for the citizens of the nation (Ijoko et al, 2022). Florence (2015) viewed governance as the use of state resources and power in an accountable way to achieve and promote the well-being of the citizenry. This means that when the power and resources are not well managed for the welfare of the citizen, there is bound to be a problem. The power and resources in Nigeria are not well utilized by the people.

There has not been good governance in Nigeria in the past decades. The worst has been from democratic era when the country changed from the military dictatorship to the democratic rule. However, there is this belief that "good governance thrives in a democratic government" (Aina et al, 2017). Good governance thrives in a democratic setting. In a similar way, where there is no democratic government there can be no good governance. The submission here is that there are many indicators to reveal the lack of good governance in Nigeria. Many of these crippled our education and affected language education badly more than any disciplines.

The primary cause of the lack of good governance in Nigeria is the absence of visionary leaders to lead the country. Most of the leaders Nigeria ever had since the return of democracy in 1999 have been in power to pursue personal, ethnic and religious ambitions. These leaders had no vision for the good of the nation. Most of the developmental challenges Nigeria had today is attributed to these leaders who lacked good vision for the nation (Odo, 2015). Therefore, good governance requires the good role of responsible and responsive political, traditional and religious leaders.

Corruption is the abuse of public office for private gain, and it is an aspect of bad governance (Ogundiya, 2010). Ijoko et al emphasised that corruption is evil, and it affects all areas of human lives. Corruption has become the way of life in Nigeria the case is worrisome in educational institutions. It is the agent for all other problems facing Nigeria as a nation depends on. The insecurity, unemployment, kidnapping, poverty, divorce, hunger and

deprivation, injustice and others are some of the problems corruption is breeding in Nigeria. These are clear evidence of lack of good governance in Nigeria. This leads us to look at the influence of language in propagating insecurity in Nigeria.

Lifelong Skills for Sustainable National Development

Lifelong skills are skills for success. They include things such as understanding and managing emotions, setting and achieving goals, feelings and showing empathy, creating meaningful relationships, and responsible decision. Cote (2021) identified eight sustainability skills to make problem- solving, calculate and pitch potential values, basic data skills and effective communication of difference in lifelong skills for sustainable national development. There are: foundation knowledge, strong leadership, an ability to identify strategic opportunity, forward-thinking, creating purpose. Sustainability should not just be left to those with their job titles, instead, professionals at all levels can benefit from developing sustainability and social responsibility knowledge skills.

This framework divided 21st century skills into two categories namely: 1. Learning and innovation skills, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and collaboration; 2. Information, media, and technology skills, which involve information literacy, media literacy and ICT (Karaca-Atik et al, 2023).

Conclusion

Communication is one of the vital skills for the current global trend. Language is a central aspect for communication and hence language education should be promoted to acquire requisite skills necessary for the future of students and for the quality sustainable language education as needed for education and development. Therefore, if the idea of quality assurance in language education is to create a system that is sustainable, it means that one can keep going indefinitely into the futures. Hence, the English language becomes the key factor to unending development in Nigeria in the area of quality assurance in language education for sustainable national development.

Suggestions

From the topic “quality assurance in English language education for sustainable national development in Nigeria”, the researchers carefully outline some facts to prove that English language education can be repositioning in order to help in the sustainable national development in Nigeria. Therefore, the following suggestions are made:

1. effort should be made for the development of the English language proficiency in its diversity for sustainability and quality assurance process.
2. English language education curriculum in Nigeria should also be restructured in such a way that it can expose and build a speaker of the language to be able to function in a variety of socio-cultural levels on both the micro and macro scales.
3. for the English language education to be more interesting, it should be on wider institutional and administrative content than just focus in examination and thereby limiting the learner’s knowledge to pass and not necessary to acquire the necessary information needed to empower the learners after their education.

4. for practical purposes, English language education in Nigeria schools should be strategically planned and implement changes in teaching and learning skills and extra-curricular activities.

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