EDUCATIONAL PLANNING: THE AILING BRIDGE IN QUALITY ASSURANCE IN NIGERIAN HIGHER EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract
This paper examines educational planning and Administration as a bridge in ensuring quality in the Nigeria higher education system. Specifically, the paper looks at the issue of quality and the indices of measuring quality in higher education. It also discusses what is planning, what educational planning entails, and educational planning as a bridge. The paper also examines educational planning in practice today. The paper notes that Nigerian higher education (Institutions) are yet to meet up with the UNESCO recommendation on quality. Consequently, the paper recommends that for Nigeria to achieve quality in its quest for education for all by this century, the system must be adequately funded, transparent admission system, top class administrators, a very rich learning and living environment. Finally, five-yearly visitation which is to be distinguished from a judicial commission of enquiry and more stringent planning and close supervision must be done. The government, at all levels, must increase budgetary allocation to education to a minimum of 18% for a start with a target of 26% in the nearest future as recommended by UNESCO.

Formal education is one of the tools for achieving personal, group or national goals, and aspiration. Transformation within any given society often starts gradually within the education system for over a period of time before its outward manifestation in the lives of its citizenry.

The National policy on Education (2013) states clearly the national goals of Nigeria. These formed the basis for the philosophy of Education which has been based on the people’s beliefs or conviction about what education could do. The philosophy of Education places emphasis on: the development of the individual, the full integration of the individual into the society, and the provision of equal access to educational opportunity (pp 7-8)

The national education goals emerged from the policy and include: the inculcation of national consciousness, right type of values and attitudes, the training of mind in the understanding of the world and the acquisition of appropriate skills and
development of appropriate skills and development of mental, physical and social abilities (p.8)

Instructions at all the levels of education are rooted in the above and teaching is to be geared towards the following areas.
- respect for the worth and dignity of the individual,
- faith in man’s ability to make rational decisions,
- moral and spiritual principles in interpersonal and human relations,
- shared responsibility for the common goal of society,
- promotion of physical, emotional well being of all children, and
- acquisition of competencies necessary for self reliance.

All the above are presented as raw materials to the education system that is saddled with the responsibility of fine-tuning them, breaking each down into smaller units and spreading them over the life span of an individual from childhood to pre-school, primary, post primary, tertiary levels of education and adulthood (Ajibade’ 2004)

The role of higher education as essential to national development cannot be over emphasized. This is due to the contribution of higher education in producing higher skills and competencies as essential to national development particularly in the context of globalization and the shift towards knowledge economies. For these reasons, countries all over the world, Nigeria inclusive are giving higher education the needed policy attention. Higher education includes all types of study, training or training for research at post-secondary level, provided by the universities or other educational establishments that are approved as institutions of higher education by competent state authorities (UNESCO, 2003). Also Johnstone (2006) opines that higher education as an agent of change, national growth and instrument for the realization of collective aspiration should contribute to the development of the entire education system through teacher education, curriculum development and educational research thereby providing the crucial mass skills and educated populace needed by any country to ensure genuine endogenous sustainable development.

In the Nigerian Education system, Higher education is the education given after secondary education. It constitutes Federal universities, State Universities, University of technology, University of Agriculture, polytechnics and colleges of education. They are often referred to as either Post-Secondary Education, Tertiary institutions, or Institutions of Higher learning owned either by the Federal Government, State Government or Private Agencies as provided by the National Policy on Education. (NPE, 2004).

Higher education system has a key role to play in this development because the system has the capacity for creativity, new knowledge and innovative ideas to solve development problems. They can also foster structural, institutional and attitudinal changes, which are necessary ingredients for economic, social, political and physical development in Nigeria. Higher educational institutions are principally the centers where
human capital is trained to seek knowledge, absorb, process and use the acquired knowledge for national development. The ability of Nigeria as a nation to greatly develop it’s information and communication capacities is crucial in the ongoing trend in the global village (Ademola, 2004)

Unfortunately, Nigeria is yet to catch up with the rest of the world in information and technology revolution due to declining quality of tertiary education in Nigeria. The persistent knowledge gap thus created is resulting in the pauperization of capacity of her potential for future growth, hence the importance of this paper.

It is therefore incumbent on Nigeria to invest heavily on quality education. She needs to establish her own foundations for research and development compatible with local, national and international standards. There should also be investment in trans-border collaborations for development of global competitive science and technology capabilities.

Given the fact that higher educational institutions (Particularly Universities) house the bulk of Nigerian’s research capability and technical expertise, their role in research, evaluation, information transfer and technology development are second to none in relation to the achievement of social progress and economic growth. The paper seeks to relate the trend of development of higher educational system in Nigeria to the concept of quality control and role of educational planners. The outcome of this examination should help identify the options and challenges for national development.

‘Quality’ appears to be an elusive notion. All disciplines and professions recognize it, but only few Individuals could specify its components and features with any degree of precision or confidence. However, some authors have endeavored to define the term.

Webster’s New International Dictionary of English Language (1986) cited in Arikewuyo (2004) defined ‘quality’ as peculiar and essential character of a things degree of excellence, the degree of conformity to standard (as a product of workmanship); an attribute that obtains only after a certain level has been reached; merit or superiority because of a combination of good traits that make one superior to the other.

Taking a cue from the above definition, Nwogwugwu (1990) viewed quality as the good characteristics or traits that promote excellence or superiority. The oxford Advance Learners Dictionary defines ‘quality’ as grade of goodness, excellence and degrees (especially high degree of goodness or worth). Implicit in these definitions are two notions. One is the idea of quality as being synonymous with the characteristics or property by which something is known or can be described. The other is that of value or worth of something.
With regards to quality in education, the International Institute for Education, the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) views quality from two perspectives. The first is from the internal criteria of the system such as profile of student performance in a standard public examination and the external criteria which are the fitness and relevance of such an education to its environment (Coombs, 1968) cited in Arikewuyo (2004). It is in the light of this that Ejieh (1990) views quality in education to be judged by both its ability to enable the students perform well in standard examination and relevance to the needs of the students, community and society as a whole.

In a similar view, Awokoya (1990) saw quality in education as being relevant and appropriate to community needs by way of food, water, housing, health, transportation, communication, energy, security, trade, law, order, good government and social welfare. Earlier, Awokoya (1983) had listed the following tasks which must be done in order to have a quality education:

1. measurement and standardization of academic attainment;
2. evaluation of quality of work during supervision;
3. use of competent teachers and administrative personnel;
4. use of educational technologies with a view to increasing the efficiency of teaching;
5. dissemination of information to teachers and students;
6. new research and development to invigorate all educational activities.

Similarly, Yoloye (1976) listed the following factors as essential in assessing the quality of any educational system: quality of teachers, quality of evaluation procedures, quality of morale, as the quality of administration and management. While acknowledging the problem with definition of quality, Vioeijenstyn (1993) views the term to mean the degree to which the previously set objectives are met, fitness for purpose or added value.

Akin-Aina (1994) summed the definition of quality as the possession of certain attributes and elements that are adjudged by those who know, or deemed to know, as being of value or high standards in terms of end product, efficacy or user-satisfaction. Quality refers to the determination of gradations based on standards of excellence beneath which a mark of inferiority is imposed or adduced and above which grades of superiority are defined.

Higher education in Nigeria is being characterized with several problems which have made the quality of its products questionable over years. The quality of education being provided at this level has been a source of concern to the public for a longtime now. For instance, the public has been complained on the content and context of the instruction being delivered to the students in our higher Institutions (universities, polytechnics and colleges of Education)

While some educationalists argued that instead of making the system more relevant to the needs and aspirations of the society, it is rather structured and made to be bookish in nature, Adepoju (2003a). Experts, opinion leaders, educationists and other
stakeholders have severally observed and lamented at public fora, conferences and workshops the persistent declining of the standard of education in Nigeria. While some of them attributed the blame on the quality of the inputs, others put the blame at the door steps of the government. For example, Jacobs (2001) as cited by Adepoju (2003b) remarks that “the declining levels of literacy in Igala land can be attributed to the fact that teaching employment is given to unqualified applicants and admissions given to some unqualified candidates”

The implication of Jacobs (2001) observation is that, if the quality of the inputs of a system (university in this context) were faulty or inappropriate, it would have a negative effect on the processing and the output of the system. Of course, if the output is bad it would have a serious and negative multiplier effects on the society which is according to Adepoju (2003b) more dangerous and can cause a colossal or more mental damage to the socio-economic and political postures of the nation.

Quality assurance is indeed, an area of research that needs to be seriously and rigorously examined and consequently addressed by all stakeholders in the education industry so as to make the system more responsive to the needs and aspirations of the society and the changing world. Unless this area is looked into, quality education may be difficult to be accomplished (Adepoju, 2003b)

The need to ascertain the performance of the system makes quality assurance very much desirable. In order to ensure that the school system performs its expected role, there is the need to inject quality assurance into such system. Achieving the required standard also necessitates quality control and assurance. Understandably, quality of education is relative and exists in degrees or standards. The standard varies from one educational system to another and varies with time and societal expectations. This therefore, demands that quality assurance be ascertained at all times to determine the levels of deviations and area of need.

In the literature, several positions have been taken by professionals, researchers, experts, educationalists and opinion leaders in respect of quality assurance. For instance, evidences and research findings of Olayeemi (2001), Adepoju (2006), Ayodele (2000)

In the recent past, It has been revealed that the type of education offered to students in the public higher institutions is nothing to write home about and this is attributed to the quality of teachers, instructional materials, poor funding of the system by the government and politicization of the location of schools to mention a few.

Olayemi (2001) has also observed that the depreciation that has endangered public higher institutions (universities) is undoubtedly the major cause that led to the emergence of private universities in Nigeria.

Apart from the findings on the declining nature of the instructions, there are other indicators of poor quality and wastage in the educational system. Ijaiya (2001) includes high dropout and failure rates, rampant examination malpractices, poor reading
habit and writing among student sat at all levels. Quality assurance is indeed a problem-solving approach and a preventive measure against wastage and failure.

The need to enhance performance, productivity and minimize wastage has led to a new but broader organization wide approach to quality away from the traditional view of quality control to quality assurance (Cole, 1996). It has variously been termed Quality Management (QM), Total Quality(TQ), Total Quality Management (TQM) (Adepoju, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, Bush and Coleman, 2000).

Quality assurance requires that the school system should be forward looking and focused on ways of achieving quality rather than indulge in curing symptoms. Of course, emphasis these days has shifted from quality control to quality assurance in human organizations such as higher institutions. (Adepoju 2002b, 2003c,) identifies some indicators of quality assurance and performance in the higher institutions. These include: quality of teaching materials, teachers workload, and quality of the recommended textbooks among others. In Nigeria, tertiary education (including university education) is, among other things expected to contribute to national development through high level relevant human power training, develop students, intellectual capability to understand and appreciate their local and external environments, facilitate the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society and promote and encourage scholarship and community service (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1998). In furtherance of these objectives, the National policy on Education (NPE) (2013) stipulates: “All teachers in tertiary institutions shall be encouraged to undergo training in the methods and techniques of teaching” (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

The call for pedagogical training within tertiary institutions has however brought in its trail a raging controversy on the place of teaching qualification (or training) as an indicator of quality assurance in universities or educational institutions in general. While some academicians (especially educationists) would agree with Day (2000) that “Teachers (lecturers) emerging from (such) training will be technically proficient, able to deliver the curriculum efficiently” others would argue like Klicku (2002) that “in virtually all academic research documents that there is no positive correlation between teacher’s qualifications (especially certification requirements and student performance)

The controversy about the place of training in university teaching borders on concern with quality assurance which is rooted in the perceived primary role on research or vice versa. With the monumental challenges confronting the Nigerian university system in recent years-phenomenal growth in student population across university campuses, the liberalization of ownership of universities, and the not-infrequent disagreements between staff unions and university administrators in recent years (Banjo, 1998) cited in Ogunyemi, Ifegbesan and osunde (2004),it is evident that concern about quality assurance in university teaching is an obvious necessity if not an imperative. Thus, it may be asked how the two camps described by Gibbs (1995) manifested in
Nigerian universities. Addressing this all-important question provided the initial motivation for this study.

Quality Assurance and University Teaching


Quality assurance is generally understood as the process by which users (and also producers) of a service or product can be confident of its consistency, reliability, safety and to some extent is value for money; such assurances are normally predicted on certain assumptions about the conditions under which the product or service will be used and the nature of the users involved. Accountability involves the requirement that one group (here a profession) provides an account or justification of its activities to another group in return for the trust or privileges’ granted to the former by the later. Accountability also normally involves the expectation that the accountable group be willing to accept advice or criticism from the public and to modify its practices in the light of that advice or criticism.

Contemporary efforts at enhancing organization’s (educational) quality have largely centered on the work of Deming cited in Ogunyemi, Ifegbesan&Osundeyi (2004). who insisted that quality could not be improved unless it can be measured (Dill, 1995). This perspective supports an emphasis on in-service training. If not certification in teaching for university teachers as an indicator of quality assurance.

Harvey (1995) has however warned on the limits of applying Deming’s quality assurance model in higher education. For example, he observed that students are both customers and products, which undermines this model. Again, whereas higher education is fundamentally about empowering students through the enhancement of their knowledge, skills and values, Deming’s model is largely reductionist-analyzing productions or service possibilities by stages. This goes on to show that there is no consensus on what constitutes ‘quality’ or how to measure it. The matter becomes particularly more complex when it has to do with teaching where there is no ‘standard method’or best practices (Ogunyemi, 2000).

A more recent analysis of the quality debate by Umar,(2002) has-brought out four broad approaches to quality assessment that could illuminate current practices in respect of university teaching. These are objectivist, relativist, developmental and synthetic approaches. The generation of valid and reliable data can at a glance indicate the quality of not just one institution but also facilitate the comparing of institutions on a quality index. This perspective assumes some direct relationship between staff qualification, studentsentry qualification, equipment and facilities on the one hand and the quality of tuition provided in an academic institution. The relativist conception of quality however rejects the objectivist argument for criteria mainly on the premise that
human actions (including university teaching) are based on social meanings: intentions, motives, attitudes and beliefs.

To the relativists, educational institutions are perceived as equal but different and should be given the support and encouragement to implement their mission statement (Umar, 2002). The relativists are therefore not likely to accept periodic nationwide comparison of university programmes by external agencies such as implemented by the Nigeria’s National Universities Commission (NUC) during the “Accreditation Exercises”.

Development approaches to quality assessment, according to Umar (2002) are those in which institutional managers, staff and students of educational institutions such as a university assess their own activities and performance with a view to regularly improving the quality of the activities.

The developmental conception is therefore formative and programme-specific. Unlike the objectivist and relativist conceptions, which are summative and institutional-wide. Arising from his critique of the prevalent objectivist model in Nigeria, Umar (2002) proposes a synthetic approach to quality assurance in higher education. This approach provides adequate insights both into the quantifiable dimensions of an institution’s performance and process variables that are qualitative in nature. A major component of the approach is its emphasis on the quality of teaching which could be measured principally through the perceptions of students, peers and external examiners, other areas of emphasis are quality of research gauged mainly by publications in reputable journals, peer assessment of the quality of one’s work, and learning which could be measured by a systematic (qualitative) attempt to relate what the student knew when they are first admitted and what they know when at each successive level, including what they know when they graduated, and organizational efficiency and effectiveness (Umar, 2002)

What Does Educational Planning Entail?

Educational planning has gone through a process of metamorphosis over the decades. These changes were in response to the historical and theoretical conditions within a given society. Despite these changes, the functions of Educational planning can still be summed up to include policy making and analysis, planning, implementation, coordination, supervision and evaluation. According to Beeby (1968) cited in Nwadiani (1998), Educational planning is the exercise of foresight in determining the policy, the priorities and cost of an educational system, for the system’s potential, for growth and for the needs of a country and of the pupils served by the system. Since the planning in education involves the preparation of decision to be taken in future, the collection, compilation and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative information related to the educational system and society are crucial.

Educational planning is an achieved process, is a course of activities to be done in steps in order to achieve a desired process quantities or quantitative goals. According
to Gbadamosi (2005), educational planning must always possess such properties as rationality, comprehensiveness, depth of design and continuity. There are various dimensions to the general objectives of educational planning. These cut across through political, legal, economical, social, cultural, scientific, demography and technological spheres.

**Educational Planning as a Bridge**

Educational planning provides the needed connection between national goals and educational goals on the one hand and between educational goals and instructional activities within the educational system on the other hand. The functions of educational planning brings fulfillment to the dreams of each sector in terms of what is achievable and or achieved.

When traveling on Nigerian roads, people come across different types of bridges that connect one part with the other. Within the educational system, bridges exist which are similar to those found on our roads. These often give directions to all activities at the various levels of education.

There are busy roads in education where over head bridges are needed such as population, explosion, development of technology, unemployment of school products. Aggressive planning is needed to deal with these issues. There are junctions that call for spiral bridges especially while crossing from one level of education to the other or during transition from the school system to the employment world.

The concrete bridges are needed in areas of policy formulation and planning, because these often dictate the direction of the education system. Each section or type of bridge described above denotes a level of planning needed in the education system. These, will cater for both short and long term development in the field of education.

The success of the system has been seen to be dependent on planning: - it is pertinent to ask the following questions.
_are the bridges put in the master plan constructed?_
_what type of bridge/bridges are constructed?_
_are they temporary or permanent?_
_are the bridges ailing?_

Answers to the above questions will be gotten based on the present role of educational planning in Education in order to ensure quality.

**Educational Planning in Practice Today**

The basic functions that will determine the type or effectiveness of the bridge were summed up under policy making, planning, implementation, coordinating and evaluation.

The success of any Endeavour depends greatly on planning, for failure to plan is planning to fail. There is no doubt that some planning has been put in place in
producing the National policy on Education, assigning responsibilities, putting the general road map in place and building in necessary checks and balances.

All the above are to give the stakeholders an idea of what to expect in the coming decades in the field of Education. The sum total of the policy is that education is the key to all national goals and objectives. The National Policy on Education is paper planning, there is need for physical planning, the nation as a whole could be said to be bewildered by the problem of planning. There is too much hustle in the approach to planning and thus people employ the ‘fire-brigades’ approach. Adequate time has never been given to planning and the tendency is to plan and implement simultaneously.

**Way Forward**

The unhappy situation described above calls for a return to basics. The preoccupation with access by the various governments is laudable, but if the only way of increasing access is by watering down quality beyond acceptable limits, a major rethink is called for.

In recent years, the cumulative failure of the entire education system has become very pronounced at the tertiary level, particularly within the Universities, what is required is a return to the kind of vision, which guided the university of Ibadan during the first twenty five years of its existence: a transparent admission system, top class administrators, a very rich learning and living environment. For the rest, all Universities have the mechanisms which ensure high standards and comparability with the best Universities in the world.

The first is the five-yearly visitation, which is to be distinguished from a judicial commission of enquiry. The second mechanism is the involvement of external examiners in the final assessment of candidates for degrees.

A recent innovation which should be welcomed, however, is that of ranking the Universities in terms of excellence. After appropriate fine-tuning, this should stimulate a healthy rivalry among the Universities. More stringent planning and close supervision can eliminate wastage, so also more funds is required for urgent attention.

Finally, one way of enhancing quality, indeed, is by recognizing specially gifted individuals through the award of scholarships. The crisis in education is more serious than any other crisis that the country is facing, and sooner a headlong attack on it is made, the better the future of our country.

**Conclusion**

It is clear from the above discussion that to ensure quality in education, adequate funding is necessary for the educational system. Most classrooms in Nigeria’s schools are not only dilapidated, but also inadequate. Laboratory and instructional facilities are grossly in short supply; stationery and office equipment are inadequate. Quality can never be assured under this situation.
Educational planning provides the needed connection between national goals and educational goals on one hand and between educational goals and instructional activities within the educational system. The functions of educational planning brings fulfillment to the dreams of each sector in terms of what is achievable and or achieved. As a result, there is need for aggressive planning to deal with issues such as population explosion, development of technology, unemployment of school products. Fund should be made available to repair all the dilapidated buildings, equip the laboratories, libraries, employ qualified teachers.

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