THE ROLE OF TOTAL QUALITY ASSURANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to examine the role of total quality assurance in secondary school achievement. Quality and quality assurance are terms which are seen differently by various experts particularly in Social and Management sciences and education. However, most of them agree that total quality assurance refers to maximization of all the teaching and learning activities by the school administrator in order to achieve the set Academic standard. The need for total quality assurance secondary school is in response to the desire to clear the mess that has made it difficult for schools to achieve the mandate for which they were established. The strategies for establishing total quality assurance in schools begins with the statement of the mission and vision of the school and setting up a Task Force Committee to monitor the implementation of the various programmes of the school. The principal, who is the head of the school, makes sure that all staff and students and other non-academic staff in the school are actively involved in the activities earmarked for ensuring total quality assurance.

KEY WORDS: Quality, Total quality assurance, Strategies, Stake holders, School Administrator, Taskforce Committee, Social and Management Sciences, Education

INTRODUCTION

Education is the bedrock of every society and a tool for nation building. Provision of functional education to the Nigerian child has suffered a lot in the last decades. Most public primary and secondary schools across the country find it increasingly difficult to provide qualitative education to the teeming population. In most schools today, there is a rapid decline in literacy level. The consequences of this poor quality have led to high drop-out rate, rampant examination malpractices in internal and external examinations, indiscipline and low staff productivity. Most state schools boards do not employ teachers on quality basis but on political basis. One finds a large percentage of teachers teaching in most primary and secondary schools without possessing the minimum teaching qualifications as spelt out in the National policy on Education. Evaluations are not periodically carried out by State Ministries of Education and Inspectorate Divisions to ensure quality and teacher professional development. The heads of these schools are not concerned with the set objectives of the school any longer. Under these conditions, quality can never be achieved. Without quality, education becomes wastage and this

poses serious danger to the personal development of the individual and the society at large. It is in view of this that stakeholders in the education industry must employ principles and strategies of total quality assurance to raise the performance of these schools.This paper therefore examines the role of Total Quality Assurance in the achievement of institutional goals under the following headings:

- Meaning of quality and Total Quality Assurance
- The need for quality assurance in secondary schools
- Factors militating against quality assurance
- Strategies for achieving quality assurance in secondary schools

Meaning of Quality and Total Quality Assurance

Total Quality Assurance is a recent innovation in the education sector. It was used in business and manufacturing industries where managers and captains of industries were concerned with satisfying the needs of consumers by raising the quantity and quality of the products. The quality management models are therefore adopted and applied to the education sector in view of its successes recorded in providing quality services and products to consumers. By supplying the consumer behaviours in education, students are regarded as consumers or customers who are purchasing the services provided by the industry (Feng, 2010).

Quality, according to Hadi (2010) and Nwagu (1991) is a concept that has eluded the dragnet of definitions. It is therefore seen differently by various professionals who use it. The word quality therefore lies in the perception of the consumers because what is good for somebody may not be good enough for another. This means that quality has to do with whether something is good or bad. It is about the standard of something when compared with other things. Quality in education is seen by its ability to help the students to do well in internal and external examinations that will take them to any university in the world (Arikewuyo, 2004). This therefore means that a standard must be set as a baseline for measuring success.

Quality assurance is related to quality control but it functions in a proactive manner. Quality assurance means the sum of activities that lead to the increase in the quality of products and services at the time of production and delivery. These activities are carried out by all employees of the industry or educational institutions and are supervised by the leadership at various levels in the organization in order to achieve the industrial or institutional goals (Berry, 1996). This requires total involvement of all parties such as workers, students etc within the organization. Nwagu (1991) also sees Total quality assurance as a system of setting standard and taking appropriate action to deal with problems militating against it. Moruppa (2009) defines quality assurance as the effectiveness and efficiency of administration, teaching, learning and

research. What is common to all these definitions is that the head of institutions must find effective ways of harnessing the human and material resources in order to achieve the mission and vision of the institution. Total quality assurance is therefore preventive rather than a corrective measure because failures and wastages are prevented before they happen.

There are two aspects of quality assurance: External and Internal total quality assurance. These bodies ensure that the school meets the minimum standard provided by the Ministry of Education or school boards. These bodies are the Inspectorate Service and the school management. For instance, most states ministries of education organize central mock examination for the final year students in order to compare performance and the extent of curriculum coverage.

The internal total quality assurance is also referred to as school based total quality assurance. The school tries to put in place certain preventive measures against failures and wastages such as identifying the learners' needs and problems in order to address them. The school based quality assurance involves all staff, students and parents in order to produce well balanced, high quality pupils from year to year and all weak points along the line are collectively identified and dealt with before any damage is done.

The need for total quality assurance in Secondary schools

The need for total quality assurance cannot be overemphasized. This is because it has so far been known to be the best strategy in addressing the myriad of problems militating against the provision of quality education to the Nigerian child. Through total quality assurance, schools are able to effectively harness the human and material resources available to provide quality teaching and learning in order to achieve the minimum set goals. Total quality assurance in secondary schools ensures that every staff in the school particularly the instructional staff is focused all the time in meeting the needs of the students. When teachers are involved in the quality process, the achievement of the goals of the school is made possible and school principals are able to get the required feedback about the problems hampering progress.

The adoption of total quality assurance by principals leads to the use of effective monitoring and supervision strategies that will lead to the achievement of high academic standard. It also helps principals to determine the level of adequacy of the facilities available for quality control. It helps the school administrators to make the best use of the available financial resources. Using the best practices of total quality assurance in schools leads to improvement in performance at the West African Senior School Certificate Examination and other National examinations.

Factors Militating against total quality assurance in secondary schools

Hadi and Yeshodharo (2010) and Nwagu (1991) have identified the following as potent factors militating

against the implementation of the total quality assurance in schools:

- Lack of public accountability for teachers and principals. In most secondary schools in Nigeria, teachers and principals are not dedicated to their duties and responsibilities. Many of them are engaged in their private businesses at the expense of the students and their employers. This is one of the strong factors that accounts for the rapid decline in quality assurance in schools

- Lack of clearly defined quality standards. Most principals of secondary schools are not goal directed and do not therefore spell out the mission and vision of their schools to their academic and non academic staff. Teachers, students, parents and supporting staff in the school need to know what is expected of them by the school authority so that they are assisted to meet the set standard. Where goals are clearly defined, some principals hardly have time to monitor and supervise the operations of the entire system.

- Lack of effective instruments of evaluating the school programmes. Most school principals do not have effective policy of evaluating the total school programmes. Internal examinations and continuous assessment are poorly conducted and records

poorly kept. Some principals consider it a sacred duty to ensure prompt and periodic conduct of continuous assessment and insist that the results are properly recorded and utilized. This raises the motivational level of students and staff leading to the attainment of meaningful academic output.

- Poor working environment. Most teachers in secondary schools today work under difficult and unstable conditions such as inadequate teaching facilities, irregular and inadequate remunerations, intimidation, nepotism, under funding education and periodic strikes. These conditions do not create enabling environment for them to achieve total quality assurance.

- Poor inputs, poor teaching. Most secondary schools are poorly equipped. They lack relevant instructional materials, laboratory equipment and classroom seating facilities. This affects teachers' and students' productivity which is evidenced by poor performance in external examinations.

- Political and religious interference. Politics and religion interfere allot in the appointment of principals, funding and internal administrations of schools. The result is that the poor quality of the principals

appointed tends to run the school in camps. This situation leads to low morale of staff, hence negative attitude to work and students' poor performance in both internal and external examinations.

- Poor quality of admission. The products of most public primary schools that are absorbed by secondary schools lack the basic numerical and language skills to cope with the junior secondary school curriculum. It is a common experience that most pupils in JSS one do not know how to spell their names. This ugly situation cannot guarantee quality assurance in schools until it is removed.

- Corruption. Corruption which ranges from examination misconduct aided and abetted by teachers, parents and school administrators to moral bankruptcy, falsification of examination records, issuance of fake certificates and embezzlement of school funds abound in most Nigerian schools. It is therefore difficult to achieve the expected high academic standard.

Strategies for achieving total quality assurance in secondary schools

The responsibility for achieving total quality assurance in secondary schools lies on the principals supported by instructional staff, auxiliary staff and students. His duty, among others is to see how the educational resources allocated to his school are properly managed to achieve the institutional goals. This requires a good demonstration of purposeful and inspiring leadership capable of raising the morale of all staff. He must therefore play the role of a listener, an encourager, a dissuader, a watcher, a critic, a judge and a model if he must perform his role effectively to achieve the institutional goals. Students, who are consumers of the services rendered by the school, should be actively involved in teaching and learning activities and other co-curricular activities of the school. Since total quality assurance is a participative and collaborative system, other stakeholders such as policy makers, resource providers, policy implementers etc. should be actively involved in carrying out their individual tasks that will lead to the achievement of the institutional goals. The school principals must therefore place more emphasis on prevention of wastage, involvement of students, teachers, inspectors, parents and securing the tight attitude and commitment of all concerned to quality so that quality becomes the concern of all members of the school community.

Moruppa (2009), Fadokun (2000) and Adegbsan (2010) identify the following strategies for establishing total quality assurance in educational institutions:

- The beginning of achieving total quality assurance in educational institutions starts with the statement of the mission and vision of the

school. This is important because it spells out the minimum standard to be met by the school.

- The next thing to be done by the principal is to assess the quality of services provided by the school in order to find out whether there are adequate facilities required for the tasks and the level of dedication of teachers and students. To do this successfully, a survey is carried out among staff and students. This is because staff and students are the principal actors in any educational institution. The students are the primary judge of the quality of services rendered by teachers and school administrators. Survey items such as: Effective teaching and learning, availability of hostel accommodation, free and fair admission policy, responsive to students needs, good library, availability of ICT facilities, possession of qualified and dedicated teachers, absence of nepotism/ethnicity, religious tolerance etc. should be used to elicit responses from both staff and students. The results of the survey give the principal and his team the idea on where to start.
  - Carrying out stakeholders' orientation. The principal and his team should conduct an orientation for all stakeholders. The aim is to help them to develop

their own quality goals, initiatives and how to make productive use of the available human and material resources in the school.

- Setting up a quality improvement team. The principal should set up a Total Quality Assurance Committee (TOQAC) and identify hard working subject specialists to serve on the committee. Terms of reference should be clearly spelt out. The committee should be mandated to set up relevant sub-committees whose activities will be monitored closely to ensure good performance. Sub-committees such as C.A committees, Award Committees, welfare committees etc should be made functional.

- Quality admission process. The principal and his committee should ensure that only quality students are admitted into the school. This is because students admitted without basic literacy and communication skills make teaching and learning very difficult and frustrating and any effort to attain total quality assurance is met with failure.

- Creation of quality awareness. The Total Quality Assurance Committee should embark on quality awareness campaign in the school so that staff, students, local school community and PTA get to know about the set academic standard and enlist their cooperation in the throes of achieving the set goals.
- Institution of zero tolerance for examination misconduct. No school, whether primary or secondary will achieve sound quality culture without instituting zero tolerance for examination malpractice. All forms of examination misconduct should be met with stern disciplinary measures. If students know that no assistance is given to candidates in the external examination hall, they will be motivated to work very hard in order to pass with flying colours. Schools therefore should put in place all measures that will prevent any incidence of examination malpractice.
- Monitoring, evaluation and supervision. The committee, backed by the various Heads of Departments, Vice Principals (academic), Senior Masters, Subject Heads, Form Masters and Mistresses etc should be involved in the following tasks:

Monitoring

This refers to the process of collecting data at intervals about the ongoing academic activities in the school. The aim is to assess the level of performance with a view to finding out how far a set of objective is being met.

Evaluation

This could be both formative and summative. The aim is to see how the system can be assisted to improve on the present level of performance.

Monitoring publication of C.A results where prizes are given to the best students can be very motivating. Staff whose students do very well in external examinations are also recognized by giving them mouth watering awards to sustain performance.
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Supervision

This involves inspection but goes beyond inspection. An assessment of the available facilities and resources is carried out regularly in order to find out how far the prescribed standards are being made.

- Professionalization of teaching. The school authority should try to acquire only professionally trained teachers with cognate experience to teach in schools. Periodic workshops and in service training should be included in the staff development policy
- Modern teaching methods. The school should encourage the use of ICT in teaching and learning

CONCLUSION

The desire for qualitative education for the Nigerian child is a generally shared feeling by parents, learners, employers of labour and the government. Educational institutions that have been established and funded with the mandate to achieve high academic standard of teaching and learning are infested with many problems, thus making it increasingly difficult to meet the set standard. Total quality assurance is a better alternative for addressing these problems because it focuses on wastage prevention before it occurs. This will lead to the enthronement of sound academic culture in the school system. This however requires the commitment to the quality process by all stakeholders in the educational industry.

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