

ICT AND MANAGING UNIVERSITY EDUCATION FOR QUALITY
ASSURANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Ensuring Quality management of university education in Nigeria is of paramount importance due to the position of universities as the highest citadel of learning. University education in Nigeria and indeed any other part of the world plays a crucial role in the supply of highly skilled manpower to manned different sectors of the nation's economy. Quality management in education is about all the various organized activities that culminate in the production of a given output that conforms to set standard. It is geared towards high standards and a zero-tolerance level for wastage in the educational enterprise. The gross under-funding of the education sector in the country has been rendering the university system incapacitated. This paper examines appraising Quality management of university education in Nigeria. On the basis of this, issues such as, University Education in Nigeria, Concept of Quality management in education, Role of National Universities Commission (NUC) for Quality Management of Nigerian Universities, University Management in Nigeria, Problems to Quality Management of Universities in Nigeria, Concept of Appraisal, and finally, concept of Quality management were discussed. This paper concluded that management of higher education in general and university education in particular has been bedeviled by inadequate funding, which has affected quality management of these institutions. The Paper recommends that education sector should be adequately funded by allocating at least 30% to education sector and 50% of this allocation to universities and also sourcing internal revenue and individual contributions, corporate bodies should be

encouraged. And finally, it is recommended that a university/Industry Partnership should be established because it is a hall mark of national development and progress. This would give double benefit to industries by helping universities to produce graduates for their consumption.

Keywords: Assurance, Management, Nigeria, Quality, University Education

Introduction

Quality assurance is the ability of educational institutions including Universities to meet the need for the use of manpower in relation to the quality of skills acquired by their products via using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in educational assessment and research. So that they will be able to compete with other students from other countries and to meet the 21st century standard. This will pave way for the quality of an academic programmes offered by these institutions of higher learning to become a universal concern (Oladipo, Adesun and Oni, 2017). University Education is important to the growth and development of the community and the society; because of its power to fashion an individual to be integrated into his society for his positive contribution, and to become a promoter of his societal culture, and development. It is a weapon for acquiring skills, knowledge and competence for survival in a changing world (Adepoju & Fabiyi in Ekpo and Ish'ak, 2014). Education in general and Higher education in particular are fundamental to the construction of a knowledge economy and society (Saint et al, 2003). The universities are charged with the creation of knowledge and it is of their primary mandates, in creating knowledge, a lot of research has to be taken by universities and research Centres. The number of universities has grown astronomically in Nigeria especially with the emergence of State and Private universities and Nigeria has eightysix (196) universities The increased number of universities has not translated into increased generation or creation of knowledge, Ibiam (2014) posited that, Quality management in education was stressed in the Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) where it stated that the success of any education lies on proper planning, efficient administration and adequate funding (which are components of management). It expects these management services in education to achieve specified goals which include::

- (a) Provision of efficient administrative and management control for maintenance and improvement of the system.
- (b) Assurance of quality control through regular an
- (c) continuous supervision of instructional and other educational services.

The advancement of ICTs has brought new opportunities for both knowledge sharing and knowledge gathering to the extent that the global community can reach heretofore unconnected individuals, families, and populations to better understand their needs and challenges (Asanga, 2012). ICT can provide unlimited opportunities for economic development and social engagement through new innovative thinking and tools. The adoption of modern technology can be a key driver for economic and social growth in transitioning and developing countries. ICT can advance economic growth, enhance social inclusion, increase health and education services and improve governance at all levels This is acknowledged by the United Nations Millennium Development Declaration, which calls to “ensure that the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communication technologies are available to all (Annan ,2003).

University Education occupies a strategic position in the development of the manpower of a nation. Moreover, education develops the skills and relevant attitudes as well as the values more productive but also to be less ignorant and consequently become more governable (Jubril, 2005). However, university education in Nigeria is presently facing a lot of management crises. Regrettably, at this level of education, lip service appears to be paid to this all important issue of quality management. The problem of declining quality management in university education is usually attributed to paucity of financial resources, goal displacement and mismanagement. The employers of labour described the poor quality of university education in Nigeria as a multifaceted problem. Apart from the inadequate financial allocation, there is also the problem of internal mismanagement in the university system. Moreover, there is presently a huge scarcity of qualified and experienced lecturers in many departments. Also in many universities, equipment workshops, libraries and laboratories have become mere monuments of obsolescence. All of these factors combine together hamper the quality of university education in the contemporary Nigerian society. There is therefore an urgent need to address these problems with a view to improving the quality of university education being received by the growing number of youths in the society. The improvement of quality in the management of university education will however require the effective combination of adequate provision of material resources as well as a conducive learning environment before such needed quality management in university education can be achieved. The main purpose and relevance of university education in Nigeria is the provision of much needed human resources to accelerate the socio-economic development of the nation. Such specialized education at the higher level is regarded as an instrument of social change and economic development (Ibukun, 1997).

According to the National Policy on Education (2013), University Education shall

make contribution to national development by:

- a. Intensifying and diversifying its programmes for the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation;
- b. making professional course contents reflect our national requirements;
- c. making all students part of a general programme or all round improvement in university education to offer general study contents such as history of ideas, philosophy of knowledge, nationalism and Information Technology (IT); and
- d. Making entrepreneurial skills acquisition a requirement for Nigerian universities.

University Education in Nigeria

Higher education system in Nigerian is composed of universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and professionally specialized institutions (International Association of Universities, 2000). They can be further categorized as state or federal universities and as first, second and third generation universities (Hernett, 2000) Federal universities are owned and financed by the federal government, while state universities are owned and financed by the state governments. According to NUC (2021) there are 196 Universities (45 Federal, 52 States, 99 Private). The uneven spread of these institutions over the country is obvious with the southern part of the country having the highest concentration of these institutions. The uneven distribution of the federal universities probably informed the establishment in one fell swoop of 9 universities by the Federal Government in 2011 towards ensuring a federal university in each 36 States in the federation. Bamiro (2012) further explained that, the Higher Education (HE) sector in Nigeria can be described to a large extent, as a sector locked in iron triangle defined broadly by the Vectors of Access, and Quality.

Table 1

Research Allocation Policy in Nigerian Universities

1. Library	10%
2. Research grant	5%
3. Health Services	5%
4. Staff development	2.5%
5. Publication	2%
6. Maintenance	10%
7. Other charges	5.5%

NUC, 2005

Concept of Quality Assurance/Quality Management in University Education in Nigeria

Quality management in education mean different things to different writers. For example, Okeke in Ibiam (2014) sees quality management as the aggregate of “all efforts from the top management to the lowest rung of the organizational hierarchy geared towards doing the right things first and all the time and continually striving for improvement”. Jacklin also views quality management as an ideal systematic process for managing change in public education. Quality management is concerned with the improvement of the organizational performance. It has to do with conscious and concerted efforts of everybody in the educational system. Though it is a fact that all stakeholders in education have the responsibility of contributing towards the continuous improvement of the education system for excellence; those statutorily charged to manage education for quality and standard as well as meeting up with the challenging changing society are required to exhibit leadership qualities and practices that will create and usher in best practices in education. Quality management requires the attention of education managers in the input-process-output framework to achieve any success since quality encompasses quality in people, process, service and products. Iheonunekwu stated that, each element in the input-process-output framework of the education enterprise should be of an acceptable quality to ensure high quality in education. This implies that quality management which results in quality education has to really address these elements in the education enterprise. There is the need for adequate planning, provision, organization, evaluation and re-planning of the educational inputs, process and outcomes. The state, level, extent, quality and quantity and management of these elements account for the quality of management in education. For example, according to him if the educational inputs (financial and human resources) such as funding, learner enrolment, quality and quantity of teachers are in the right proportion, learner/teacher ratio, curriculum, textbooks, school materials and facilities etc are adequately, proportionately and timely provided for education delivery, quality management is on course.

The primary responsibility of the universities for quality assurance

The primary responsibility of the universities for quality assurance through internal mechanisms is encapsulated in the remark by Aminu (1986) that the university community must surely be one of the first to engage in self-assessment, self-criticism, and self-improvement, through review of courses and modification of curricula. He added that no organization outside the universities is better placed than the university itself to undertake the performance audit. It is, however, ironic that such a statement came from someone whose tenure witnessed an accelerated erosion of university autonomy and impingement of the academic freedom of Nigerian universities. However, the establishment of buffer institutions like the

NUC the world over has been attributed to the following reasons: to avoid a government decision-making monopoly in the organization, to have more comprehensive representative of the society in decisions related to education and to relieve the learning institutions from their dependency on governments. These parastatals, occasionally referred to as buffer institutions (Frackmann, 1992), or 'intermediary bodies' (Neave, 1992) are established as corporate bodies to organize, promote, supervise and control education services for the benefit of the people. They usually enjoy considerable autonomy from federal government by law or constitutional provision.

The forms of educational parastatals vary greatly particularly among the states depending on the state's unique history, the personalities and geo-political relationships. However, they are viewed as levers in steering and coordinating the education system. They are the mediums of injecting a degree of sensitivity into the organization towards the attainment of education objectives. Experience in the Nigerian university system indicates that rather than be a facilitator of events, the NUC is perceived as government megaphone, which has been accused of unnecessarily lengthening the lines of management that is contrary to modern management literature (Ofoegbu, 2004). Thus Ade-Ajayi (2003) observed that the NUC could not be reformed, as it has become a federal parastatal, subordinate to the Federal Ministry of Education. He then suggested that the Ministry is overburdened and a new Ministry more used to advising than supervising and directing the universities should be put in place. In order to sanitize the universities, Ade-Ajayi (2003) suggested that the NUC must revert to its traditional role at inception, which is that of an advisory function.

University Management in Nigeria

The instrument of university governance in this country still remains the committee system. There is visually a committee system for every aspect of the university function. Although the committee system is being seriously challenged, it remains an acceptable forum where all members of the university community have a stake in the welfare of the students on our university campus. According to Ekundayo and Ajayi (2009) Management of university education can be looked into from two dimensions: the external and internal levels. At the external, this is the control by the federal government through the National Universities commission (NUC) a body charged with the coordination of university management in the country. According to Ibukun (1997) the main objectives of the NUC are to ensure the orderly development of university education in Nigeria, to maintain its high standard and to ensure its adequate funding.

On the other hand, the internal management of each university is represented by a

simple organogram. The first is the visitor who is usually the Head of state or the Head of government that established it (The president in case of federal universities and governors in case of state universities). He usually comes to convocation ceremonies where he uses the occasion to address the academic communities on matters of the moment (Adegbite, 2007). The second is the chancellor who is the titular head of the university, who by law, in relation to the university takes precedence before all other members of the university and when he is present, presides at all the meetings of the convocation held for conferring degrees (Ekundayo & Ajayi, 2009).

Besides at the apex of the management structure within each university is the governing council headed by the chairman (pro-chancellor) which is charged with the administrative functions in the area of goal setting, policy formulation, staff development, general discipline, budget approved and liaison activities with the government. In addition to this, there is the senate, headed by the vice chancellor and the Registrar as the secretary. The senate regulates the academic activities of the university following the general guidelines by the NUC. According to Mgbekem (2004). The universities in Nigeria are run through committee systems which are either responsible to the council or the senate, among these committees are:

- a. Finance and general purpose committee
- b. Development committee
- c. Appointment and promotion committee
- d. Admissions committee
- e. Committee of deans
- f. Research grants committee
- g. Academic planning committee
- h. Ceremonies committee, among others.

Challenges to Quality Assurance in Management of Universities in Nigeria

Ibukun (1997) observed that university governance in Nigeria today is nothing but crises management. Nigeria's university crises, some of which have been identified by the world Bank (1994), and the traces are noticeable as: Decline Public Expenditure; deteriorated infrastructure/facilities/equipment for teaching, research and learning materials are either lacking or very inadequate and in a bad shape to permit the universities the freedom to carry-out the basic functions of academics the erosion of university autonomy and academic freedom; the increase rate of graduate unemployment; brain-drain; and student unrest and constant strikes by both students and academic staff. Ibiam (2014) lamented that, constraints to quality management in Nigerian universities have been identified by Erinsho (2004) and Awe (2009) as the factors of the role of their proprietors and those that are self-inflicted by the universities on the other hand, that is, internal and external

problems. The internal problems are related to problems of institutional management in the university system while external problems relate to various policies enunciated by the government and effects on the university system. The external problems are the constraints imposed by external environment, which are determined by the various policies of the government on the university system. For instance, the historical background of the Nigerian universities makes them absolutely dependent on government for their financial requirements (NUC, 2001); Babalola, 2001 and Aina, 2007). The tremendous influence of politics on public universities in Nigeria is encapsulated in the remark by Hamza (1992) that no top administrator, particularly in Nigeria, would deny that political factors have played a part in the formulation of the memorandum he finally submits to the government for a decision. The memorandum would not sail through if political considerations were not met. Clearly, the politics and the philosophy of the government of the day must be taken into account even if these are against his own principles as an administrator and educationist. He may, like Socrates, pay the price of defiance or change his employment.

Learning with ICT

According to Hill et al (2004), the *Learning With* perspective is rooted in the constructivist school of thought which emphasizes active participation of learners in the learning process. The learners, it is presumed, is an active contributor of knowledge and s/he helps in creating and designing instructional artifacts that aid learning (Perking 186). In a similar vein, the use of ICT at Nigerian Universities exhibited this perspective.

Nigerian University now has a learning management system (LMS) that helps students to monitor their progress academically, register for courses and access marks for different examinations. Students seemed particularly happy about the possibility of seeing their grades by logging into the learning management system even during recess terms. They did not have to wait until the semester start to know how they had performed. *“...because it is easy to see for myself the differences in my GPA’s (Grade Point Average) I’m able to adjust accordingly to improve my performance. Everyone wants a good CGPA (Cumulative Grade Point Average) at the end of the day,* “one final year student observed. The learning Management System in this regard serves as an artifact that makes it easy for students to monitor their academic progress. Since it was possible to access all the final marks for all semesters it was easy for students to take stock of their academic strengths and weaknesses by making a comparison of how they had performed in different semesters and therefore make the necessary adjustments in the way they approached their studies to better their performance

Major Impediments to ICT use in instruction at Nigeria Universities

1. Inadequate ICT infrastructure

It was evident that the use of ICT at Nigerian universities is plagued with innumerable challenges. Contrary to what Hill et al (2004) claimed, the ICT infrastructure in place in this faculty is somewhat inadequate when one considers the students to computer ratio. The aftermath of this disproportionality is the pushing and shoving by students witnessed when trying to get an hour allocated to them in the university's internet labs. It is little wonder then that many students shy away from them since their effort to get time to use computers and the internet is more often than not futile. The absence of other related equipment like projectors and public address systems also seemed to play a big role in discouraging faculty from using technology in the classroom.

2. Lack of inter-faculty Collaborations

Basing on students' arguments, there are faculties at Nigerian Universities which are endowed with adequate ICT infrastructure but which facilities are not accessible to students from other faculties. They pointed out the faculty of Computing and Information technology (hereafter FCIT) which has the largest ICT centre complete with Wi-Fi connection. This situation is true to the inherent characteristic of universities as loosely coupled organizations.

Conclusion

This paper has reviewed Quality Management of University Education in Nigeria. The conclusion here is that, there were constraints to quality management in Nigerian Universities. Education sector in Nigeria is suffering from insufficient funding which resulted in numerous set-back to Quality management of these institutions. This paper affirms, therefore, that there is room for improvement on the current situation. The need for quality management of our university educational institutions has been established. For efficient and effective management of university system, total quality management is expedient. The universities derive their powers for quality management through their statutes. However, it appears that the process and procedure for quality management have been constrained through policy inconsistency that appears to prevent the universities from adequate mobilization of their statutory and regulatory framework for quality management. There is a need to harmonize the external and internal control measures of universities to facilitate quality management for the revitalization of university system in order to provide framework for efficiency and effectiveness which will eventually lead to the socio-economic and political growth of the giant of Africa.

Suggestions

Based on the conclusion above the following suggestions were made for improvement:

1. It is recommended that the National Universities Commission (NUC) should ensure strict adherence to the existing universities statutory policies, and to check from time to time inconsistency that appears to prevent the universities from adequate mobilization of their statutory and regulatory framework for quality management.
2. It is recommended that both systemic and institutional transformation are required to enhance quality assurance in management in university education
3. Universities should be adequately funded by giving top priority in the budget (at least a minimum of 30%). At least 50% of the budgeted 30% should be allocated to universities and also sourcing internal revenue and individual contributions, corporate bodies should be encouraged.
4. It was suggested that, two percent (2%) Profit collection from Multi-National Companies operating in Nigeria for TETFund intervention should be increased to four percent (4%) for the development of higher education in general and University Education in Nigeria.

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