

Quality Education for Sustainable Development Goals in Africa

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Abstract

This paper titled “Quality Education for Sustainable Development Goals in Africa” examines how to intensify the quality of education for sustainable development Goals in Africa; the study implicated the fact that once quality education is assured, the outcome of it is development Goals. Discussion in the paper pointed out the fact that school managers have a lot to do for schools to achieve their goal of ensuring quality education. It is however noted in tertiary institutions that despite accreditation instituted they are found wanting in the area of ensuring improved quality education and hence stunted development goals observed over the years. Corruption and examination malpractice are identified to be rubbing every effort made towards attainment of improved quality education that could guarantee sustained national development goals in Africa. The study adopted quasi-experimental design and the population for the study comprised two African countries (Nigeria and Niger), thereafter, instruments were developed by the researcher as titled: “Quality Education Achievement Test (QEAT)”. The data collected for this study was analyzed using Mean and Standard deviation. It was recommended that accreditation exercise in tertiary institutions be strengthened and as well extended to primary and secondary schools to help in instilling consciousness on the managers and other stake holders. That school managers or administrators should be monitored to ensure that they faithfully carry out their statutory duties and that concerted efforts should be made by school proprietors, managers, teachers, parents and the society to curb corruption and examination malpractice in schools.

Key Words: Quality, education, Sustainability, corruption.

Introduction

Nobody is tired of listening to the same song being sung all the time in Africa because it is the only available music. More than 60% of conference themes in Africa for about a decade now have centered on the issue of quality education and sustainable national development goals, (Kayode, 2020). Since we have not attained the kind of quality education that we desired and believe could bring about national development goals that could be sustained, the theme for this conference is very much in order. This time around we have decided to focus our attention on improving quality education for sustainable development Goals in Africa. This again has the understanding that before now the quality of education that the country could offer cannot bring about sustainable development Goals.

Sustainable Development is a development that meets the needs of the present without conceding the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. According to Igbo (2008), the process is aimed at improving the living condition of the population in a sustainable way and the implication is that

development requires the formation of human capital and social capital in addition to some factors of production needed for a broad-based economic growth that does not jeopardize the development of future generation. Sustainability and sustainable development focuses on balance that defines line between competing need. The need to move forward technologically and economically and the needs to protect the environments more broadly, the social fabric in awe and other live. It is also about examining the longer-term effect of the actions humanity takes and asking questions about how it may be improved and longer term survival ensured.

The need for quality assurance in African schools is highly desired in order to ensure quality of teaching and learning. The following according to Adegbesan (2010) are the major needs of quality assurance in our education system in Africa:

1. to serve as indispensable component of quality control strategy in education,
2. to ensure and maintain high standard of education at all levels,
3. to assist in monitoring and supervision of education,
4. to determine the quality of the teacher input,
5. to determine the number of classrooms needed based on the average class size to ensure quality control of education, and
6. to determine the level of adequacy of the facilities available for quality control.

Development Goals in all sectors of African economy is agreed in this paper to be tied to development Goals in education. The implication is that no matter how the nation seems to be advancing in commerce, science and technology, information and communication technology and so on, if education is out of it, it could mean that the success or development goals are temporary, depending on borrowed skills, etc which definitely will not last. At the moment the poverty index of the nation, the nature and output of school leavers, facilities available in schools at all levels, etc are all indicating that unless corrective measures are taken now, what the future holds as far as education and subsequently development Goals for Africa could be catastrophic.

Quality Assurance and Development Goals in Africa

It is put on note that the concern for quality has been at the core of the motivating forces for reforms in education in Africa. Ajayi and Adegbesan (2007) see quality as the total of the features of a process, product or service on its performance, in customers' or clients' perception of that performance. Further, with regards to education, the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) views quality from different perspectives. The first is from the internal criteria of the system such as profile expiration and the external criteria which are the fitness and relevance of such education to its environment. Arikewuyo (2004) judged quality in education by both its ability to enable the students perform well in standard examinations and relevance to the needs of the students, community, and the society as a whole. He finally concluded that quality serves as determination of gradations based on standard of excellence beneath which a mark of inferiority is imposed or adduced and above which grades of superiority are defined. However, quality assurance is related to quality control, but its functions in a rather proactive manner in the sense that quality control serves as series of operational techniques and activities used to ensure that requirements are met. Similarly,

Ajayi and Adegbesan (2007) argue that, quality assurance is related to accountability both of which are concerned with maximizing the effectiveness and efficiency of educational systems and services in relation to their contexts, of their missions and their stated objectives.

In attempting to bring all definitions together, Fadokun (2005) seems to sum the definition of quality assurance in education as a programmed, an institution or a whole education system. By implication, quality assurance is all these attitudes, objectives, actions and procedures that through their existence and use, and together with quality control activities, ensure that appropriate academic standards are being maintained and enhanced in and by each programme. According to Federal Government of Nigeria (FRN, 2004), National Educational Quality Assurance Policy in Nigeria is concerned with 8 components of quality standards itemized as:

1. learner achievement and standards;
2. learners' welfare and participation;
3. care guidance and support;
4. leadership and management;
5. school community relationship;
6. learning environment;
7. teaching and learning;
8. curriculum and other activities

Quality here can be globally seen as the worth, goodness, acceptability, strength, taste, durability, etc of something. All these quality constructs have diverse meanings that call for an in-depth understanding of quality assurance. According to Okebukola as cited in Bandele (2011), quality assurance is an umbrella concept designed to improve the quality of input, process and output of the education system. It is a label for the process of ensuring for purpose. Quality assurance is amplified here to include academic, administration and infrastructural quality assurance. Detailed schematic representation of the segments sectors of institutions college quality is presented in Figure 1.

Relationship among Dimensions of Quality Education

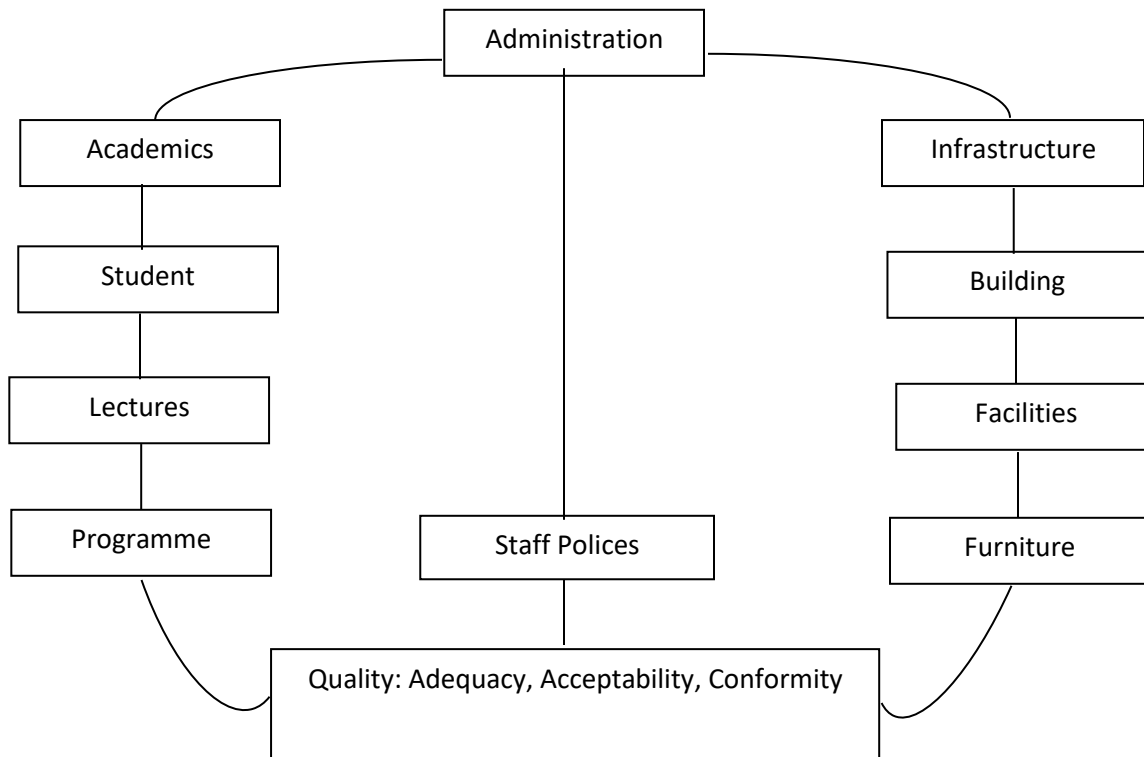


Figure1: (Source: Kayode, 2020)

A major problem in Africa is the proliferation of substandard goods and services due to corruption. It is a common thing to pay for services that are never enjoyed because there is no quality assurance measure put in place (Kolawole, 2011). Most buildings under construction have collapsed while consumers have paid for sub-standard goods such as drugs, electrical appliances, cables, drinks and services. The implication of some of these things is that the health of the people is compromised, huge sum of money is lost annually and the country is portrayed in negative light in the eyes of white (European) who uses African Nation as a dumping ground (Kolawole, 2011).

According to Kolawole (2011) the inevitability of quality assurance mechanism in development Goals has been highlighted by scholars in the field of development Goals and they have thus indicated that quality assurance is the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the various aspects of a service, facility or project with a view to maximizing the probability that minimum standards or quality are being attained by the production process (Almeida, Alvaro & Meria, 2007). According to them, quality assurance helps to ensure that mistakes are eliminated while the product or service is made suitable for the intended purpose. The realization that quality assurance drives improvement and establishes a standard of behaviour led to the suggestion of four critical elements that must be emphasized in underlying the importance of quality assurance in development Goals. The elements according to Kolawole (2011) are:

- i) control of job management, adequate processes, performance and integrity criteria and identification of records;
- ii) competence in the area of knowledge, skills, experience and qualifications;
- iii) personnel integrity, confidence, organizational culture, motivation, team-spirit, and quality relationships;
- iv) Adequate infrastructure to promote functionality (Almeida, Alvaro & Meria (2007).

Gboyega (2003) captures development Goals as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. It implies improvement in material wellbeing of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not imperil the future, it also demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced. It is reasonable to know that development Goals is not only an economic exercise, but also involves both socio-economic and political issues and pervades all aspects of societal life including education.

Instructive Executives as Quality Education Agents in Africa's Education System

According to Adegbesan (2010), the roles of instructive executives range from administrative to professional. That professional staff in the education industry should be concerned about how they manage the educational resources allocated to them for use as well as the control of their schools and students. The teacher's managerial functions by the same token should go beyond those of the beginning classroom teacher. Arikewuyo (2004) had said it all while he listed the tasks which must be done by education managers in order to have a qualitative education. These include:

1. Measurement and standardization of academic attainments.
2. Evaluation of quality of work during supervision,
3. Use of competent teachers and administrative /supervisory personnel.
4. Dissemination of information to teachers and students,
5. Use of educational technologies with a view to increasing the efficiency of teaching,
6. New research and development Goals to invigorate all educational activities.
7. Guidance and counseling.
8. Placing students in suitable employment.
9. Efficient management of all education.

However, educational managers are classified by their functions, that is, by the role they play in their position as managers. To fulfill the purpose of quality assurance in African education system, there is need to identify educational management as a body of systemized knowledge, based on general principles which are certifiable in terms of school of practice. Ogunsaju (2006) argues that, a school manager may manage with good or bad judgment, with great or little experience, with exemplary or undesirable character traits. Educational managers ought to function for quality assurance in our education systems and therefore their practices may be similar in all kinds of schools. These practices are:

1. **Planning:** This is an essential aspect of good management. It requires the ability of the manager to look ahead and be able to formulate and select appropriate objectives and procedures to be followed within the school system.
2. **Organizing:** This is the ability of the managers to create structural work. That is, he should focus attention on the structure and process of allocating tasks to achieve common objectives.
3. **Staffing:** This is another essential role of educational managers. It requires his ability to search for the right people and to place them on the right job both in quality and quantity which would reflect their experience and capability for the school objectives to be achieved.
4. **Motivating:** This is the energizing force behind all other activities of educational managers. Managers should know how to keep good morals of their workers in order to obtain maximum efficiency and effectiveness from them. This includes constant payment of salaries and other emoluments needed for their welfare.
5. **Evaluating:** This is the ability of managers to assess and know the outcome of the school aims and objectives. He ensures that set down goals and objectives are achieved through quality control system which includes:
 - (a) An effective quality school system,
 - (b) Periodic audit of the operation of the system,
 - (c) Periodic review of the school system to ensure it meets changing requirements (Ogunsaju, 2006).

Factors of Quality Assurance in the Tertiary Institutions

It is glaring that the philosophical objectives of quality assurance are the decision of educational programme to train individuals to achieve competence in a given area of industrial production function. The focus of which, is to prevent problems, strengthen organizational systems and continually improving performance. Thus, quality assurance is the ability of educational institutions to meet the need of the use of manpower in relation to the quality of skills acquired by their products. With this, the quality of an academic programme becomes a universal concern. This is because the product of one tertiary institution becomes another employee in another tertiary institution or other culture's industrial setting. Consequently, quality assurance has become an internationalized concept. To establish and maintain high quality standards, the Universities needs to have a shared responsibility in addressing the following key areas, according to Kayode (2020): Minimum academic standard. Accreditation, Carrying capacity and admission quota, Visitation, Impact assessment, Research and development Goals, Publications and research assessment, Structures, infrastructures and utilities. These conditions apply to colleges of education and polytechnics.

1. Minimum academic standards form the baseline for entrenching quality tertiary education, since it prescribes a profile of curriculum, human resources, structures, infrastructures, equipment and associated facilities required for establishing, governing and managing the institution.
2. Accreditation is the process by which programmes are evaluated against set minimum academic standard and institutions comprehensive academic research and development Goals activities are

evaluated against prescribed criteria (including self-vision and self-produced strategic plan (refer to Figure 2 for details).

Quality Education Drivers in African Tertiary Institutions

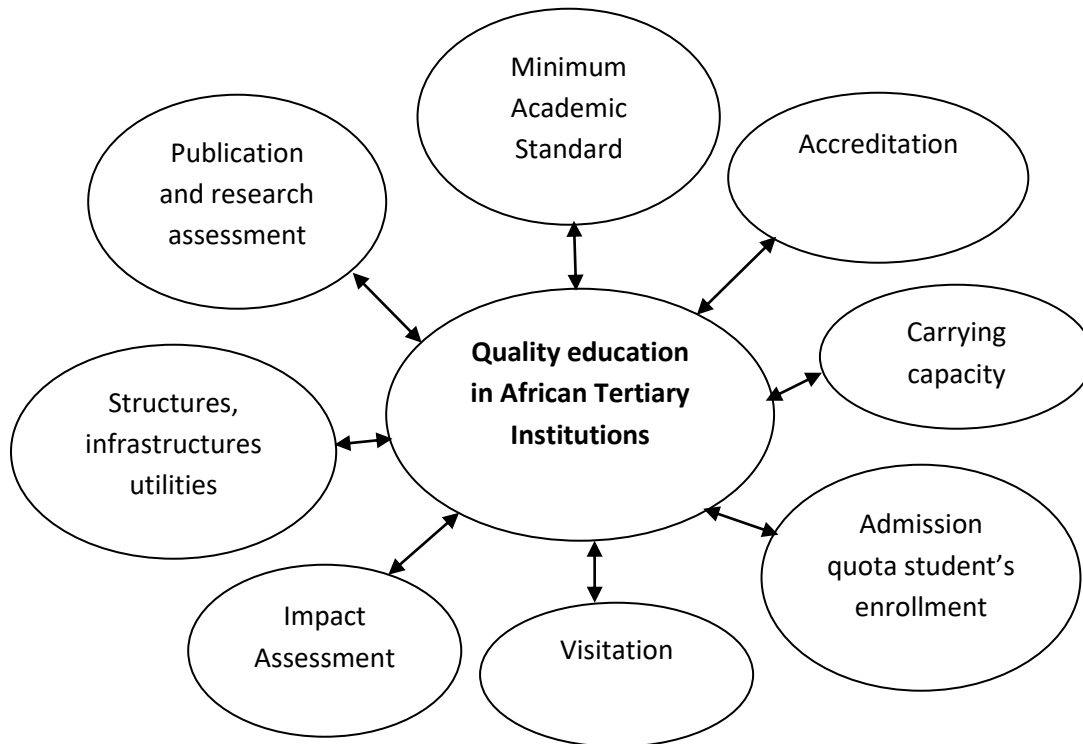


Figure 2: Adapted from Kayode (2020)

1. Carrying capacity of an institution is the maximum number of students that the institution can sustain for qualitative education based on available human and material resources.
2. Visitation to institutions is a statutory requirement that empowers the proprietor to ascertain the well-being of the institution.
3. Impact assessment is a specialized form of evaluation aimed at finding out if the core expectations of the establishment of a particular institution are being met.
4. Research is the driving force for human development Goals as globally determined; such research should be evidenced by publications.
5. Structures, infrastructures and utilities are essential driving force for qualitative productivity in any organization, particularly in the university system.

However, Baldwin as cited by Oyebande, Oladipo and Adetoro (n.d) in his own view, highlighted the following as quality assurance checklist:

Institution /faculty mission and objectives, Teaching programmes, Students selection, Course structure and documentation, Teaching arrangement, Postgraduate supervision where applicable, Students, Support, Assessment/evaluation, Grievance procedures, Monitoring of outcomes, Research and development Goals, Community service, Staffing issues, Infrastructure/resources and

Governance. Makoju, Nwangwu, Abolade and Newton (2004) observed that the Whole-School Evaluation (WSE) concept/practice is considered as one of the cornerstones of quality assurance and one way of improving the quality of education. Quality education in this context refers to the monitoring and evaluation of performance of the various levels of the education system in achieving the specific goals at each level and overall objectives of the system.

Conclusion

From the discussion made so far, to ensure an improved quality education, quality assurance measures have to be put in place. This will involve school managers with a lot of implications for all levels of educational institutions in Africa with particular emphasis on tertiary level. It is also the conviction of the paper that development Goals is simply a product of quality education system. However, there is doubt as to whether the problem of Africa is really quality education and development Goals rather than corruption and examination malpractice. The paper concludes that discussion of quality and development Goals without putting in perspective what corruption and examination malpractice could do may result in efforts in futility.

As a way forward, a suggestion is made to the effect that issue of accreditations in tertiary institutions should be strengthened. This is because a lot is seen each time being put in place practically as the people come around on inspection. Notwithstanding a monitoring group should ensure that window dressing is uncovered and punished while it is suggested that at the same time that accreditation be introduced as quality assurance strategy at the primary and secondary school levels in African educational system. The school managers are seen to be custodians of policy, implementation and monitoring; their failure to do or not to do what is expected of them could make or mar schools. They should be monitored to ensure that they faithfully carry out their statutory duties. Though appears unrelated, it was made clear that corruption and examination malpractice are silent killers of quality and development goals. That concerted efforts should be made by school proprietors, managers, teachers, parents and the society to curb corruption and exam malpractice in schools.

Way Forward:

1. Education curriculum and standards of education in Africa should be reviewed to reflect the needs and aspiration of the society. This therefore means that there is need to harmonize the internal and external criteria of quality education raising standard of excellence of the education systems.
2. There is need to improve or employ modern teaching methods and techniques in the classroom. In a nutshell a more developed and reformed curriculum content is highly desirable. There is also the need for curriculum evaluation to allow innovations and new techniques/ methods to be incorporated.
3. Full professionalization of teaching in African country to set a standard under which a qualified and well-trained teacher must operate is highly imperative. This means Governments should endeavour to properly fund educational institutions in the Africa to meet the expectations of the continent.

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