

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Without quality teaching, achieving quality outcome in education in Nigeria which will lead to sustainable national development will not be possible. There is then need for quality assurance in the education received by teachers and would-be-teachers because the quality of any educational system depends in that system. This paper therefore, treated the concepts of sustainable development, and education for sustainable national development. It also looked at quality assurance in education, as well as teacher education in Nigeria. It stressed quality assurance and teacher education in Nigeria. It in addition highlighted the challenges to quality assurance in teacher education in Nigeria. The paper suggested among other things that the government of Nigeria and other stakeholders should make teacher education a priority and as such, ensure the provision of the resources needed in the training of student/would-be-teachers. To enable pre-service and in-service teachers upgrade and update their knowledge and skills, professional development programmes should always be organized for them.

Keywords: Teacher Education, Quality Assurance, Quality Education, Sustainable Development.

Introduction

For any society to achieve sustainable development, there is need for the improvement of her quality of education, and the quality of any educational system largely depends on the quality of the teachers in the school system. This is why the Federal Government of Nigeria (NPE) (2014) stated that no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers. Teachers play key roles in sustainable development, for there can be no meaningful socio-economic and political development in any given society without the teachers. Their knowledge, competencies and skills are crucial for restructuring educational processes and institutions towards sustainable development which is the development that endures for both now and in the future. According to Adelakun (2016), it is a quantitative and qualitative advancement that can stand the taste of time or over a long period of time at the same time giving future generation the opportunity to meet up with their needs.

Teacher education through which teachers are produced should be taken seriously in Nigeria knowing the importance of teachers in national development. There should be quality assurance which is used to carry out quality management, and to help ensure that appropriate academic standards are fulfilled and maintained.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development has become a very popular concept used in many fields. It is often seen as the development that satisfies the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. In the definition of Sustainable Development Commission (SDC, 2004), sustainable development is a framework for redefining progress and redirecting the economy to enable people meet their basic needs and improve their quality of life, while ensuring that the national systems, resources and diversity upon which they depend are maintained and enhanced both for their benefits and for that of future generation. Sustainable development is all round well-being of present generation without forgetting the well-being of the generation to come. According to Agyeman, Bullard and Evans (2003), it is the need to ensure a better quality of life for all, now and in the future, in a just and equitable manner, whilst living within the limits of supporting ecosystems. This definition according to Agyeman (2005) is hinged on the following four conditions: (1) Improving the quality of life and well-being of people; (2) Meeting the needs of the people today and the future generations; (3) Justice and equity in terms of cognition, process, procedure and outcomes; and (4) The need to live within ecosystem limits. Sustainable development has three components – social, economic and environmental sustainability. It has according to Hasna (2007) been further extended to cover other domains such as ecological, political and cultural sustainability, all of which are interdependent. As an organized principle, sustainable development addresses natural systems for now and in the future, linking the present to the future.

Education for Sustainable National Development

Education has always been regarded as the bedrock for national development. This is because education builds skills, change values and modify the behaviour of an individual such that the individual is moulded and guided to become useful to him/herself and to the society at large. By being educated, people are equipped with knowledge and skills to improve themselves and others in the community. Through education, the populace is skilled to be able to meet the challenges of global change. This is why the Federal Republic of Nigeria (NPE), (2014) recognizing this fact, stated that education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plan because it is the most important instrument of change and any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by educational revolution. In other words, education is the key to sustainable national development, an instrument for nation development according to Federal Republic of Nigeria, (NPE) (2014).

The relationship between education and sustainable development is so intimate that one cannot be dispensed from the other. Education is an indispensable tool in life which aims to equip individual with relevant knowledge and skill to meet day-to-day challenges and to promote national growth and development. It is an instrument of change and the key that unlocks the doors of development (Uzodinma, 2017). Stressing this fact, Osakwe (2016) views education as a tool for nation building which involves systematic training and instructions designed to transmit knowledge, skills, potentials and abilities which enable an individual to contribute effectively to his or her growth and development. He further stated

that education trains the mind, the body and the brain through acquisition of values, skills and knowledge that help to shape man and lay foundation for sustainable growth and development of a nation. To achieve sustainable development in Nigeria, there is need to inculcate the type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual member of Nigeria Society; training of the mind in the understanding of the world around and the acquisition of the appropriate skills and development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies for an individual to live in and contribute to the society (FRN, 2014).

Education for sustainable development enables people to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to shape a sustainable future. UNESCO, 2017 defined Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as helping the people to develop knowledge, skills, values and behaviours needed for sustainable development. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) was declared to be an enabler for sustainable development with the potential to empower learners to transform themselves and the society they live in (UNESCO, 2014). One can therefore conclude that one of the necessary conditions for sustainable development is that individuals in society have adequate education, which means that human being owe their existence and development on earth to education.

Quality Assurance in Education

Quality can be seen as the degree of excellence. Quality has to do with whether something is good or bad according to Robert-Okah and Osiobe (2014). Quality is relative with attribute and characteristics, and is about the standard of something when compared with other things, which means, there is a standard set. Quality assurance helps to ensure that products or services rendered are in perfect order, even beyond the expectation of the recipient. In the opinion of Ukwungwu (2008), quality assurance is used to express “**Fitness for purpose**”.

The main purpose of setting up any institution is to provide effective teaching and learning so that the outcome will be of desired standard. This takes one to quality in education which is seen in terms of the positive change in the learner and the overall satisfaction the society derives from education provided to the learner. Quality education fulfills the needs and expectation of members of a society, and is fundamental to societal development. This is because the products solve environmental and societal needs of the nation. A quality education is required to adequately prepare learners for adult life roles. It should enhance the capability of its recipients to improve and bring about positive improvement in their societies. According to Arikewuyo (2004), quality in education is to be judged by both its ability to enable the students perform well in standard examinations and to be relevant to the needs of the students, community, and the society as a whole. UNESCO/UNICEF in Maple (2011) viewed quality education from these three perspectives: (i) Quality education refers to the extent to which the educational system meets or tends to respond to the economic needs of the society. (ii) It refers to the effectiveness with which the educational system promotes or reinforces among children and young people, the culture and values, morals and attitudes particular to a given society. (iii) It refers to learners’ performances or standard of attainment in different school subjects. Quality education can be said to be a well-planned, systematic training programme acquired by man to enable him function effectively in the society which he finds himself (Ezeonwuka and Okanume-Onah, 2016). This pre-supposes that the quality of an education system is suspicious if its recipients

cannot function effectively in the society. In other words, if the quality of a system does not fulfill the purpose for which it was designed, it is then of low quality. Quality education is indispensable in a society that needs to break the circle of poverty, disease, ignorance and under-development. Without quality, education becomes a wastage and even poses danger to the individual beneficiary and the society. This calls for the mounting of strategy in the school system for ensuring quality, which in other word is called quality assurance.

Quality assurance ensures that a school develops and performs in line with the curriculum and standards set for the production of quality students. Ozioko and Ugbo (2019) stated that quality assurance in education is a process of monitoring, assessing, evaluating and reporting objectively based on agreed quality standards, all aspects of school life to ensure that acceptable standards are attained, maintained and improved upon continually. In addition according to them, quality assurance processes and practices are dynamic and provide the needed guidance and support to schools for consistent improvement in learning outcomes. Quality assurance focused on the following: (i) Learners' entry behaviour, characteristics and attributes including some demographic factors that can inhibit or facilitate their learning. (ii) The teacher entry qualification, values pedagogic stalls, professional preparedness, subject background, philosophical orientation etc. (iii) The teaching/learning process including the structure of the curriculum and learning environment. (iv) The outcomes, which are defined for different levels in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes including appropriate and relevant instruments to access these objectives (Ehinder, 2004).

In the words of Vasceanu in Ozioko and Ugbo (2019), quality assurance is an aggregate of actions and measures taken regularly to assure the quality of education products, services or processes, with an emphasis on assuring that a prescribed threshold of quality is met. With these, Ozioko and Ugbo (2019) deduced that quality assurance in Education is a totality of the combination of such indispensable variables as quality teachers, quality instructional materials and quality infrastructure (classrooms, seats, tables, chalkboards etc). Others include favourable teachers/pupils ratio, favourable pupil/classroom ratio and quality instructional supervision.

There are some things that can enhance/facilitate quality assurance in education, they include; recruitment of quality personnel, opportunity for professional growth and development, proper supervision, adequate funding of education, improvement of teachers working condition/welfare, and evaluation of goals and objectives. All these and more will result to quality product from education that can solve societal problems and bring about national development.

Teacher Education in Nigeria

Teachers are very significant asset in the education system because they are the greatest determinants of quality in that system. And again, as education unlocks the door to national development, it is the teachers that hold the key to that door. They aim at bringing about desired outcomes in the individual learners and in turn, the society at large. Mkpa (2009) defined a teacher as a professional, who consciously and deliberately uses his/her wealth of experience, training skills, competencies, attitudes, interests, knowledge of content with the help of instructional materials, methods/techniques to impact a less experienced person. This definition implies that a teacher is trained and equipped for his job. It is only when a teacher is adequately sound in content, methods, strategies and techniques that he/she

can impact effectively to the learner. Professional training and teacher education is then imperative for the production of good and efficient teachers.

Teacher education is the education of those who teach or those who will teach in our educational institutions. Nwabueze, Nnamagu and Nnamchi (2019) defined teacher education as a professional education and training given to teacher for the attainment of attitudes, skills and knowledge that are desirable to make them more efficient and effective in their duties, in accordance with the need of a given society at any point in time. According to Okafor in Ogbonnaya (2010), teacher education is that form of education which is properly planned and systematically tailored and applied for the cultivation of those who teach or will teach, particularly, but not exclusively, in primary and post-primary levels of schooling. This means that teacher education institutions have well planned courses and programmes for the production of teachers who teach mainly in primary and post-primary schools. A coherent teacher education programme should systematically embrace integrated curriculum innovations which reflect the social, economic and political environment of a modern society to solve societal problems (Ogunyinka, Okeke and Adedoyin, 2015). The Federal Government of Nigeria (NPE) (2014) stated that teacher education programmes shall be structured to equip teachers for the effective performance of their duties. Teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all our educational planning and development since no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers. The following institutions among others, shall give the required professional training provided they continuously meet the required minimum standards: (a) Colleges of Education (b) Faculties of Education (c) Institutes of Education (d) National Teachers' Institute (e) Schools of Education in the Polytechnic (f) National institute for Nigerian Languages (NIN LAN) (g) National Mathematical Centre (NMC).

The general purpose of teacher education is to enable teachers to develop the skills and qualities that will increase their professional effectiveness. The goals of teacher education in Nigeria as contained in the Federal Republic of Nigeria (NPE) (2014) are to provide highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational system. It is also to encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers and to help them to fit into the social life of the community and society at large, and to enhance their commitment to national objectives. Another goal is to provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to changing situations. In addition to this, the goals of teacher education in Nigeria as contained in the National Teacher Education Policy (NTEP) (2009) are to ensure that teachers have sufficient mastery of content and varied methods of teaching that are subject specific, including teachers for special need learners; ensure structured, effective and supportive supervision of teaching practice and induction as well as certification and licensing; motivate teachers and provide opportunities for their continuing professional development, retention, advancement and improvement in their chosen career; and ensure that teachers constantly upgrade their skills in order to retain competence and relevance in the their teaching career. These goals are noble and if strictly followed would greatly improve the effectiveness and efficacy of the teachers which would subsequently improve instruction delivery in Nigerian institutions.

Teacher education is organized in three stages considered as part of a continuous process. They are: pre-service, induction and in-service. The pre-service course or initial

teacher training/education before entering the classroom as a fully responsible teacher is the first stage. The second stage is the induction which is the process of providing training and support during the first few years of teaching or the first year in a particular school. This training and support enable newly recruited teachers to properly adapt to the school classroom environment. The third stage is the in-service which is a process for practicing teachers for teacher development or continuing professional development. All these aimed at meeting the national demands which is producing teachers with adequate knowledge, skills and ideas to promote sustainable national development.

Quality Assurance and Teacher Education in Nigeria

Teachers are among the main determinants of the quality of any educational system. The validity of any educational system naturally is dependent upon the availability of competent teachers and the quality of teaching. The education of teachers is therefore the foundation of quality in schools because it provides pre-service and in-service teachers with the knowledge and skills that help increase their professional effectiveness. As defined by Agwu and Iduma (2016), teacher education is an institutionalized procedure designed for the professional training of those who engage in the business of teaching. It is a major pillar that supports the growth and development of any society as the quality of the education determines the quality of the teacher and that subsequently gives rise to the quality of students. In other words, adequate teacher training at all levels of the education system and effective teaching are very crucial in the achievement of quality education and national development. Teacher education is therefore expected to function by equipping teachers with the knowledge, skills and competencies that will enable them develop and impact in their students the required positive changes.

The goals of teacher education as stated in the National Policy on Education are laudable and clear, and the Federal Government of Nigeria in recognition of the pivotal role of quality teachers in the provision of quality education at all levels stated in the National Policy on Education (2014) that teacher education shall continue to be emphasized in educational planning and development and the minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession shall be the National Certificate of Education (NCE). The Federal and State governments in order to ensure better outcomes from teacher education have supported in various ways such as providing funds, making policies to be of guide to educational institutions, laying emphasis on quality education and review of curriculum through various agencies saddled with such responsibilities. The various institutions that are engaged in teacher education, in order to enhance quality of programmes offered by them, put up some internal mechanisms. In addition to this, there are some external measures to ensure that teacher education programmes meet the expected standard. Such external measures include, the establishment of agencies to regulate, accredit and maintain acceptable standards of the programme in the training institutions. These agencies include: (i) National University Commission (NUC), (ii) National Commission for College of Education (NCCE), and (iii) Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN). The National Universities Commission (NUC) and the National Commission of Colleges of Education (NCCE) are bodies established by the Federal Government to moderate the activities of Universities and Colleges of Education in Nigeria. These bodies according to Okebukola (2010) are to accredit, monitor, evaluate programmes implementation from time to time through the constitution of

visitation panels or external audit panels empowered to examine the relevance and adequacy of the input process and output elements of the teaching, learning, research and other activities of the teacher education programmes based on set minimum standards. The Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) is the professional teachers' regulatory body, empowered by law to register teachers of different categories such as: NCE graduates, B.Sc/B.Ed graduates, M.Sc and Ph.D teachers.

Challenges of Quality Assurance in Teacher Education in Nigeria

The challenges which teacher education in Nigeria face are numerous, and as a result, they produce many half-baked teachers who tend to be inefficient. As observed by Agwu and Iduma (2016), a lot of graduate teachers graduated with excellent results but have little or nothing to offer in the classroom. They find it very difficult to express themselves in simple and correct English. Many of them do not have a good knowledge of the subject matter they teach. This therefore according to them, places a lot of question mark on how they were admitted into the teacher education programmes and how they managed to graduate with very good grades. Some of those challenges which confront teacher education programmes in Nigeria include: Over admission/over population of students, type of candidates admitted into teacher education programmes, inadequate physical facilities and poor management, inadequate funding, staff recruitment, poor welfare scheme and working condition of lecturers, attitude of lecturers towards teaching and supervision, corruption, non-adherence to quality assurance and quality control practices, lack of adequate planning for the future, non commitment of government to confronting challenges in the educational sector, policy inconsistency, insecurity etc. If these problems are well handled, there will be better output from teacher education institutions.

Conclusion

Quality teachers are the strength of every nation and they hold the key to national development. This is because quality and effective teachers impart the right knowledge and skills to students, and as such, beget functional citizens that would make for national development. Such quality teachers can only be produced through quality education programmes. The education of teachers is therefore very important, and adequate attention and consideration should be given to it. Effective teacher education is imperative if Nigeria must realize her dream, philosophy and goals of education in Nigeria. It is only when teachers are properly trained and re-trained that the quality of education in Nigeria will be improved, and that will in turn lead to sustainable national development. There must be quality assurance in teacher education for the goals of teacher education in Nigeria to be achieved. This means that quality control mechanisms put in place in teacher education institutions must be maintained and improved upon.

Recommendations

The government of Nigeria and other stakeholders should make teacher education a priority, and as such, ensure the provision of the resources needed in the training and re-training of would-be-teachers and teachers.

To enable pre-service and in-service teachers upgrade and update their knowledge and skills, professional development programmes should always be organized for them.

~~The appointment of lecturers in the teacher education institutions should be purely on merit so that unqualified personnel will not be employed to teach the would-be-teachers.~~
Dr. Lily Gertrude Njoku

Lecturers who compromise quality in teacher education programmes should be sanctioned.

Candidates to be admitted into teacher education programmes should not be those who cannot secure admission into other courses of their choice, and have no alternative choice, rather those who have interest in the profession.

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- Quality Assurance in Teacher Education in Nigeria for Sustainable National Development*
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