



www.eprawisdom.com

Research Paper

ENHANCING QUALITY TEACHING/ TRAINING AND RESEARCH IN HIGHER EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA

Dr. Olaleye, Florence Oluremi¹¹Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Management,
Ekiti-State University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This paper discussed the need to enhancing quality teaching and research in higher education sector in Nigeria. Education sector has been be-devilled by various challenges in recent times this include low academic performance of students, examination malpractices, cultism, truancy just to mention a few, they also faced serious challenges ranging from poor quality graduates, problem of funding and poor quality environment. Hence there is therefore the need to enhance or improve the quality of higher education for sustainability. This paper highlighted the meaning of quality; factors that influence higher education quality; the input, process and output based on system theory. The need to enhance teaching and learning in higher education to produce quality graduates were discussed. Research as the fulcrum of academia was highlighted. The importance of research to the nation was widely explained, challenges facing research work which include poor funding of research, lack of equipment and material for doing basic scientific research were discussed. Strategies to improve teaching, training and research in higher education were suggested.

KEYWORDS: Higher Education, Quality, Sustainable Development, Teaching, Research. Inputs, Process Output.

INTRODUCTION

Educational quality is perhaps the most elusive concept to measure. It is elusive because there is lack of educational benchmarks that are comparable over time. Yet, it is most important because it sets the standards that define a University's intellectual environment which in turn conditions the vision and capacities of graduates and the capacity of a nation to manage its affairs well (Saint, 1992)

A university which does not enjoy international acceptance of its standards, prejudices the academic future of most of the promising graduates "Mediocrity today leads to greater mediocrity tomorrow". Quality teaching, learning and research are the main mission of a University. Quality of higher education is crucial for any nation and more importantly developing nation like Nigeria.

It is the key to being in a competitive edge.

- ☞ Promotes the reputation of the institutions, its staff, students and management
- ☞ Markets the products of the institutions as it enhances employment opportunities of quality graduates.
- ☞ Sets an international mark of recognition in terms of national and international (Nobel Prizes on research products)
- ☞ Enhances demands for its works including publications and artifacts
- ☞ Improves the competitive edge for admission and employment
- ☞ Attracts resources and opportunities from National and International Organizatons



- ↳ Acts as a fulcrum for rapid national, socio-economic and political development of the nation.
- ↳ Produces top class Leaders and professionals

Despite the significance of university education, it has been observed that the excellence of most Universities in the country have gradually been compromised and eroded. There are symptoms of downward trends in academic performance. These are reflected in decline performance of students in examinations, admission of poorer quality students and staff, declining quality of research and publications output. There are also hues and crics among education stakeholders over the preparation of University graduates for employments and their inability to take a leading role in resolving various problems within their areas of expertise.

It is as a result of the aforementioned issues that this paper aimed at clarifying the concept of quality in higher education. Discusses the viable measures to ensure quality and improve performance and excellence for sustainable development

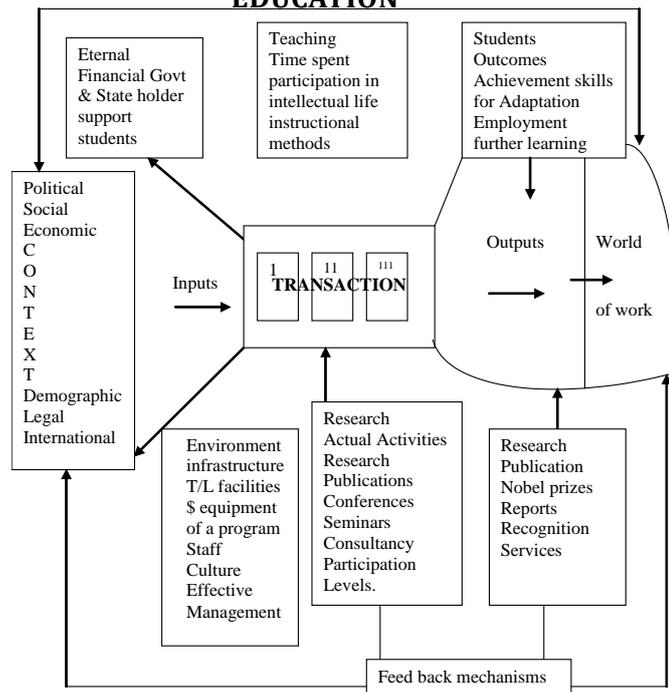
Concept of Quality

Quality means different things to different people. To the researcher quality can be regarded as the degree of goodness or excellence. High quality teaching can be regarded as the goodness or effectiveness of teaching which can result to students

learning and satisfaction. Standards are level of excellence, the ideal state which are set by authority, when standards are too low, practitioners may be content with mediocre. Similarly when standards are too high achievement might be impossible (Harvey & Green 1993) Given the fact that the manifestation of quality is the level of performance in realizing the given missions of higher education, the goals are supposed to reflect the generally expectations of the major stakeholders. Students, employers and community that support higher education institutions. (Adedeji 2003) Quality in higher education is influenced by many factors. The inputs, processing of inputs into output or outcomes of given institution. Hence quality in higher education is a multi-dimensional concept which should involve the interaction between inputs, processes of teaching and learning, research and consulting to achieve the cherished goals. These factors combined to produce given quality (World Education Forum 2000). Macukoww and Witkowski (2005) asserted that each educational institution such as the University should introduce its own quality culture to improve the quality of teaching and learning, enhance the quality of research, improve general working environment and satisfy the aspirations of staff and students.

The increasing challenge to quality in the University education underscores the need for quality management in higher education. See figure 1

Figure 1
FACTORS INFLUENCING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND RESEARCH IN HIGHER EDUCATION



These factors are identified as follows:

Political conditions exerts effects on higher education institutions. The laws and Regulations of government on higher institutions can affect the limit of operation of higher education. It might set the limit to their academic freedom thereby affect the attainment of quality in higher institutions.

Economic conditions: Changing economic conditions serves as an important constraint on any organization. (Hall 1977) noted. Thus in periods of economic depression like the situation in Nigeria today. There is under-funding of education, budgetary cutbacks and adhoc funding of the Universities. These in turn affect quality of teaching and limiting research activity in higher institutions. Odiya and Omofonimwan (2007) asserted that education in Nigeria is besieged by colossal problems such as poor funding, poor educational infrastructure and polluted learning environment.

Legal conditions: These deal with laws and regulations that guide higher education institutions, many of the statutes that establish higher education two or three decades ago are said to be inadequate and outdated to guide its operations effectively in this 21st century.

Demographic conditions which are related to increase in students enrolment in secondary schools and subsequent pressure for admission into University is likely to affect quality. Also pressure from advocates of equity and gender-access can affect quality. Mere admission of more women without requisite intervention programmes is likely to affect quality. To realize quality in Nigeria higher education. A system theory which involves inputs process, output were used in this paper.

Inputs

Inputs comprise the essentials requirements that are acted upon to facilitate realization of quality outcomes in teaching, learning and research. In this paper the inputs are divided into external and internal. Three major inputs are external inputs These are (1) Financing (2) Parents and stakeholders support and (3) quality students.

Financing: Effective financing has been identified by various writers, researchers to be one of the most critical factors that affect quality of higher education in Nigeria.

Lack of adequate financial resources to support higher education institutions is one of the key factors that has prompted conflicts, crises, student unrest and closure of universities. These have in turn resulted into

inefficiencies in the system such as class-boy cotts and closures affecting teaching and on going research. It is the major cause of the conflicts of interests between individual and organizational goals (Mosha, 1994). Nwapachu (1995) maintains that ineffective funding and budgetary cutbacks on Universities is visible in terms of the unabated academic flight, erosion in standards of teaching, accommodation and service facilities, deferment of development and maintenance of physical infrastructure, declining library standards due to acute shortage of new textbooks and journals, poor job satisfaction and performance, and erosion of research activities. If poor financing continues standards will be compromised and Universities turned into extensions of poor quality high schools.

Longe (1999) asserted that the amount of money Nigeria devotes to education is far lower than the 26% of government expenditure as recommended by UNESCO. For instance in the years 1999, 2002, and 2003 budget allocations to education stood at 11%, 5% and 1.89% respectfully (ASUU 2000 & Abiola 2007). This situation has led to a poor quality of schooling at the University level.

The pursuit of quality of higher education should not only be the concern of teachers and educational institutions, but also of the parents and other education stakeholders.

Parents and Stakeholders Support

Although it is the responsibility of government to fund higher education. Its capacity is limited. Hence the call for partnership in financing higher education. The current wave of cost sharing require parents/private sectors and other stakeholders who are the beneficiaries of higher education products. In order to provide quality higher education, they need to contribute to the sector, training and research activities.

Another area of enhancing quality higher education is the quality of students

Quality of Students: Admission of qualified students in germane to quality higher education, though Universities mainly depend on secondary schools to provide them with quality students. If that quality is poor, the University output will be of poor quality also. Hence if the secondary school is handicapped by large classes and absence of textbooks or basic equipment in the laboratory and inadequate trained teachers production of quality products at this level will be difficult to come by

Processes

various studies have shown that students academic achievement was due to academic activities at the institution and to what teachers and students do in the teaching/learning process, (Heyneman and Loxley 1981) Mere availability of basic/inputs was not sufficient in realizing excellence what was more important was effective and judicious use of inputs in order to realize the cherished outcome.

Teaching and learning are germane at the process level. It is the area whereby knowledge and skills are imported to students across faculties/centres of a University. The question now raised is: Are Universities providing equal opportunities for students to acquire knowledge? The following factors are important in promoting quality teaching and learning in the Universities.

Devoting time for preparations. Effective teaching and learning can only take place if teachers devote adequate time for preparing their lectures/tutorial/practicals so as to stimulate students imagination and creativity. Make students aware of how knowledge and understanding have been accumulated by great thinkers. This will allow them to do research on their own using information technology to search for knowledge. In short a well prepared and taught course would allow the students to develop sound judgement both in public and private life.

It has been discovered that many lecturers were physically or psychologically absent most of the time they had little time for preparation, they therefore resorted to using old lecture notes. Such practice was not amenable to effective teaching and learning and substance of good quality.

The use of various methods of teaching would enhance teaching and learning. Variety is the spice of life. Using variety of teaching strategies would enable the lecturers to be effective thus enhance quality.

Regular student's assessment and feedback is a process of determining performance and also to know whether academic goals have been achieved.

Regular student assessment provides useful information that can be used to judge progress made on the basis of the feed backs, the learner and the teacher can take remedial measures to improve performance for quality teaching and research it is imperative to evaluate classroom teaching and learning in the Universities. Individual and the institution need to be appraised for collective responsibility in attaining quality teaching and research (Omari 1995 noted)

Research

Research is the major ingredient that distinguishes Universities from other institutions in terms of nourishing, advancing and refining knowledge and skills imparted in teaching and learning process. It serves as a spring board for innovation and subsequent development. Research is instrumental in the pursuit of truth and providing clear basis for action. Any scientific action, research is the hub of and stimulus. It is the fulcrum of academia.

It has been observed that in African Universities with particular reference to Nigeria, underfunding of research limits opportunities for young scientists to visit top-class laboratories and work with top class colleagues thus limiting their ability to do the work they were trained for

Factors affecting quality of research in Universities are underfunding, quality of staff in terms of skills levels, limited facilities and equipment, and lack of motivation. Total research funding in most developed countries is between 1.5% and 3% of GDP. Sweden is the only country to exceed 4%. (The Scholar 2007). Research funding policy in Nigeria is low. Though an unprecedented growth and development in technological terms have been achieved in all spheres of life yet more needs to be achieved if Nigeria is to be ranked among the best in the world. Statistics showed that corporate bodies contributed immensely on research South Africa spent 0.7% of GDP on research and development in 2005.

In the EU, expenditure on research was 2% 2.8% in the U.S.A and 3% in Japan. The number of researchers per 1000 of the working population is 0.00 (in Nigeria): 0.71 in South Africa. 4.84 Australia, 0.3 Malaysia and 2.77 (South Korea). In the developed world there are four out of every 1000 of the working population in the EU, eight in the U.S.A and nine in Japan. (The scholar 2005). The question them is, what can Nigeria do as a nation to boost its technological research and development strategies?

In line with the government reform programmes of encouraging private sector-led economy it is undisputable that this trend can only be reversed by a government policy or initiative which will compel Nigeria Public Limited companies to fund research and development programmes in the Universities.

To the companies, research and development spending is an investment which will drive for growth and development of the nation.

The research will bring about improvement in the economy as new products and processes that can be adapted to our peculiar environment will be developed.

Scarce foreign exchange spent on acquiring foreign technologies will be saved.

Best brains in the world will be attracted to and retained by our Universities.

Other challenges facing research in the Universities is the misdirection of research funds to government departments and parastatal research units which rarely do any meaningful research. Materials and equipment for doing basic scientific research are also in short supply or out of order. These problems demand holistic approach to redeem the Universities for sustainable growth.

Strategies for Promoting Quality of Teaching/Training and Research in Higher Institutions in Nigeria

This paper focused on how to enhance quality teaching and research in Nigerian Universities. The question posed in this paper was on the concept of quality, teaching and research in the University. The strategic initiatives highlighted ways to enhance the quality of Universities education and how to carry out their responsibilities effectively and efficiently in response to the growing knowledge in this 21st century. Excessive control of Universities by the state has led to curtail of academic freedom which has led to crises and closure of the Universities which eventually affect the quality of teaching and learning. According the University academic freedom that is reciprocated with accountability and responsibility with the state assuming mainly a supervising role is the most effective way of running Universities for high quality, outcomes in training and research.

Nyerere (1995) noted that University staff and students must have untrammited freedom to think and to exchange thoughts, even if the thinking lead to some of its members to become orthodox in their conclusion.

Controlling staff too much may de-motivate them, they may feel stifled and unable to act. Each University should ensure and assure teaching which is the primary responsibility of every University teachers.

Another way to improve teaching is to replace the traditional lecture method of teaching with discovery method of teaching in which students are led by the teacher to discover knowledge from various sources including the internet in line with an agreed course outline.

On economic basis, many African Universities are faced with economic recession hence, Universities are not adequately funded. To improve teaching and research in higher education there is need for heavy investment in the education sector. Education and training especially in science and technology which are the keys to survival as well as development in the future. United State of America (USA) and Japan have education and health as their topmost priority, because they all realize the role of quality training and research in the socio-economic and political transformation and development of their nations. Nigeria cannot be left out for sustainable development. Improvements in internal efficiency of education systems are crucial. Improved budgetary allocation to education sector in general and higher education in particular will lead to lowering of costs in other sectors as nation will have better trained and informed population who can plan size of family, take care of their roads. Other education stakeholders must share part of the cost of education. Although adequate funding was an essential pre-requisite for the attainment of excellence: what is done with the investment in pursuit of quality improvement in teaching and research is equally important. Effective management and mobilization of the human and financial resources and time had a significant role to play in enhancing quality of teaching/training and research.

Quality assurance is another important strategy of ensuring quality teaching training and research. Universities have relied mainly on appraised of individual staff members performance through annual staff reviews. The process is often rushed. It is therefore recommended that strategies of evaluating teaching learning/training process should be inform of peer evaluation, internal and external evaluation need to be institutionalized. Appraisal should be carried out regularly and feed back pursued in order to bring about desired changes. Students appraisals of their lecturers should be a welcome process.

It has been observed that research capacity of some Universities was very low. hence there is need for internal training for lecturers to improve their skills. Senior members of staff can team up with junior colleagues to conduct significant original research. Funds can be allocated to conduct useful research projects, publish books and journals that would bring about sustainable development to the nation.

REFERENCES

1. Adedeji, S. O. Bamidele, R.O. (2003) *Economic impact of tertiary education on human capital Development in Nigeria. In human Resources Development in Ibadan; the Nigerian Economic society. selected papers for 2007 Annual conference.*
2. Abiola, T (2001) *Education: ASUU; FGN, Role in Education. The Gazette (10) p. 33*
3. Asuu (2000) *Breach of Agreement reached between the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Academic staff Union of Nigerian Universities ASUU on October 25, 1999. A plea for Intervention. A press release of ASUU issued on 29th April.*
4. Harvey, L and Green, D (1993). "Defining Quality Assessment and Evaluation. *Higher Education* 18(1) 9-34.
5. Hall, RH (1977) *Organization. Structure and Process. New Japan, Prentice hall*
6. Heyneman S. and W. Loxley (1981). *The Impact of primary school quality on academic achievement across twenty nine high and low income countries. Paper presented to Annual meeting of the America sociological Association Toronto.*
7. Longe, R.S (1999) *Investment in Nigeria Education: Relevance, Quality and Governance at the Eve of the Third Millennium. An inaugural Lecture University of Ibadan.*
8. Mackmkoww, B and Witkowski M. (2005) 'Accreditation and Evaluation Does it really work' A paper presented at the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education Biennial Conference New Zealand March 29-April.
9. Mosha, H.J. (1994) *Conflict management and organization Health in Universities: Lessons from Tanzania Professional Inaugural Lecture series No 59 Oslo. Ham Trykk. as/hhi grafisk.*
10. Nwapachu, J. (1995) *25 years of the University of Dares Salaam (1970-1995) Achievements and short comings. Key note Address*
11. Nyerere J.K. (1995). *Address 25th Anniversary of University of Dar-es-Salam 1st July 1995.*
12. Odiya, L.O. and Omofonwansi (2007) *Educational System in Nigeria Problem and Prospects, Journal of Social Sciences* 14(1): 81-86.
13. Omari, J.M. (1995) *University at the Verge of Maturity. Towards Corporate Excellence. A paper presented at the University of Dares Salam silver jubilee 1970-1995.*
14. Saint, W. (1992) *Universities in Africa: Strategies for stabilization and Revitalization Washington Dc. The World bank.*
15. *The National Scholar (2007) Perspectives on private Universities in Nigeria ASUU Academic Publication* 5(7) Ibadan.
16. *World Education Forum (2000) Education for all 2000 Assessment <http://www.unesco.doc.org>.*