Ensuring Internal Quality Assurance in Colleges of Education in Nigeria: Benefits and Challenges

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Abstract: Education is an important tool for human and national development. It is a key to national development. In any educational system, quality education standards are the goals to which all staff, students and management should aspire to achieve. Over the years, Colleges of education have produced a large number of NCE teachers that teach in our primary and junior secondary schools, thus alleviating the manpower problems of the nation at those levels. The need for quality assurance in Nigerian Colleges of Education cannot be overemphasized in order to ensure quality of teaching and learning. This paper therefore, discusses the origin and evolution of Colleges of Education in Nigeria, Concept of Quality Assurance, and Education Quality Assurance in Colleges of Education, Internal Quality Assurance processes, benefits of internal Quality Assurance and some challenges facing internal Quality Assurance in Colleges of Education in Nigeria. Based on the discussions, Conclusions and some recommendations were made.

Keywords: Internal, Quality Assurance, Colleges of Education, Benefits and Challenges

1.INTRODUCTION

As stated in the National Policy on Education, NPE (6th Edition, 2013), that in recognition of the pivotal role of quality teachers in the provision of quality education at all levels, teacher education shall continue to be emphasized in educational planning and development. Hence, teacher education is the training designed for the future teachers.

According to Wikipedia Encyclopedia, Teacher education (TE) or teacher training refers to the policies, procedures, and provision designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviour, and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school and wider community. The professionals who engage in training the prospective teachers are called teacher educators (or, in some contexts, teacher trainers).

The goals of Teacher Education as stipulated by the NPE (2013) are as follows:

i. Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational system;

ii. Further encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teacher;

iii. Help teachers fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals;

iv. Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to changing situations; and

v. Enhance teachers’ commitment to the teaching profession.

Nwagwu (1988) cited in Oga and Okpaga (2019), the general purpose of teacher education in Nigeria is “the production, in sufficient quality, of high quality professionals who have good academic knowledge of their subject disciplines as well as other personal qualities that are worthy of emulation by their students”. Stressing the importance of high quality teachers in the educative process further, the National Policy on Education stated that teacher education will continue to be given a major emphasis in all our educational planning because no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers.

Colleges of Education were identified as among the various educational institutions through which the nations hopes to achieve its developmental goals (NPE, 2013).

Origin and Evolution of Colleges of Education In Nigeria

Oga and Okpaga (2019) affirmed that the origin of Colleges of Education in Nigeria is traceable to the Ashby Report (1960:16) called, “Investment in Education”. The Commission recommended the establishment of Teachers’ Grade One Colleges, which would offer a two-year teacher education programme based on a school certificate. As a result of the modification of the Report, five Advanced Teachers’ Training Colleges were established in 1962 by the Federal and Regional Governments with the aid of UNESCO. The programme is a three-year course open to candidates who had completed a Grade II Teachers’ course or secondary education with the required credit passes.

Furthermore, Oga and Okpaga (2019) confirmed that five Advanced Teachers’ Training Colleges were established at Lagos, Ibadan and Zaria in 1962. That of Ibadan was later transferred to Ondo in 1964, now known as Adeyemi College of Education. Other Advanced Teachers Training Colleges were established at Owerri in 1963, Kano in 1964 and Abraka in 1968. All the Advanced Teachers’ Training Colleges were...
Quality assurance is a set of activities for ensuring something (a product or a service) to ensure that it is working as expected. That is, Quality control is inspecting to ensure that the product is as expected, whereas quality assurance is preventing defects in the first place. They are not the same concept but, they are related.

Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality control (QC) are at times misinterpreted and misconstrued to be the same concept but, they are not.

College of Education is an institution where prospective teachers are trained. NCCE curriculum implementation framework for NCE (2012) affirmed that the mandate of the teacher training programme at the NCE level, which is the recognized minimum teaching qualification in Nigeria, is to produce quality teachers for the Basic Education sub-sector. The Basic Education sub-sector encompasses the following categories of education:

i. Pre-primary Education or Early childhood & care Education,
ii. Primary Education,
iii. Junior Secondary Education,
iv. Adult and Non-formal Education,
v. Special Needs Education.

Colleges of Education in Nigeria have plan waded into the task area of producing professionally trained teachers for our vocational and technical secondary schools in order to meet the nation’s requirements for technological take-off as provided in the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2013).

II. CONCEPT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

Oxford Dictionary defines Quality assurance as the maintenance of a desired level of quality in a service or product, especially by means of attention to every stage of the process of delivery or production.

Quality Assurance (QA) and Quality control (QC) are at times misinterpreted and misconstrued to be the same concept but, they are not.

Distinction between Quality Assurance and Quality Control

Quality Assurance is process focused while, Quality control is end-product focused. That is, Quality control is inspecting something (a product or a service) to ensure that it is working fine. Quality assurance is a set of activities for ensuring quality in the processes by which products are developed. Quality assurance aims to prevent defects with a focus on the process used to make the product. But, Quality control is a set of activities for ensuring quality products, that is, the activities focus on identifying defects in the actual products produced (Online QA vs QC, 2019). Encarta world English dictionary (1999) defined quality control as a system for achieving or maintaining the desired level of quality in a manufactured product by inspecting samples and assessing what changes may be needed in the manufacturing process.

Wikipedia Encyclopedia describes quality assurance as a part of quality management focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled. Quality assurance is a way of preventing mistakes and defects in manufactured products and avoiding problems when delivering products or services to customers. Quality Assurance is the management of goods, services and activities from the input stage, through processes, to the output stage of production. It aims at preventing quality problems and ensuring only conforming products reach the customer.

Ajayi & Adegbesan (2007) cited in Adegbesan (2011) viewed quality as the total of the features of a process, product or service on its performance, in ‘customers’ or clients’ perception of that performance. It is not just a feature of a finished product or services but involves a focus on internal processes and outputs and includes the reduction of wasted and the improvement or productivity. Ukwungwu (2008) cited in Chidobi & Eze(2016) posited that quality assurance is used to express “fitness of purpose”.

Education Quality Assurance (EQA)

Ukwungwu (2008) cited in Chidobi & Eze (2016) stated that quality in education bothers on effectiveness and efficiency of the School administration, teaching and learning. According to the Hon Minister of Education, Mal Adamu Adamu, “one of the major concerns of Government in the early part of the present millennium was improving the quality of education being provided to learners in institutions below the tertiary level. This is because over the years, the mode of inspection of Schools did not lead to the expected improvement in learners’ outcomes. It was devoid of standard evaluation guidelines and largely limited to diagnosis without helpful support for school improvement. This desire to provide quality education spurred the Federal Ministry of Education to request the National Council on Education (NCE) in its 2007 meeting, to approve the shift from the old system of inspection to education Quality Assurance (QA) using the Whole School Evaluation (WSE) strategy.”

Similarly, according to Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), as stated under the guidelines for Quality Assurance in Basic Education in Nigeria (2012), Education Quality Assurance practice in Nigeria is a paradigm shift from Monitoring and Evaluation process to Quality Assurance. This provide a new operative mode of evaluation which is systematic in measuring educational performance by
providing an opportunity for internal and external evaluations with in-built processes that could affect appropriate and desired changes to bring about quality output, outcomes and impact on society. It ensures that evaluation processes and practices are carried out according to prescribed standards that bring about improvement in teaching and learning.

According to UBEC (2012), Quality Assurance in Basic Education sub-sector can be defined as an all-encompassing concept which includes all processes, policies and actions through which the quality of Basic Education is developed, improved and maintained. It goes beyond quality control and lays more emphasis on the quality of the end-products with the presumption that minimum standards exist. Hence, Quality Assurance involves all the processes that contribute to the success of the end-products (the learners) in terms of their learning outcomes.

In the same vein, according to the National Education Quality Assurance Policy (2014), education quality assurance involve in various ways, the processes of monitoring, assessing, evaluating and quality controlling (remediation, counseling, supervision and maintenance of resources, etc). It also involves accreditation of the education system and communication of judgments obtained to all concerned in order to ensure quality with integrity, public accountability, and consistent improvement.

Education Quality Assurance involves systematic monitoring, evaluating, regulating and reporting of educational programmes and practices to ensure that acceptable standards are attained and maintained. It is a dynamic process that provides the needed guidance and support to schools for improved learning outcomes for learners. According to education sector support programmes in Nigeria (ESSPIN) under the Federal Ministry of Education, Education Quality Assurance (EQA) 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.

Education Quality Assurance involves the systematic review of educational programmes and processes to maintain and improve their quality, equity and efficiency. Quality Assurance is important for accountability as well as to support ongoing development of schools and teaching and learning (Online school education, 2019).

Furthermore, according to UBEC (2012), quality standards are the goals to which all learners, teachers, staff and those who lead and manage schools should aspire to achieve. They are sometimes erroneously referred to as minimum standards but these are actually quality standards that focus on quality. Quality assurance is about continuous improvement. Schools should aim to go beyond and above each standard.

Moreover, Ehindero (2004) cited in Adegbesan (2011) agrees that quality assurance focuses on:

(i) Learners entry behaviours, 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 processes 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 assess these objectives.

Campbell and Rozsnyai (2002) cited in Chidobi and Eze (2016) asserted that quality assurance is an all-embracing effect whereby all policies and actions through which quality education is developed and maintained.

### III. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

The importance of quality education in nation building cannot be over emphasized. There have been several calls on the educational managers on how to make the educational system to be more vibrant in the quality of its products after several quantity of mass failure and half baked products from our various educational institutions in the country (Adegbesan, 2011).

Ebisine (2013) asserted that a close look at our Colleges of education indicates that most of the certified products lack acceptable level of competence in their area of specialization. In order to have quality teachers, Harris (1992) cited in Ebisine (2013) is of the opinion that teacher production in Colleges of education should be based on a sound philosophy and on such rationale that should guarantee the acquisition of necessary knowledge components and professional skills which would enable pre-service would-be-teachers to benefit from schooling and become better teachers.

Quality Assurance is concerned with the effective and efficient implementation of National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) teacher education guidelines in Nigeria, in terms of inputs, processes and outputs/outcomes of the education system.

Quality Assurance in higher Education includes policies, measures, planned processes and actions through which the quality of higher education is maintained and developed (online: quality Assurance, 2019). Quality of higher education can be described as the degree to which the education meets the client’s needs and demands. In this respect higher education has two different clients: students and society. The expectations of these differ depending on whether it regards academic (science/research-driven) study programmes (labour market’s demand-driven) programmes. It is, therefore, obvious that by putting the concept ‘quality’ into practice the further filling in of ‘quality’ differs as well.
Quality standards include appropriate and adequate infrastructure, consistently high learners’ achievement, effective teaching and learning, purposeful and inclusive management and leadership, satisfactory care, ample support and sufficient guidance (UBEC, 2012). Therefore, Education standards cover all aspects of the education enterprise, such as inputs, processes and outputs/outcomes.

According to NCCE curriculum implementation framework for NCE (2012), the teacher standards represent a measurable and public statement of quality and professionalism regarding the required knowledge, skills, and attitudes of teachers. The Teacher Standards should be the foundation and ultimate goal of the curriculum of the NCE-awarding institution. Adegbesan (2011) opined that for quality education to be achieved in a nation, the principal actors of education who are teachers, learners and the environment must be cooperatively organized. In other words, the teacher must be adequate in quality and quantity, the students must be well trained and adequate facilities must be provided as well.

According to the provision of the NCCE (2012), to enhance the effectiveness of Quality Assurance in Colleges of Education Nigeria, assessment shall be conducted at two levels, namely:

1. Internal Quality Assurance (to be conducted by the institution offering the NCE programmes).
2. External Quality Assurance (to be conducted by the NCCE).

In the case of external Quality Assurance, the accreditation exercises are done by the NCCE to ensure that NCE awarding institutions are meeting the Minimum Standards (or in the case of proposed institutions that they have the potential to meet Minimum Standards).

According to the NCCE curriculum implementation framework for NCE (2012), all NCE awarding institutions must establish an internal quality assurance unit to ensure that the guidelines provided in the curriculum implementation framework are followed.

Consequent upon the directive of the NCCE, the individual academic board of Colleges of education, approved the Directorate of Quality Assurance to be in-charge of the internal quality assurance of such institution.

Therefore, this paper focuses on ensuring internal Quality Assurance in Colleges of Education in Nigeria, vis-à-vis the Benefits and Challenges.

**Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)**

Quality in the view of Anton & Naido (2014) is a multi-dimentional concept composed of three interrelated dimension, the quality of the human and material resources available (input), the quality of management and teaching/learning processes taking place (process) and the quality of the results (outputs and outcomes).

Internal quality assurance (IQA) measures learner achievements, assessors judgments, assessor knowledge and the standard of processes and procedures within an institution (Online, 2020). This is in order to ensure that learners can achieve qualifications, assessors are making the correct assessments and an institution is offering a high quality service. Internal quality activities also ensure staff working within an institution is qualified and competent.

According to the NCCE (2012), each college of education should have an internal Quality Assurance Unit that will monitor assessment in the institution, and that this IQA should collect, collate, analyse, and regularly update all available forms of data on assessment (from schools, departmental examination Officers, student notebooks, teachers’ learning programmes or course outline, etc.). Internal Quality Assurance includes monitoring the training and assessment activities and the quality of evidence learners produce.

In Colleges of Education, the Directorate of Quality Assurance is commissioned by to coordinate the maintenance of internal quality assurance of the College of education system vide the directive of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) that an autonomous Quality Assurance unit should be established in each College of Education in Nigeria.

**The Directorate of Quality Assurance**

The Directorate of Quality Assurance is an internal self-assessment mechanism. The Directorate of Quality Assurance, apart from playing an advisory role to the College on issue related to academic programmes, also serves as an inspectorate organ of the College system with its scope of operations extending virtually to all schools of studies/Departments/Directorates/units with a view to maintaining standards and quality at higher loft. The Directorate, being a prerequisite for accreditation of programmes, is designed to add value to the Students and Lectures as well remove public criticism on poor quality of College of Education graduates.

The Directorate is to be headed by the Director and supported by other administrative officers, computer analyst, secretary/computer operator and other staff to enhance the effectiveness of the unit. There is also a College statutory committee of Quality Assurance in which the memberships were drawn from every stratum of the college. The committee is to compliment the efforts of the Directorate of Quality Assurance in ensuring standards. The Director of Quality Assurance is the Chairman of the Committee.

As stated in the NCCE curriculum implementation framework for NCE and Quality indicators for teacher education (2012), the following were the criteria for appointment as Head of Quality Assurance Unit:

i. undergone QA training organized or recognized by NCCE;
ii. should be an experienced lecturer not below the rank of a Chief Lecturer;
iii. track record of quality enhancement in the College;
iv. possesses a higher degree in any area of study of the institution;
v. generally acknowledged as a successful/accomplished lecturer in the institution;
vi. good working knowledge of College of Education system;
vii. conversant with the NCCE Minimum Standards and Accreditation procedures and instruments;
viii. the head of the unit shall have a tenure of 2 years which is also renewable.

The roles of the Directorate of Quality Assurance

As stipulated in the NCCE curriculum implementation framework for NCE, and the Quality indicators for teacher education (2012), the roles of the Directorate of Quality Assurance includes the following:

i. Generates formative data that can be used to improve the quality of the management and delivery of the NCE courses;
ii. provides information to the public and other interested partners about quality and standards;
iii. authenticates and keeps samples of students’ journals;
iv. ensures that quality and standards are maintained in the schools and the College in general;
v. support and promote the attainment of NCCE Minimum Standards;
vii. acts as liaison with NCCE on quality assurance issues in the institution;
ix. reviews external examiners reports and advise relevant action/implementation by Management, Dean and HODs;

Fig 1: A Model of internal quality assurance procedures in Colleges of Education in Nigeria.

- Quality Students Intake
- Entry requirements used to admit candidates
- Qualification of students admitted and Conformity to entry requirements
- Number of students registered versus capacity
- Facilities and equipment (quality and adequacy)
- Curriculum (content adequacy and relevance)
- Environment (academic, social, welfare safety, gender sensitive)
- Orientation of students and staff
- Academic and non-academic staff (quality and adequacy)
- Quality of lectures and early commencement
- Attendance of lecture by staff/student
- Adequacy of practical/SW/ETP
- Extent of coverage of curriculum (moderators report/IP report from school)
- Standard of exam questions/diversity of questions/changes (moderators report)
- Implementation of external examiners reports
- Teachers – student relation
- Evaluation of teachers by students
- Distribution of class of degree/certificates
- Employee evaluation
- Adaptability of products to open market
- Comprehensive assessment by visiting lecture report from collaborators
- SW/ETP
- PG/ETF

Input: These are raw materials which the system absorbs from the environment for processing. The students constitute the major input to be processed. Other subsidiary inputs include physical resources, material resources and financial resources.

Process: This is conversion, treatment or change of the inputs by internal mechanism of the system. In educational institution, students are being transformed into output through internal mechanisms of the school system, which include: teaching, learning and other extra-curricular activities and there are influenced by some institutional factors which include academic and non-academic staff (quality and adequacy), quality of lectures, attendance of lectures by lecturer and students, standards of examinations, teacher-students relation, evaluation of lectures by the students, adequacy of T.P/SIWES exercise. When these factors are favourably disposed to the system, the transformation process tends to be very effective and this will invariably have positive effect on the output. On the contrary, where the factors are not favourably disposed to the system, the transformation process becomes effective and will have adverse effect on the output.

Output: Output represents the finished goods. The outputs of the education system are graduates who have successfully completed a given educational system with the right knowledge, skills values, attitude and certificate.

Feedback through internal quality assurance process

Feedback mechanisms shall be obtained from the following sources among others:

- Lectures assessment by their students
- CA scores and marked scripts (these should get back to students at least two weeks before the examinations).
- Report of internal moderation of Examination questions.
- Feedback from employers
- Report of course experience questionnaire on students
- External moderators report.
- Feedback from products that are self-employed, particularly in some areas like Vocational and Technical Education and Theater Arts, etc.

Uses of the Feedback

Data from the feedback shall be used by the Institution for decision making towards improvement in the system. Students shall also use feedback available to them to improve on their performance and overall conduct in the College.

To enable the Directorate generate data to monitor input, process and output, instruments (mostly, questionnaire) was developed and validated by the experts to determine the quality of the question given to the students for examination, for monitoring students’ hostel accommodation, students’ evaluation of lecturers, etc.

The school environment are also monitored, Physical facilities, library, laboratories etc are personally monitored by the staff at the directorate. The reports of the observations are made known to the management regularly for necessary action.

Benefits of Internal Quality Assurance

The below were the probable benefits to be derived from the activities of the

Directorate of Quality Assurance:

i. It instills a strong awareness of quality, improvement, integrity, accountability and transparency in the system.

ii. It ensures quality teaching and learning (i.e in the mode of instructions by the lecturers and their attitudes; and also in the students’ attitudes towards learning).

iii. Monitor the quality of assessment judgments.

iv. Ensures consistent and reliable assessment judgments are made across an institution.

v. Ensures all procedures and policies within an institution are adhered to and maintained by staff.

vi. Internal quality assurance helps to ensure that assessments and IQA activities are valid, authentic, sufficient, fair and reliable.

vii. Measures the quality, delivery, processes, procedures and learner achievements.

viii. Quality Assurance allows the system to attain beyond the minimum standards in the inputs, processes and outputs/outcomes that would lead to producing a Nigerian child that will be useful to himself/herself and society (UBECE, 2012).

IV. CHALLENGES FACING INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

The below were the factors inhibiting credible internal Quality Assurance in most of the Colleges of Education in Nigeria:

i. Quality of the students: Most of the students opted for NCE programmes were those that were unable (rejected) to secure admission into the universities programmes as a result of their not measuring up to standard academically. Ebisine (2013) cited Akpochafo and Filho (2008) that the quality of fresh men admitted into the system is low; this is because their preparation at their primary and secondary levels were and many of them passed their examination by relying heavily on examination malpractice. These students lack the culture of scholarship and hard work when they find themselves in educational system. Many go into lecture halls without textbooks and even pens. A good number of them, they started recording less than 50% attendance at lectures and default in assignments.

ii. Inadequate funding of the institution/Quality Assurance Unit: Ebisine (2013) opined that well-structured funding arrangement is imperative for
meeting the cost of providing adequate educational services in Colleges of education. However, inadequate funding affects the provision of facilities and the recruitment of the manpower to implement the programmes that have developed.

iii. Corruption within the system: Embezzlement, misappropriation and diversion of the scarce funds meant for education purposes further impoverish the sector. The funds meant for a particular unit/section is embezzled, hardly can be any meaningful implementation of policy, acquisition of facilities, laboratories and libraries which are vital to effective teaching, learning and research.

iv. Examination malpractices: Examination malpractice is a threat to quality assurance in Education. Examination malpractice has undergone various forms and sophistication. Common examples are; use of electronic device (e.g. phones, wrist watch, calculator etc), impersonation (aiding and abetting), smuggling out/in of examination scripts and/or examination question paper, lobbying for examination grades by whatever means, inscribing notes on examination tables/chairs or palm /lap, bribing invigilators/supervisors, etc. this menace hampers efforts to ensure academic quality and standards.

v. Negative attitude/unco-operative attitude of colleagues (staff) whereby, the staff of the units are tagged as “EFCC” officers.

vi. Students’ enrolment: Dwindling/ Explosion in students’ enrolment

vii. Interference of the management/ union/ prominent people at the helm of affairs in the activities of the Quality Assurance unit, most especially when a ‘favourite’ is reported to have played foul of the law.

viii. Lack of integration and cohesion of training policies with other management process such as recruitment, promotion, incentive system, and staff appraisal.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Colleges of Education in Nigeria have played a vital role in our national development, Especially in the education sector. This study discusses the origin and evolution of the Colleges of Education in Nigeria, concept of Quality Assurance, Education Quality Assurance, and Quality Assurance in Colleges of Education, Internal Quality Assurance in Colleges of Education, Internal Quality Assurance processes, Benefits of Internal Quality Assurance and some challenges facing Internal Quality Assurance in Colleges of Education in Nigeria.

Based on this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Quality Assurance unit should be strengthened to enhance its operation in maintaining standards within the College system
2. The Directorate should be adequately founded
3. Colleges of Education should be adequately equipped and staffed to ensure meaningful teaching and learning for better certification of products.
4. Concrete efforts should be made towards value orientation as regards examination malpractices.

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