

ENHANCING QUALITY ASSURANCE IN NIGERIAN ADULT EDUCATION

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Abstract

Quality assurance in education generally, and specifically in adult education is basically about ensuring that standard is maintained. Adult education as a form of education goes a long way in making sure that, an individual's status particularly that of an adult is upgraded economically, socially and academically among others. Thus, given its importance in the life of an adult, it is therefore, pertinent that quality assurance is enhanced to ensure proper quality delivery in adult education. This paper therefore, started by giving some conceptual clarifications of quality, and quality assurance. Furthermore, it examined the issue of quality assurance in Nigerian education, and that of adult education. The paper also established some strategies, and the reasons for enhancing quality assurance in adult education. In addition to the above, it investigated the challenges that emanate in the process of using quality assurance in adult education. Finally, some recommendations were made towards proffering solutions to the challenges investigated.

Keywords: Quality, Quality Assurance, Education and Adult Education

Introduction

The need for quality assurance in the Nigerian education system, and adult education in particular cannot be over emphasized. In order to make the system more responsive, meaningful and functional to the recipients and the society in general, there is need therefore, to refocus on quality assurance in adult education given that it is an instrument of change. It goes a long way in ensuring that adults acquire requisite knowledge and skills that will help them function well in their society and any other place they might find themselves, thereby enhancing national development. Olugbeko and Erinsakin (2011) established that, adult education is education for life. From his perception, adult education transcends beyond nomadic, women, political, and health

education to mention but a few, but as an educational process that revolves round the total life of a man.

Education and adult education in particular plays major role in the development of individuals and the nation, different bodies and agencies had contributed immensely in ensuring that quality adult education is delivered to the citizenry. United Nations Educational and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) among others played their own roles in ensuring that individual nations, Nigeria inclusive benefit from quality adult education. The agitation and concern for quality education is therefore, reflected in the inauguration of Education for all (EFA) in Jonitien (Thailand) in 1995 and Dakar in 2000 (Oludare&Adebile, 2014). Some of the Dakar goals which emanated from the Dakar forum of April 2000 and which were geared towards the attainment of EFA goals by 2015 further lend credibility to the pursuance of quality education anchored in National Policy on Education. Therefore, foreducation to fulfil its fundamental roles, there is need for quality assurance measures at different forms of education. Without that, the expected end result of educational programmes will not materialize (Omolewa, 2014). Thus, high quality delivery is a prerequisite for effective productivity in education/adult education, and hence, quality adult education is an instrument for effecting national development.

Meaning of Quality/Quality in Nigerian Education System

According to Ayonmike, Okwelle and Okeke (2015), the concept of quality has been one of the most important concepts in contemporary educational terminology. In terms of general concept, quality is defined by Adebayo, Oyenike and Adesoji (2009) as the ability or degree with which a product, service, or phenomenon conforms to an established standard, and which make it to be relatively superior to others. Juran in American Society for quality (2008) defined quality as fitness for intended use. He posits quality as meeting or exceeding customer's expectations. Ekong (2006) established that, quality builds knowledge, live skills, perspectives, attitudes and values. According to Adegbesan (2010), quality is not just a feature of a finished product or services but involves a focus on internal processes and outputs which includes; the reduction of waste and the improvement of productivity. Thus, from the above definitions, it could be deduced that, quality is the extent and degree to which a programme or product conforms to the established standard which makes it good or ready to be used by the customer.

With respect to education, African Union (2007) stated that, quality is a multidimensional concept, embracing all functions and activities of

education system, including teaching and academic programmes, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, and facilities. It also include equipment, services to the community, and academic environment; taking into account national cultural values, circumstances and international dimensions such as exchange of knowledge, interactive networking, mobility of teachers and students, and international research projects. Similarly, Oyeboode, Oladipo and Adetoro (2012) opined that quality in education may be considered on the basis of how good and efficient the teachers are; how adequate and accessible the facilities and materials needed for effective teaching and learning are; and how prepared the graduates are for meeting the challenges of life and for solving the social problems. Therefore, it is obvious that, when quality education is delivered high enough to meet set standards, the products of education will perform well in the world of work and in real life situation, whereas, when quality is low, performance will not meet the set standards.

Meaning of Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is a term that can mean different things in different national and regional contexts. In a broad sense, Williams (2010) defines quality assurance as the deliberate attempt of making sure that standard, merit, excellence and performance are maintained or attained in a given organization. It can also be seen as the planned and systematic production process that provides confidence in product stability for its intended purpose (Oyeniran, Ojo & Ottan 2014). They went further by saying that, it is a planned and systematic review process of an institution or programme to determine whether or not acceptable standards of education, scholarship, and infrastructure are being met, maintained and enhanced. Maajumdar, Khambayat, Tsesoro-Gayondato and Solla (2010) described quality assurance as the process of verifying or determining whether products or services meet or exceed customer expectations. This involves a coordinated quality assurance system, which should be systematic; provide fundamentals of practice; be manageable so that its people will use it; be integrated; and allow scope for individual initiative and professional judgment (Kirkpatrick, 2005).

Quality assurance is a paradigm shift from the former practice of traditional school inspection to monitoring and evaluation, according to set standard (Akogun, Balogun, & Bello, 2014). One of the key building blocks of quality assurance in education is the development of minimum standards as in qualification of instructors, the quality of teaching in the institutions, expected educational achievement of learners and the development of a more rigorous management process for education so that, the entire sector develop stronger operating policies, procedures which are well documented and adhered to.

Quality Assurance in Nigerian Education System

Quality practice in education is a mechanism used to evaluate the efficiency and appropriateness of teaching and learning in the curriculum process with a view to ensuring the delivery of high quality education (Oludare & Adebile, 2014). Fasasi (2006) opined that quality assurance in education can be described as consistent provision and utilization of good and high standard resources to foster effective teaching and learning in every stage and aspect of the educational system. He explained that, quality assurance will only be meaningful when application of its strategy is not deferred till the end of an educational programme. African Union (2007) established that, quality assurance as applied in education refers to all forms of internal and external quality monitoring, evaluation or review or the systematic review of educational programmes to ensure that acceptable standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure are being maintained. In addition, Tuck (2007) view quality assurance in education as the process and procedures for ensuring that qualifications, assessment and programme delivery meet certain standards.

Furthermore, Nwizu (2011) defined quality assurance in education as those actions that educational institutions undertake to ensure that they provide required standard of education, in order to produce quality manpower for national development. Adeogun and Osifila (2007) were of the opinion that, quality assurance in the school system covers all the activities that are conducted in order to achieve or maintain a certain quality level in every participant. In public examination for instance, the credibility and quality of the results may depend to a large extent on the quality of the practices which are put in place before, during and after such examinations (Addae-Mensah, 2006). Examination malpractices have become reoccurring threats to the quality of products of all citadels of learning. These menaces are more prominent in public examinations, especially those certificated examinations usually conducted by external examination bodies (Adeyegbe, 1998). Thus, because of the above menaces among others, public examination bodies in Nigeria have adopted certain quality assurance practices to redeem the credibility of their certificates. These according to Olaifa (2016) includes the use of online students registration, accreditation of examination centres, rotation of supervisors, provision of photo albums for candidates, embossment of photograph on the certificate to prevent forgery, and impersonation among others. These practices were adopted as preventive measures to compliment the already existing quality assurance measures. Quality assurance is therefore, a process by which educational institutions monitor their

programmes in order to ensure sustainability and maximum output from the established programmes.

Quality Assurance in Nigerian Adult Education

Adult education can be seen as an educational activity designed to enable individuals especially adults acquire new skills and knowledge or update the existing knowledge and skills to enable them add value to their lives and to the lives of those around them. Seya (2005) established that, adult education is seen as a transmission of process of general, technical or vocational knowledge as well as skills, values and attitudes, which takes place out of the formal education system. This, according to him, is with a view to remedying the early education inadequacies of mature people or equipping them with knowledge and cultural elements required for their self-fulfilment and active participation in the social, economic and political life of their societies.

With regards to adult education, quality assurance is the management and assessment strategies/procedures put in place by an educational institution or organisation to monitor performance, and also ensure achievement of quality outputs or improved quality. Quality assurance in adult education therefore, entails a set of activities intended to ensure that the programme meets its objectives. This involves among other things, recruitment of human capital that have acquired knowledgeable skills in adult education. This is in collaboration with the opinion of Damachi (2001) where he stated that, for education to satisfy the present demands, it must not just produce human capital for the labour market, rather, it should produce knowledgeable workers with flexible and adaptable skills. The human capital therefore, should be such that can impart the useful knowledge acquired, to the adult learners for the continuous regeneration of the society and the survival of humanity.

Quality assurance in adult education involves among others, evaluating/assessing the strength of the programmes offered in the learning centres with the intension of ensuring that, the contents of the programmes are relevant to the needs of the learners, and that the objectives of establishing the programmes are met. It enhances accountability, productivity, and reduces wastage in any educational system. Quality assurance involves accreditation and auditing. This is in line with Kis (2005) view on the three main approaches to quality. These approaches include accreditation, assessment and audit. Accreditation according to him is an evaluation of whether an institution or

programme meets a threshold standard, and qualifies for a certain status. Furthermore, Dill (2000) believes that assessment is an evaluation that makes graded judgements about quality. In this respect, it goes beyond accreditation that makes a binary judgement. In addition, quality audit checks the extent to which the institution is achieving its own explicit or its implicit objectives (Woodhouse, 1999). Therefore, in order to transform the individuals and the society through adult education, it is thus, imperative to ensure that adequate measures are being put in place to make sure that the education they are exposed to has quality standard. Thus, it is necessary that, any adult education programme must have well defined mechanisms for quality assurance at every stage of its developmental process; planning, implementation and evaluation.

Strategies for Enhancing Quality Assurance in Adult Education

Monitoring: It refers to the process of collecting data at intervals about ongoing projects or programmes within the school system. The aim is to constantly assess the level of performance with a view to finding out how far a set objectives are being met (Ehinder, 2001).

Review of institution's curriculum: Adult education curriculum, and the general standard of education should be reviewed to reflect the needs and aspirations of the learners as well as the society. The curriculum therefore, should match the minimum academic standard.

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 as a quality assurance strategy, is to see how the system can be assisted to improve on the present level of performance (formative) (Ijaiya, 2001).

Supervision: Supervision might involve inspection, but it goes beyond inspection and includes attempt at bringing about improvement in the quality of instruction. It involves staff as essential part of the process. It is a way of advising, refreshing, encouraging and stimulating staff (Onocha, 2002).

Facility Inspection: This usually involves an assessment of available facilities and resources in an institution with a view to establishing how far a particular institution has met prescribed standards. It should be more of an assessment rather than an improvement induced exercise (West-Burham, 1994).

Staff quality control: Staff quality is an essential pre-requisite in the issue of quality assurance. There is need therefore, to continue to encourage staff training and development strategies. The qualification and experience of

instructors matter a lot in their instruction delivery. On this note, they should continually be assisted to continue to undergo refresher courses, workshops, seminars and conferences. This is why Ojedele (2007) established that, quality control should be of concern to the country in its drive towards technological development.

Reasons for Enhancing Quality Assurance in Nigerian Education / Adult Education

Quality assurance in Nigerian education generally, and adult education in particular cannot be overemphasized in order to ensure quality of teaching and learning. However, according to Oduma (2013), quoting Adegbesan (2011), the following may be seen as the reasons for enhancing quality assurance in Nigerian education

- i. Quality assurance serves as an indispensable component of quality control strategy in education.
- ii. It will ensure and maintain high standard of education at all levels.
- iii. It will assist in monitoring and supervision of education activities especially that of teaching and learning.
- iv. It will equally help to determine the quality of teachers input.
- v. It will assist to determine the resources as well as facilities needed for smooth operations from time to time in our school system.
- vi. It helps to determine the adequacy of the learning environment for the comfort of both the teacher and the students.
- vii. It would also ensure how the financial resources available could be prudently and judiciously utilized.

Challenges in Enhancing Quality Assurance in Adult Education

- i. There is the dearth of skilled manpower in the area of monitoring and evaluation: Lack of trained monitoring and evaluation personnel in the Non-formal education sector is a serious problem to the development of the sector since monitoring is a sine qua non to a successful adult and non-formal education (NFE) programmes. It involves the management of a large database. Monitoring is a vital ingredient for successful implementation of NFE as such, it should be integrated in the programme action plan. Adequate funds are not provided and required information about the status of the programmes is not available. Due to lack of proper monitoring and evaluation in the Non-formal education, it has resulted in variations in the types of programmes available and offered across the states of the federation.

- ii. Poor record keeping: There is a problem of record keeping in adult education. This has seriously affected the database needed for adequate planning and implementation of adult education intervention programmes. This also affects the tracking of learner's performance and transition from one level to the other.
 - iii. Accessibility: Most times, both the adult learners and those involved in the monitoring and supervision of the programme find it difficult to have access to the learning centres. This is as a result of their locations.
 - iv. Inadequate funding: Inadequate funding is the most critical challenge that has threatened the attainment of good quality education in Nigeria, particularly adult education. Quality assurance in adult education requires some sizeable amount of money in carrying out exercises to ensure quality delivery in adult education. However, in most cases, the fund to carry out the exercise is not adequately provided.
 - v. Lack of information and communication technology facilities:
Another challenge to quality assurance in adult education in Nigeria is lack of information and communication technology facilities in adult education centres. As part of her education reform effort, Nigerian government adopted information and communication technology in all levels of education since information and communication technology integration in educational practices is meant to improve teaching and learning, education research, enhance collaboration among peers and improve quality of education. Unfortunately, in most adult education centres in the country, there is acute short of computers, multi-media projectors, and electronic white boards. Even majority of the institutions do not have internet connectivity. According to Resnick, (1998), these new digital technologies make possible a learning revolution in education. Thus, lack of information and communication technologies in adult education centres could be an obstacle for effective monitoring and supervision of the whole programme. .
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Conclusion

Education generally is very essential for the development of any society. Adult education in particular goes a long way in enhancing the status of adults, especially those who were not opportuned to acquire formal education. It also enhances the status of those who acquired, but want to update their knowledge, or further their education. Thus, given the importance of this aspect of education, the paper concludes that quality assurance is paramount in ensuring that the objectives of the programme is achieved, and standard is maintained.

Recommendations

As a result of the challenges that emanate from enhancing quality assurance in adult education, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Government and other stakeholders in education should constantly train and retrain individuals in the areas of monitoring and evaluation. This is in order to have adequate manpower that will carry out quality assurance exercise.
- ii. In order to enhance quality assurance in adult education, the culture of record keeping should be maintained.
- iii. In addition to the above recommendations, adult education centres should be located in such a way that they will be accessible to learners, and those who will be involved in quality assurance exercise.
- iv. Government, non-governmental organizations, and different bodies should make sure that, adequate fund for monitoring, supervision and assessing adult education programme is released.
- v. Efforts should be made to ensure that enough information and communication technology facilities are provided in adult education centres. This is not only to promote effective teaching and learning,

but also to enhance effective monitoring and supervision of the entire programme.

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