

Supervision for Quality Assurance in Universal Basic Education Programme in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper discussed quality assurance as the major print out of emphasis towards ensuring standard education in Nigerian educational system. It discussed supervision of instruction as the panacea for quality in the Universal Basic Education in Nigeria Schools. Objectives of UBE and the need for effective supervision of the Scheme were discussed System theory was used as the theoretical frame work in the paper. Strategies for effective supervision were proffered. Recommendations were made among which is provision of adequate facilities and efficient supervisors. Adequate funding of the scheme was also recommended.

Keywords: Quality Assurance, Supervision, Instructional programme, Monitoring, Universal Basic Education.

1. Introduction

Education constitutes the major engine for sustainable human development as well as the fulcrum around which every activity revolves. Nigeria like so many other developing countries of the world has invested so much in education because it is believed that education is for national growth and development. The launching of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1976 was as a result of this believe. The introduction of the UPE resulted in an up-surge of students, population in the primary schools. As at 2008, there were 54,434 primary schools in Nigeria with 319,590 classrooms and 21,294,515 primary school enrolments, while the number of primary school teachers was 586,930 with an average pupil/teacher ratio of 1:36 (Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja, 2009)

The unexpected increase in primary school enrolment led to a subsequent increase in Secondary enrolment which created the problem of providing well trained and qualified staff to meet the new demands and answering the crucial questions of how to provide suitable facilities and ensure qualities. For example the number of students enrolment from JSS 1 to JSS III in 2003 was 3,684,644 which rose to 3,720,789 in 2008 since Junior Secondary School has been included to be part of the UBE programme according to the new national policy on education. In 1988, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) created the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) to look into the problem of quality and poor performance at the primary level. However the problem of poor performance at the primary level of education persists. (Falayajo 1992).

In compliance with the recommendation of the World Conference on Education held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1991 "Education for All" (EFA), Nigeria launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in September 1999. The UBE was launched with a wider scope which provides a nine year universal, free and compulsory education covering primary and junior secondary education.

This programme covers the rural population, nomadic population, urban slums street children, almajeries and children with special needs. No doubt the Universal Basic Education (UBE) appears to be a huge venture and requires huge financial and human resources. Any enterprise of such magnitude as implied in UBE requires effective monitoring, supervision and quality control to achieve the stated objectives including maintaining set standards.

The key factors in the primary school system include the pupils without whom the school would not be established, the teachers without whom the curriculum will not be delivered, the teaching and non-teaching without whom the academic activities cannot function for the realization of quality objective in education. (Mkpa, 2000)

Without effective supervision of aforementioned factors or groups, the achievement of the goal of the school cannot be achieved. Supervision therefore is of utmost importance for the realization of high quality in education. Ojogwu (2001) stated that supervision creates awareness of sound education philosophies in teachers, it makes them to be aware of educational policies and reforms and make them part and parcel of the whole system so that the aim will be achieved because teachers are vehicles that will deliver any educational reforms in schools.

The quality of education being provided for children has been a source of great concern for a long time. There was the complaint about the low performance of children, high drop out rate and failure rate, poor reading and writing skills among students at all levels. Olayemi (2001) noted that the depreciation that has endangered public schools is undoubtedly the major cause that led to the emergence of private schools in the country.

The trend in many countries has been towards restructuring of school management in ensuring quality control that is exchanged for quality assurance. The focus of this paper is on how supervision can be used to ensure quality control or assurance in Nigerian Schools.

This paper therefore discusses supervision as an instrument for quality assurance in the Universal Basic Education programme in Nigeria. Specially, it examined the need for supervision, the agencies responsible for supervision, roles of supervisors and strategies for quality assurance.

2. Objectives of the Universal Basic Education

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) sees education as a close articulation of the formal approaches to the mechanism of awakening on all round development of human potential (FME 2000). The broad aim is to lay the foundation of life-long learning through the inculcation of appropriate learning self-awareness, citizenship and life skills.

In summary, the specific objectives of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Scheme among others include;

- The provision of free universal education for every Nigerian child of school age.
- Non formal skills and apprenticeships training for adolescent and youth who have not had the benefit of formal education.
- Development in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.

3. Concept of Quality Assurance

Quality control according to Cole (1996) is basically a system for setting standards and taking appropriate action to deal with deviations outside permitted tolerance. Quality control is a retroactive action used to determine the quality of a product or a system after processing and during which wastages have occurred and what is left is to reject. It is however better to prevent wastage and failure before they happen. Hence the need for quality assurance which is preventive rather corrective

Quality control practices in Nigeria education is based essentially on schools supervision, monitoring and control. Nwagwu and Yoloye in Fadipe and Oyedele (2000) opined that quality in education systems includes quality of its inputs, quality of teachers, instructions and evaluation procedures among others and must be properly supervised for sustenance.

3.1 Essential Elements of Quality in Education

For us to understand that the word 'quality' has multi-dimensional factors, we may look at those essential elements of quality in education i.e. those elements that make inputs into quality of education and the process through which they can or do influence on the quality Umo (2004). These diagrams explains better as presented by Obanya (2002)

Inputs	Process
Society	Participatory process of programme development, full societal acceptance and ownership of programme.
Policy	Democratic/ formulation and articulation of policy, adaptability to local

	conditions.
Management framework	Decentralization/devolution of power and initiatives to the grassroots levels, empowerment, autonomy for operations down the line
Teaching force	Qualitatively adequate, adequately educated and professional prepared.
Curriculum	Responsive to individual and societal needs and aspirations, comprehensive coverage, adaptable to changing needs, time and conditions
Infrastructure	Quantitatively, aesthetically, specially adequate, learners and teacher friendly adequate classroom workrooms recreational facilities, toilet and first aid facilities
Materials	Judicious mix of print/audio text, video electronic teaching/learning facilities closely related to the goals of the curriculum, user friendly and qualitatively adequate.

Umo (2002) added funding to all these elements which should be judiciously managed. Quality outcomes in education can be derived through effective supervision of inputs and processes.

Harvey and Green (1993) classified quality into five categories, namely quality as exceptional, quality as perfection or consistency, quality as fitness of purpose, quality as value of purpose, quality as value for money and quality as transformation. Letuka, Strydon and Mahrasoa (2007) observed that the notion of Harvey and Green on quality was sufficiently inclusive and adaptable and could be used by different institutions working under different circumstances. When applied to education, Mackoww and Witkowsk, (2005) opined that quality assurance exists to ensure that quality assurance mechanisms achieve their purpose. One of such mechanisms is supervision.

The Federal Government, mindful of the importance of quality control in education systems made legal provisions for quality in Nigeria by decree 16 of 1985 known as the "National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions" to prescribe the minimum standards of education at different levels on behalf of the Minister of Education. The National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) is responsible for the supervision and control of primary education in Nigeria.

In addition, a number of policy statements have also been documented in the National policy on Education (FGN 2004). to ensure quality control in schools, through effective school supervision. The primary responsibility of supervisors is to see that high standards are maintained and that schools are run in accordance with laid down regulations. By implications the supervisors are seen to be fulfilling a controlling, coordinating and communicating roles as guardian of educational standard. Supervision therefore is an important component of quality control strategy in education that would ensure the maintenance of high standards in the universal basic education.

4. Supervision and Universal Basic Education (UBE)

The importance of supervision in UBE cannot be overemphasized, this is because supervision is the panacea for quality education. Supervision in UBE includes among others, improvement of teaching and learning which helps teachers in class management. It makes the incompetent teachers confident and enhances the identification of good qualities possess by teachers. Supervision examines continuously schools instructional goals and assesses teachers performance in meeting such goals. The roles of the supervisors in the UBE include the following.

- 1) Inspection of all aspects of the programme to ensure they are run according to the philosophy and the objectives of the scheme.
- 2) To ascertain that the programme is functioning optimally and that public funds are used judiciously.
- 3) To assess and report on the efficiency of the teaching learning process in the different schools.
- 4) To supply the ministry of education with current information on the education standards, problems and potentialities of the school supervised.
- 5) To examine record keeping in accordance with the relevant education laws and regulations.
- 6) Offer professional advice and guidance to teachers, and lead teachers and principals to improve the teaching learning process, the school tone and improvement with a view to raising the standard of education.

For the supervisors to carry out these enormous duties, they need to be professionally trained in educational supervision. It has however been observed that the UBE schools are not well supervised due to some constraints such as shortage of funds, obsolete equipment, inadequate number of experienced personnel, also the inability of inspectors to assist teachers to improve their performance. Tuoyo, (1999) noted that the government should expand the

inspectorate division to ensure regular inspection of all schools, motivate the supervisors with attractive remuneration and conditions of service to get their best in UBE Programme.

5. Strategies for Quality Assurance in Universal Basic Education (UBE).

In this 21st century, various techniques of supervision are used. These include classroom visitation and observation, teachers conference, interschool visitation, micro- teaching and workshops. These techniques may not be applicable in all situations. Supervision of educational programmes is usually carried out by inspectors through State and Federal Ministries of Education. These inspectors visit schools on scheduled periods to observe teaching and learning in various schools. These methods however are not empirically enough to tell whether the programme is effective. The suggested strategies especially for Universal Basic Education scheme are.

5.1 National Assessment and continuous Assessment of Educational Progress

The National assessment strategy for supervision and quality control requires assessment of macro indicators of the entire system. These indicators are access, enrolment, retention, attrition rates, availability of infrastructure, instructional facilities and the level of funds. All supervisions and quality control procedures must focus on the input, processes and outputs. In compliance to this mandate the model that is adopted for the effective National Assessment of Education progress takes of the variables as shown below:

Input	Processes	Output
Class Size	Student- teacher classroom interaction	Learning
Student – teacher ratio	Students' learning activities	Outcomes
School Population	Teachers' activities	Cognitive
Funds	School Administration and Management	Affective
Libraries		Psychomotor
Students' and teachers characteristics		

Adapted from Onwuakpa (2000) Education Today. Published by Federal Ministry of Education

From the above table, the school supervision should take cognizance of many variables which may influence the achievement of the objectives of Universal Basic Education in order to maintain quality assurance of the programme. These include class size, student teacher-ratio, school population, funds and so on. As earlier indicated, there are 319,950 classrooms in the primary schools with a total enrolment of 21,294,515 pupils as at 2008. Hence, there is an average class size of 67 which may not be conducive enough for effective teaching and learning. This could affect either positively or negatively on the student-teacher classroom interaction and consequently the learning outcomes. This is where the focus of supervision should be either at micro or macro level. In Nigeria, much importance is attached to external supervision being carried out by the officials of State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) or the officials of the Ministry of Education where as the internal supervision carried out by the head teachers or head of departments need to be highly emphasized as they are more closer to the teachers and pupils in daily activities of the school.

To conduct a National assessment of Educational progress using the model above ,there is need for varieties of instrument such as questionnaires ,observational schedules, checklist, Achievement tests and anecdotal records.

5.2 Continuous Assessment

Continuous Assessment is another strategy of achieving quality assurance in the U.B.E programme if properly used. Continuous assessments is defined as a mechanism whereby the final grading of a pupil /student in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of behaviour takes account of schooling. Such an assessment involves the use of various modes of evaluation for the purpose of guiding and improving learning performance of the students (FME 1982). Generally continuous assessment can be sued as a device strategy for monitoring, supervision and quality control of the educational progress in UBE scheme. This is because, information of the pupils/students academic performance under the UBE programme can be obtained easily using continuous assessment strategy.

Another approach to quality assurance in UBE is termed Total Quality management (TQM) Cole (1996) sees it as approach that is based on a positive attitude to quality at every level in the organization. TQM has it genesis in the work

of Professor Ishikawa, who while training supervisors on quality process came to the realization that worker participation in the quality process can ensure the achievement of quality standard, provide feedback to supervisor and manager about quality problems and secure workers' commitment to quality. When workers form part of the total quality production process, quality assurance becomes participative or collaborative (Cole 1996) (Bush and Coleman 2000).

The main features of TQM according to Cole (1996) include prevention of errors rather than detection. TQM can be an internal arrangement by each school to prevent wastage rather than rectify it. It recognizes the autonomy of the school to handle its own affairs. Most private schools have already started some form of TQM, this strategy can also be adopted in UBE schools where each teacher will be a client to the next teacher by ensuring that he passes on to the next class at least near perfect pupils both in academic performance and behavior. School based quality assurance will therefore be a continuously built school-wide culture of progressive programme involving all staff, students and parents in the effort to produce well balanced, high quality pupils from year to year. There is every expectation that TQM will become a reliable tool for improving school quality in Nigeria for effective, TQM schools, adequate funding and free hands to operate should be provided.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The UBE programme is a very huge enterprise which needed effective monitoring and supervision. For successful implementation of the scheme, quality control measures have to be in place. In this paper suggested strategies were made for quality control of the scheme such as periodic supervision of all domains of behaviours of students, Teachers, Conducive atmosphere, Qualifications of teachers, the ratio of teacher to pupil, current textbooks library facilities, journals, magazines, dailies, standard classrooms, adequate funds for capital expenditure and effective management of funds. All these variables should be effectively controlled for quality assurance in UBE scheme.

The following recommendations are made:

1. All the three tiers of government, Federal, State and Local should be involved in monitoring and evaluation of UBE scheme to enhance quality data on enrolment figures, personnel and infrastructure.
2. There is need to employ qualified supervisors with the training in educational supervision these supervisors need to be motivated by providing them with vehicles that will allow for accessibility into schools in rural area.
3. A valid instrument for measuring learning achievement should be developed. Standards should be set as guidelines for equipping all the schools.
4. Managerial skills of head teachers in monitoring and supervision should be improved.
5. UBE schemes should be adequately funded in order to enhance productivity and maintenance of standard.
6. Infrastructural facilities in schools should be adequately provided for students /pupils
7. Continuous assessment should be encouraged and reinforced as an important aspect of quality assurance in UBE programme.
8. Total quality management where collaborative efforts of teachers, students, community, parents are utilized to prevent wastage in schools should be encouraged.

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