

QUALITY, EQUITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM: PARTICIPATORY PLANNING APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the role of education as a veritable tool for the achievement of national goals. The paper x-rays the rapid growth in the Nigerian education system in size and quality with reference to the performance of students in WASCE across the country in 2014. The issue of quality and relevance in education, equity and accountability in the school system was equally discussed. Internal quality assurance procedures in terms of admission, student assessment, quality of facilities, development of programmes and quality of teachers among others were looked into. Finally, participatory planning for improved school system and ways to improving the quality was discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Education globally, is regarded as a veritable instrument for the achievement of national goals. It is fundamental to the development of every nation and, to a large extent, dictates the likely pattern of the other sectors while at the same time providing an insight into the nation's future. In Nigeria's National Policy on Education document (2013), it is clearly stated that "No nation can rise above the quality of its educational system". Over the years, serious concerns have been expressed about the education system not meeting the needs, yearnings and aspirations of the populace. The rapid growth in the Nigerian education system has been mainly in size and not in quality.

There have been problems in the implementation of policies for the expansion of the education system which have contributed to their failure to assist in the socio-economic development of the country. Lack of capacity for planning and management, limited financial resources, inadequate information monitoring systems, defective curriculum, and defective implementation of policies is some of the problems that have led to rapid and unplanned growth, a situation of "growth without development". There is quantitative growth but qualitative decline. More attention seem to have been paid to the expansion of the system due more to political pressures than from a concern about the provision of greater access to quality education, an expansion programme that has not been matched by a corresponding increase in funding to ensure that the quality of education is maintained. There is a growing concern about the quality of what goes on with in the system. There is mass failure every year in the West African School Certificate Examination (WASCE) conducted by West African Examination Council (WAEC) and even that of its counter part National Examination Council (NECO).

Table I shows the performance of students in WASCE across the Country in 2014.

Table I: Result Statistics for WASSCE (WAEC)

S/N	State Name	TOTAL NO. OF CANDS			5 Credits and above including English and Math			
		Male	Female	Total Sat	Male	Female	Total	Percentag
1	Anambra	23,009	28,709	51,718	14,985	19,109	34,094	65.92
2	Abia	26,689	29,610	56,299	15,347	17,600	32,947	58.52
3	Edo	33,079	31,330	64,409	18,479	18,763	37,242	57.82
4	Bayelsa	10,585	9,345	19,930	5,562	4,967	10,529	52.83
5	Rivers	31,897	32,461	64,358	16,566	17,402	33,968	52.78
6	Enugu	20,425	25,686	46,111	10,787	13,148	23,935	51.91
7	Lagos	71,700	74,864	146,56	32,334	34,885	67,219	45.86
8	Imo	21,900	24,459	46,359	8,514	10,325	18,839	40.64
9	Delta	25,449	25,311	50,760	19,064	10,301	20,365	40.12

10	Kaduna	58,149	42,213	100,36	20,484	16,030	36,514	36.38
11	Ebonyi	12,761	12,677	25,438	4,652	4,518	9,170	36.05
12	Ekiti	11,373	10,905	22,276	3,570	3,960	7,530	33.80
13	Ondo	20,323	18,474	38,797	6,439	6,133	12,572	32.40
14	Akwa Ibom	29,143	29,997	59,140	8,729	9,743	18,472	31.23
15	Abuja	8,433	9,720	18,153	2,612	2,956	5,568	30.67
16	Kwara	18,302	15,543	33,845	5,058	4,941	9,999	29.54
17	Kano	42,089	23,990	66,079	10,892	7,611	18,503	28.00
18	Ogun	35,156	35,318	70,474	9,313	9,561	18,974	26.92
19	Benue	29,339	21,794	51,133	7,884	5,851	13,735	26.86
20	Kogi	24,230	18,785	43,015	5,978	4,746	10,724	24.93
21	Cross River	24,781	21,805	46,586	5,561	4,918	10,479	22.49
22	Osun	24,421	23,251	47,672	4,885	4,651	9,316	19.54
23	Plateau	28,805	23,647	52,452	5,850	4,359	10,209	19.46
24	Oyo	39,340	38,332	77,672	7,491	7,263	14,754	19.00
25	Nassarawa	27,991	19,307	47,298	4,891	3,730	8,621	18.23
26	Niger	31,025	20,790	51,815	4,982	4,229	9,211	17.78
27	Taraba	15,481	9,107	24,588	2,329	1,433	3,763	15.30
28	Borno	19,350	12,633	31,983	2,845	2,021	4,866	15.21
29	Katsina	30,298	13,245	43,543	2,868	1,681	4,549	10.45
30	Adamawa	17,700	12,535	30,235	1,510	1,136	2,646	8.75
31	Jigawa	13,546	4,247	17,793	944	386	1,330	7.47
32	Sokoto	18,321	7,070	25,391	1,193	616	1,809	7.12
33	Zamfara	21,975	7,391	29,365	1,337	617	1,954	6.65
34	Kebbi	19,074	7,541	26,616	1,356	320	1,676	6.30
35	Gombe	12,356	7,146	19,502	5833	514	1,107	5.68
36	Bauchi	19,501	9,831	29,332	196	852	1,548	5.28
37	Yobe	11,040	4,261	15,388	487	256	743	4.85
	Total	929,045	763,330	1,692,375	268,047	261,432	529,479	31.29

Source: WAEC May/June 2014 Report

Similarly, at the tertiary level, based on the available data, no university in Nigeria is counted among the best 2,000 universities in the world according to the April 12, 2015 WEB biometric ratings of World universities. The University of Ibadan which is the Premier University in Nigeria, that used to rank among the best 100 in the 1960's and 1970's and which is currently ranked the best in the country was ranked 2,633 positions. This challenging situation should be of great concern to all. Needles store-

emphasize that quality education, when viewed from a life-long perspective of learners, focuses on what has been acquired through education programmes in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of learners as they participate in the socio-economic development of the nation.

Quality and Relevance in Education

Quality is a concept that is evasive and difficult to define due to its meaning being associated with specific characteristics of a phenomenon it seeks to describe (Shadreck and Herbert, 2013; Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge and NgCobo, 2008). It is however generally defined as the ability of a product, service or programmes to satisfy its intended needs. Quality has to do with whether something is good or bad. It is about the standard of something when compared with other things. In educational terms, it is the ability of an education system or programme to fulfill and meet the needs and aspirations of the society which it serves. Quality education is the extent to which schools achieve and realize set goals. It is an education that satisfies the expectations and aspirations of the society in terms of the goals set within the society.

The Jomtien World Conference on Education for All in 1990 noted the importance of educational quality and specifically the need to focus on learning acquisition and out come (Saito and Capelle, 2010). The World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in 2000 also recognized quality education as being of fundamental importance and listed specific requirements of successful education programmes to include well-trained teachers, adequate facilities and learning materials, a relevant curriculum, a good learning environment, and, a clear definition and accurate assessment of learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2005). Thus, the worth of any educational system as an investment lies in its capability to continuously serve its customers better and remain relevant.

On factors that affect educational quality, this can be categorized into two broad levels, viz, those that affect the level of the learner and those that affect the level of the education system, supporting the learning experience. At the learner's level, a high-quality education system would need to be able to recognize and adequately respond to the diversity of learners and their particular experiences, characteristics, skills and conditions (Mandina, 2013). Other factors include access to relevant educational materials, the process of education and the learning environment. At the education system level, quality of education is affected by the managerial and administrative system, implementation of good policies; and, a supportive legislative framework that can ensure equality of educational opportunity, human and managerial resources, and the means to measure learning outcomes. A quality education is therefore one that satisfies basic learning needs, enhances the lives of the learners and their overall experience of living.

In Nigeria, the general public perception is that the quality of education offered at levels (primary, secondary and tertiary) is low and standards have dropped. These perceptions are based on lack of adherence to acceptable educational practice, which can be aptly summarized as follows: Education, Poor management and governance, attitudinal failure (on poorly coordinated supervision and inspection mechanism; under funding of the part of government, parents students and other stake holders); inadequate facilities for teaching and learning. Lack of adequate statistical compilation/documents (at the school/Ministry level); Discouraging learning environment; and, Irregular training and professional development programmes for teachers. A detailed survey commissioned by the federal government in Partnership with UNICEF and UNESCO in 1997 confirmed that the quality of education offered especially at the primary level was low (Falaya, 1997).

One of the effects of the introduction of the free primary education (UPE) scheme, and later the Universal Basic Education Scheme (UBE), is the up surge in pupil enrolment. However, the negative effect has been the drop in the quality of education due to the aforementioned factors. As these factors persist, the quality of primary education continues to suffer with the consequence that many parents (both rich and poor) now prefer to send their children to private schools. That trend has extended to the other levels, (secondary and tertiary) with the resultant consequence of lowering of standard as a result of the proliferation of these private institutions without corresponding quality control being put in place especially at the lower levels.

Furthermore, it is apparent that the existing curricular and learning materials in schools are not too relevant to the needs of the Nigerian society despite efforts made in the past, and still being made by the National Council on Education(NCE), the Joint Consultative Committee on Education (JCCE), the Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) and others at the lower level, and the NUC, NBTE and NCCE at the tertiary level, to ensure that the curriculum offerings are tailored towards relevance and accountability of the education system. Thus, the attainment of Education For All (EFA) by 2015 and Vision 2020 now appear to be a mirage. The Needs Assessment Report released in 2013/2014 by the government which was the out come of the comprehensive investigation in to the tertiary educational institutions, for instance, revealed the rot a t that level. One should therefore not be surprised that no university in Nigeria ranked among the first 2000 in the world, according to the Web biometric ratings, neither are the products being employed in the labour market. Infact, it has been said that Nigerian graduates are not even employable. There is thus a mismatch

between education and the world of work. At the lower levels, the situation is no better. Products of the primary schools are barely literate while at this contrary level, there is mass failure in examinations as shown in Table I.

It is a truism, and, as contained in the FRN (2013) that no education system can rise above the quality of its teaching force. There is no doubt that the quality of teachers in the nation's schools is a major contributory factor to the low quality of education in Nigeria. The teacher education programmes appear to be too theoretical and lack sound practical base needed for good class room practice. The teacher training programmes have not really taken in to consideration the changes that are needed to implement the innovative curriculum introduced in the schools, especially at the junior secondary level. We tend to forget that one cannot use yesterday's tools for today's work and still expect to be in business tomorrow. There is over-supply of NCE and graduate teachers in some disciplines and subject-combinations while there is a general shortage in some. The courses offered in the Colleges of Education and Universities Faculties of education are largely more academic in nature as opposed to the development of processes, skills and career development. There is serious gender imbalance in some states, Furthermore, the aspect of the training dealing with the internship programme (Teaching Practice) is usually done in a "wishy-washy" manner, especially at the university level, while the Cooperating school also do not help matters when it comes to assisting in supervising these students whenever they come for such teaching practice exercise. Of course, poor quality and in competent teachers will produce poor quality students with the resultant effect of lowering standard and quality of the education system.

The initial efforts to control the quality of production could be traced to the middle ages. During the period, guilds adopted the responsibility for the quality of goods and services offered by their members, setting and maintaining certain standards for guild members. Quality assurance (QA) is thus a process-centered approach to ensuring that an organization is providing the best possible products or services. Its central focus is on enhancing and improving the processes that are used to create the end product or result, rather than on the result itself or some part of the process such as planning, design, development, production and delivery. To ESS quality glossary (2010), quality assurance is an organization's guarantee that the products or services it offers meet the accepted quality standard. In the context of education, Ciwar (2005) sees quality assurance as involving the setting of standards for the various processes and activities leading to the production of graduates by training institutions. These processes were noted by Joseph and Agih (2007) to include: requirements for entry into educational programmes, programme duration, course content, quality of teachers in terms of qualifications and teaching competence, standard of instructional infrastructure and facilities (number and adequacy), the school environment from a holistic perspective, and, examination-quality of examination items, supervision, moderation of results, and grading system. The South African Council on Higher Education, Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) (2004) defines quality assurance as a process of ensuring that specified standards or requirements have been achieved. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in the United Kingdom (2010) also links quality assurance with achievement of standards when they opined that, quality assurance is the means through which an institution ensures and confirms that the conditions are placed for students to achieve the standards set by it or by another awarding body.

Quality assurance is thus an all-embracing term referring to a continuous process of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining, and improving), the quality of an education system, institutions, or programmes. As a regulatory mechanism, quality assurance focuses on both accountability and improvement, providing information and judgments (not ranking) through an agreed upon and consistent process and well-established criteria (Shadreck and Hebert, 2013). It is thus a systematic review of educational programmes to ensure that acceptable standard of education; scholarship and infrastructure are being maintained. Thus, quality assurance provides users of the education system with a guarantee that institutions, courses and graduates meet specified standards.

The above definitions demonstrate that quality assurance is a generic term that can be interpreted differently by many people. However, there seem to be common elements cutting across the varied perspectives such as compliance, accountability, reliability, credibility, and quality maintenance and quality improvement. As a regulatory mechanism, quality assurance focuses on accountability and improvement, providing information and judgments through an agreed upon and consistent process and well-established criteria. It is the continual improvement in the methods of implementing the various aspects of educational programmes and activities in an institution of learning to meet the desires of the stakeholders in education. It is also the process of providing the required resource inputs, ensuring effective control and improving the process for the purpose of raising the quality of output to meet the prescribed standards and fulfill public accountability. The major purpose of Quality Assurance is to identify the strengths and weaknesses at schools and wider institutional level so that schools may maintain effective school management systems, improve the quality of education provided and raise the educational standards achieved by students.

According to Ayeni (2014) the following are the major needs for quality assurance in education:

- To serve as indispensable component of quality control strategy in education;
- To ensure and maintain higher standard of education at all levels;
- To assist in monitoring and supervision of education;
- To determine the quality of the teacher's input;
- To determine the number of classrooms needed based on the average class size to ensure quality control of education;
- To determine the quality and adequacy of the facilities available for quality control;
- To ensure how the financial resources available could be prudently and judiciously utilized. Ehindero (2004) summarized the indices of Quality Assurance as follows:
- The learners – their entry behaviours, characteristics and attributes including some demographic factors that can inhibit or facilitate their learning
- The teachers their entry qualifications, values, pedagogic skills and professional preparedness.
- The teaching/learning process – the structure of the curriculum and learning environment, and
- Flow of operational funds—its adequacy and regularity.

The inter plays of these and other related factors will go a long way in determining the outcome of any education programme. The strategies used for quality assurance in education include:

- (a) Inspection:** This is a process of assess in gaval able facilities and resources in an institution with a view to establishing how far a particular institution has met prescribed standards. It is more of an assessment than improvement induced exercise.

- (b) Monitoring:** This refers to the process of collecting data at an intervals about on going project or programme within the school system. The aim is to constantly assess the level of performance with a view of finding out how far a set of objectives are being met (Ehinderero, 2004).
- (c) Evaluation:** This is a formal process carried out within a school setting. It is based on available data which are used to form conclusions. It could be formative or summative. The aim of evaluation, a quality assurance strategy, is to see how the system can be assisted to improve on the present level of performance (Ijaya, 2001).
- (d) Supervision:** Beyond inspection, supervision attempts at bringing about improvement in the quality of instruction. It involves staff as essential part of the process. It is a way of advising, encouraging and stimulating staff (Onocha, 2002).
- (e) Quality control:** Quality control is one of the strategies for establishing quality assurance in the educational system at all levels. For this to be successfully carried out, there is need to examine the qualification of teachers, adequacy of the curriculum, availability of equipment in the required number as well as the proper use of the processes involved in the various skills to ensure that the finished products are of high standard and not a run-off-the-mill type.
- (f) Access and Equity:** Ojedele (2007) as cited in Adegbesan (2011) asserts that the trend of students transiting from the Junior Secondary School to other levels of education has not been encouraging as it has been falling short of the expectation.

The internal quality assurance procedures are in terms of: admission, student assessment, quality of facilities, development of programmes and quality of teachers among others.

(a) Admission: Clearly, the quality of students admitted could positively correlate with the quality of graduates produced irrespective of the provision of other aspects of the programme. Today, admission processes are two folds, namely, the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board Examination popularly called Universal Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), and Post-UTME usually conducted by the candidate's chosen institution. Often, students who register for UTME employ various dubious strategies to achieve cut-off mark" of either 180 or 200 to qualify for Post-UTME screening test. This additional test of Post-UTME was implemented in an attempt to enhance the quality of admissions as these scores were thought to be a better reflection of students' intellectual abilities and aptitude for further learning. At the primary and secondary school levels, there seems to be no rigorous admission exercise. It is perhaps only in the private schools (secondary) that some form of entrance examination takes place. In the public school system, it is automatic transmission from the primary to the junior secondary school.

(b) Student Assessment: This is an important aspect of quality assurance in colleges of education, polytechnics and universities. The Federal Government of Nigerian its National Policy on Education (FGN2013) has properly articulated the issue of assessment. Conventionally, this takes place at two levels in universities; (1) continuous assessment (CA) which usually accounts for 30% of a student's final grade and the end of semester/session examination which accounts for 70% of the grade (Ugodulunwa & Mustapha, 2005 as cited in Major, 2013).At the secondary school level, the continuous assessment aspect is not given enough attention. It is even doubtful if it is factored into the final result of the West African School Certificate examination.

(c) Quality of Facilities: The recent population explosion in our institutions of learning has overstretched the expected quality assurance in education here in Nigeria. Teacher-student ratios

have grown and there is over competition for limited resources such as classrooms, chairs, tables, halls, equipment in the laboratories and so on. In some secondary schools, one can find as many as 100 students in a class against the maximum of 40 allowed by regulation. These competitions for scarce resources are capable of promoting different dimensions of conflict and misconduct and creating uncondusive and poor learning environment.

(d) Development of programmes: In Nigeria, each institution of Learning develops programmes to serve their purposes subject to the approval of their accrediting agencies. Programme development, according to Olaitan and Ali (1992), includes the creation of curricula that will help students to acquire relevant kills, knowledge, attitudes, and competencies for the job opportunities in their field of study. The hallmark for enhancing a good quality curriculum is ensuring that course content opens up opportunities for student participation that are of relevance to the aspirations and needs of society (Nsa & Aniekan, 2007 as cited in Major, 2013).

(e) Quality of Teachers: The issue here is in terms of carrying capacity, funding and conformity to ethics of teaching and learning in the respective schools. Putting in place regulatory codes of conduct may help to curb undesirable behaviors as suggested by Igbozurike (2006). Some of these undesirable behaviors include failure of teachers to attend classes, inadequate preparation and different levels of involvement in misconduct related to student assessment.

Education has been one of the great social justice projects of modern democracy. However, the equity principles underpinning the provision of high quality education for all, access to good schools, challenging and engaging curriculum, committed teaching and engaged learning and appropriate resourcing. Equity simply implies fairness or justice in the way people are

treated. It involves freedom from bias or favoritisms. It implies justice according to natural law or right, something that is equitable, just and fair. In education, equity implies ensuring that all the segments of the society get their fair share of access to whatever educational opportunities are provided. Thus, the success of any education system depends upon an equal or fair distribution of inputs, processes and outcomes among participants in education with different characteristics. Equity in education is dependent on two main factors, fairness and inclusion. While fairness implies that factors specific to one's personal conditions should not be allowed to interfere with the potential of academic success, inclusion refers to a comprehensive standard that applies to everyone in a certain educational system; that is, ensuring a basic minimum standard of education for all. These two factors can be seen to be closely related and depend on each other for academic success and educational quality assurance. However, equity in education is more than an issue of fairness and distributive justice. In the modern period when many countries are trying to develop their human resource as one element in enhancing growth and international competitiveness, unequal education implies that human potential is being wasted, that some individuals do not have the competencies to perform well in a modern society. Equity recognizes that some are at a larger disadvantage than others and aim at compensating for peoples "misfortunes and disabilities in order to make sure that every one is capable of attaining the same type or like style. The principle suggests that any differences in educational outcomes should not be dependent on factors such as student's "background or quality of educational output, over which student have no control. Equity requires that the educational opportunities are equally available to all citizens irrespective of gender, socio-economic status, race or ethnicity, culture, religion, language, geographical location and physical and health ability.

Since the attainment of political independence in 1960, the Nigerian Government, at both the federal and state levels have massively expanded access to education several fold. Primary and Secondary schools have increased astronomically, especially with the introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme in 1976 as well as the Universal Basic Education Scheme (UBE) in 1999, coincidentally by the same Head of State, General later, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. Billions of Naira has also been expended on the primary and secondary sectors, with the federal government through UBEC providing substantial funds and the states providing counterpart funds. At the tertiary level, universities in particular have witnessed massive increase in the number, from four (4) universities in the 1960's to over 150 approved universities as at May 2015, all in an attempt to increase access to university education. However, a critical challenge has been how to enforce quality and standards for these institutions since it appears that the quality of education at all levels seem to be nose-diving. Thus, the compelling need for standard and functional Quality Assurance mechanism to be put in place.

Notwithstanding the introduction of the UPE and UBE schemes in the country, there are still some issues and challenges relating to access, equity, quality and relevance some of which are:

- Inadequate level of funding: UNESCO's recommendation of at least 26% of budgetary allocation being earmarked for education by developing countries, of which Nigeria is one, has never been met. The percentage hovers between 8% and 14% at both the federal and state levels. Even the little allocated does not seem to be properly and judiciously managed due to corruption, inflation of contracts, mismanagement and such-like vices. A good example is the UBE programme where despite the billions purported to have been spent, what is on ground leaves a sour taste in the mouth.

- Certain cultural practices like early marriages, non-belief in education of girls in some parts of the country, more interest in business than education by the boys in some other parts, etc. Inadequate infrastructural facilities
- Ever shortage of qualified teachers or staffing
- In adequate teaching and materials
- Lack or inadequate quality assurance services due to a combination of factors such as shortage of quality assurance and standard officers, shortage or resources and budgetary allocation for carrying out quality assurance activities, and, inadequate/non-relevant training on quality assurance.

Accountability simply implies an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions. Tied to the concept of quality in education is the notion of accountability. Quality in the education system requires accountability on the part of all major stake holders—the teachers, school administrators, ministry officials and heads of education parastatals. Assuring quality of educational experiences in schools cannot be alienated from the notion of accountability since schools are entrusted with the delivery of quality education, equipping learners with knowledge, skills and attitudes beneficial to the nation and society (Mandina and Chihere, 2013). The central assumption in accountability is that holding schools accountable for their products will cause schools to achieve substantially higher levels of performance thereby meeting the demand for quality education for all. Since accountability is concerned with responsibility which is acknowledged in some public form, it is thus a demand for efficiency, effectiveness and being held responsible for failure to meet the expectations of those who entrusted duties to one.

In the school management context, accountability may take additional meanings and purpose, viz;

- (i) The act of compliance with the rules and regulations of school governance
- (ii) Reporting to those with oversight authority over the school, and,
- (iii) Linking rewards and sanctions to expected results. (Mandivia and Chihere,2013)

Accountability in education is thus indispensable for excellence in education and required for the development of the human resource as needed to catapult Nigeria into enviable position in the comity of nations. Accountability is therefore essential for ensuring quality. It is a form of control and regulatory strategy, hence, regulating the quality or standard of education which quality assurance mechanism is all about is thus essential for accountability. Apparently, a primary motivation for increased accountability is to improve the system or aspects of it. Education accountability targets either the processes or results of education. A desired goal is identified and measures are identified for determining whether the goal is met.

It might also need to be emphasized that each stake holder in the education system has a role to play in the accountability mechanism. Each holder has to take up his responsibility and be accountable for his decision(s) and actions with respect to those responsibilities. Teachers are responsible and accountable for teaching the curriculum, planning and delivering instruction, choosing learning resources from those available in the school and, assessing and reporting student progress. Schools are accountable for providing programmes to meet the needs of students assigned to the school within the resources provided by the authorities, and probably improvise where possible.

School/Management Boards should be accountable for the use of funds to maximize opportunities to learn. They are equally accountable for how they allocate resources, for providing safe teaching and learning environments, for the extent to which local policy decisions maximize student's opportunities to learn. The government, on its own side is accountable for the extent to which the goals and principles it sets, the funding, facilities and curriculum It provides and policy decisions it makes allow the other levels of the public education system to maximize students' opportunities to learn. It can be very frustrating for teachers and schools when everything is blamed on them; when external accountability measures hold them accountable for student achievement outputs at the same time other levels of the system are not held accountable for the inputs that support learning.

Participatory Planning for Improved the School System

Participatory planning refers to a model of planning which calls for functional involvement of members of the society in the planning process in an attempt to enhance a more effective and responsive educational planning. Participatory model of planning for quality equity and accountability views educational planning as a social process which of necessity requires the active participation of the other relevant specialists such as curriculum specialists, the various interest groups such as the students representative council, The teacher representative council the (N.U.T), Teachers Registration council of Nigeria (T R C N) representatives, the parents Teachers Association (P T A); and so on. The case for participatory planning follows that modern education presents on situation of great complexity, vastness, fluidity with its ramification into every aspect of society, that only a process of planning which in some way allows for effective participating by a major proportion of the people can be efficiently responsive and practical.

The conventional planning process as it stands now has no formal provision for involving public representatives. Although there is an elephant of participation by the public in the planning process, for example in Nigeria, the involvement of the National Economic Council (NEC), and the Joint consultative committee (JCC), this however is not the same as the functional involvement of crucial Organization such as the other specialists, the various interest group such as religions organization, the students representatives council, the teachers representative council and others whose involvement in the planning process will enhance the efficiency of the educational system.

Overcoming the Challenges

The following are very crucial to improving the quality of education in the Nigerian schools.

1. Ensuring improved quality of inputs such as the: Classrooms; Offices, Libraries; Laboratories, Conveniences; Furniture items; Sporting equipment.
2. Quality of curriculum input should possess the following attributes
 - Be relevant to socio-economic and cultural needs of the society;
 - Teacher should have good knowledge of their subjects;
 - Teachers should have access to up-to-date information relevant to the student needs;
 - Relevant training and professional development programmes should be organized for teachers regularly;
 - Parents/guardians should buy necessary textbooks and other necessary materials for their children; Teacher education curriculum and training programmes should be re-designed to prepare teachers of tomorrow needed to galvanism the education programme. We actually need a paradigm shift in our teacher preparation programmes at both the college and university levels as one cannot use

yesterday's tool for today's work and still expect to be in business tomorrow. This also includes are-designed teaching practice programme with a view to injecting quality into it.

3. The good quality of teaching and learning
 - Teachers must have teaching qualifications.
 - Teachers are expected to employ instructions of good quality.
 - Teachers should be able to determine the extent of changes in the behavior of learners.
 - Teachers should employ effective evaluation process.
 - Teachers' plans should be effective and relevant to the learning objectives.
 - Teachers should be able to show interest in the learners and at the same time motivate them towards learning.
 - They should use relevant teaching materials.
4. Effective School Management: The management should be effective in the following areas:
 - Coordination of the school activities;
 - Formulation of financial policies;
 - Accomplish tasks promptly;
 - As much as possible, provide enabling environment for teachers and learners;
 - Ensure that the resources available are efficiently utilized; Ensure proper supervision of teaching and learning activities;
 - Appropriately involve parents/guardians in the relevant areas of the school activities;
 - Reward good performance and sanction bad behavior among the teachers and learners;
 - Ensure meaningful accountability in every aspect of the school administration.
5. Funding

- Need to fund education adequately by meeting the UNESCO's target of 26% budgetary allocation to education.
 - Judiciously utilizing available funds and blocking all loopholes for corruption, mismanagement and misapplication of funds.
6. Setting up an autonomous and virile Quality Assurance Department (QAD)
- The inspectorate systems as presently set up and operated really lacks the capacity to provide effective quality assurance in schools. The frequency of inspection is often low and far between, and when schools are visited, it is often focused on administrative rather than pedagogical issues.
 - There should really be an autonomous or semi-autonomous Education Quality Assurance Directorate (EQAD) at both the federal and state levels, to:
 - (i) Ensure effectiveness of policy implementation, strategic planning, resource mobilization and management of resources by ministries and parastatals concerned with education
 - (ii) Coordinate curricular and co-curricular activities for the Development of a holistic education system for the country.
 - (iii) Ensure that quality education and learning outcomes as well as quality institutional leadership are being provided for.
 - (iv) Provide effective planning especially with particular reference to access, relevance, equity, quality services and accountability in education. Set up minimums standards for the primary and secondary schools as well as other sectors below tertiary level like adult and non-formal education, nomadic education, migrant fishermen education etc, by providing a profile of curriculum, human resources, structures,

- infrastructures, equipment and facilities required for each level across the nation.
- (v) Accredite these schools by which school programmes are evaluated against basic minimum academic standards.
 - (vi) Determine the carrying capacity of these schools, both public and private
 - (vii) Conducting section visits to the schools-routine, brief short visits, full in section and follow-up visits.
 - (viii) Carry out impact assessment– a special form of evaluation aimed at finding out if the core values and expectations of education at the lower levels in each State are being met. The release of UBEC intervention funds can then be tide to all these.

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