

## QUALITY ASSURANCE: THE CORE STRATEGY FOR EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

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**ABSTRACT:** Quality assurance in education is the efficient management, monitoring, evaluation, reviews of the resources inputs and transformation process to produce a quality output that meets standard of educational programme. The study investigated quality assurance as the core strategy for educational management and declares it a systematic process which ensures that certain set standard or quality of a program or product is met. Education as the key of human capital and economic development must anchor on quality assurance to thrive. It further beamed its search light on the efficacy and ability of quality assurance practices in actualizing the standard of education in terms of in-puts, processes and outputs. The study reviewed education and its management through quality assurance, role of quality assurance, types, benefits, theoretical framework, role of educational managers, quality assurance training, differences and similarities between quality assurance and quality control, challenges and prospects, strategies for improvement, and concluded that quality assurance occupies a strategic position in the achievement of quality in educational institutions and every other organisation.

**Keyword:** Core Strategy, Education; Management, Quality Assurance.

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## INTRODUCTION

Quality assurance has been adjudged the most effective strategy in the achievement of quality and standard in education. The management of education in Nigeria from the Islamic, indigenous, missionary and up till date has not been easy. Ensuring quality in education has posed serious challenges ranging from policy making, to its implementation. As a well-known fact, education is the bedrock of every nation and requires unwavering attention if its benefits must accrue to its citizens. We cannot also forget in a hurry that, in as much as education is the anchor pillar of national development and sustainability, it also remains a baby in the hands of the nation to nurture otherwise it dies up with its lofty prospect.

No wonder why Adepaju (1999) in Ibrahim (2024), stated that people and nations are what they are because of the nature and types of education they have been exposed to. This is to say that education plays a prominent role in shaping the affairs of individuals as well as the nation hence, quality becomes important. As firmly asserted by Nwosu (2024), education is the fortification against poverty and social unrest, and also the body of knowledge which equips our young ones with the skills and attitudes required to keep our future economic and social development afloat. The obvious answer beacons on quality assurance which implies ensuring

compliance from all the stakeholders of education, stressing and taking immediate actions for right things, attitudes, and principles to be applied and at the right times. The implication is that for achievement of quality education, quality assurance must play.

### **Quality Assurance**

Quality simply means the level of excellence in a given activity or programme. It is a standard and degree of excellence of something measured against other things. Accordingly, Nwosu, (2019, 2024), concurred that quality is the maintenance and improvement of standards with the assumption that standards are objectives and quality is continuous change.

Quality assurance is any system process of determining whether a product or service meets specified requirements (Techtarget.com). It ensures that a business or programme meets the quality or standard it has set for its self. It could also be seen from the perspective of a programme improving the quality of its products. Quality assurance is meant to increase customer's confidence and company's credibility, while improving work processes and efficiency. It also helps a company compete in its market. In managing education, quality assurance will foster in the administration of management principles that will yield quality for the achievement of set goals.

### **The Concept of Core Strategy**

Strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve goals and objectives of a programme or plan of action intended to accomplish a specific goal. Core strategy on the other hand would mean the basic and most important method or technique adopted for achievement of objectives. This is an indication that quality assurance is the most important style in the management of education to influence effectiveness, efficiency and productivity. Quality assurance as a core strategy entails the application of most appropriate managerial/administrative principles and processes to enhance quality. These processes may include planning, organising, staffing, supervision and evaluation, coordination and control, directing, budgeting. On the side of administration: humanitarian principle, prudential principle, bureaucratic principle and change principle.

### **Concepts of Education and Educational Management**

Education is the transmission of knowledge and skills from one individual to another. It seeks to develop an individual's innate ability as it gives him some desirable knowledge, understanding, skills, interest, attitudes and critical thinking. Education occupies a vital position in the development of any nation (Nwosu, 2024). In the real sense, the society depends on education for the development and training her citizens and also for the achievements of its needs, values, and aspirations. It is the harmonious development of physical, mental, moral (spiritual) and social faculties, the four dimensions of life, for a life of dedicated service. Therefore, education is the process of awakening in another human being a thirst for knowledge, desire to develop all of one's capacities, create the desire to be whole and meaningful person. It is ultimately the door of economic, social and personal advancement and the well-being of a nation and the society at large (Nwosu & Oputa, 2018).

Educational management is a process of getting tasks completed, effectively and efficiently through people (Nwosu, 2024). Every organisation including education is founded on

the principles of goal achievement, and that is why a group of individuals are saddled with the responsibility to pilot the affairs of organisations. Management involves strategy, innovation, initiative, ideas, creativity, problem solving and decision making. It also coordinates and utilises material and human resources for the achievement of goals (Nwosu, 2015; Nwosu & Maduiké, 2015). As expressed by Nwosu (2021), the objectives and importance of government in any organisation stems from the quest for maximum results with minimum efforts and resources, increasing the efficiency of factors of production, maximum prosperity for employer and employee, human betterment and social justice.

Management of education through quality assurance cannot be overemphasised as it is a critical component of quality actualisation. It ensures that programmes meet industry standards and providing students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in their chosen fields. The field of education and training is constantly evolving, and it is essential for organisations to stay ahead of the curve to provide high quality education and training programmes. One of the ways to ensure the provision of the best possible education and training is through accreditation from a respected organisation like International Association for Quality Assurance in Pre-Tertiary and Higher Education (QAHE). Implementing quality assurance process can improve the quality of organization's programmes, increase students' satisfaction, and enhance their reputation in the industry (International Quality Assurance in Pre-Tertiary and Higher Education Association (IQAHEA), 2023).

Managing education through Quality Assurance (QA) involves programme evaluation, student assessment, and on-going professional development for faculty and staff. Regularly reviewing and assessing programs can identify areas for improvement and implement best practices to enhance the quality of education and training the organisations provide.

### **Role of Quality Assurance in Educational Management**

Quality assurance plays prominent and enormous roles in the management of education in Nigeria. According to Khatri et al. (2024), an effective quality assurance system in educational institutions will benefit students both directly and indirectly. In Haapakorpi (2011) view, he stated that organisational structure and management, culture and individual discipline, all have impact on quality assurance results. Affirming the above assertions, Dill (2010) in Oktarina et al. (2023), added that all high quality educational institutions strive for effective quality assurance. Internal quality assurance functions to support educational objectives, such as the applicability of academic degree classification and the accuracy of academic quality information. While external quality assurance helps to guide public and scholarly perceptions of an educational institutions quality.

Quality assurance in education is charged with the responsibility of ensuring high quality basic education through appropriate quality assurance mechanisms as well as prescribing monitoring, evaluating, and maintaining minimum standards, especially in the area of teaching and learning in all institutions of learning. Similarly, it engineers and examines programs to identify bugs and defects, especially when they appear unexpectedly.

Expressing the view of (Quality Assurance Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), the following are the five (5) primary functions of quality assurance:

- Technology transfer (this function involves the receipt and review of a document for product design as well as trial and error details.

- Validation.
- Documentation.
- Assurance of quality of product.
- Quality management.

Nevertheless, the following have been identified as roles of quality assurance in education:

- It determines the quantity and quality of teaching and learning facilities in education.
- It helps in monitoring and supervision of education.
- It serves as quality control in education.
- It enhances the prudent and judicious management of resources.
- It promotes the quality of education.
- It fosters improvement and accountability.

### **Types of Quality Assurance in Education**

Various types of quality assurance have been identified by different scholars. To Lawal (2013), they are:

- Internal quality assurance (involving self-analysis); quality plan; monitoring and evaluation; and
- External quality assurance consisting of; benchmarking; audit; assessment and review; accreditation; accountability and continuous improvement.
- Preventative Quality Assurance focuses on avoiding errors and defects in a programme. It implements processes and procedures designed to identify and address potential issues before they impact on the final product or service. It is proactive in nature through enforcement of planning, risk analysis, training and setting quality standards to minimise defects and optimise efficiency.
- Detective Quality Assurance deals with identification and correction of defects. It relies on various testing and inspection to uncover deviations from quality standards.
- Corrective Quality Assurance addresses defects or non-conformities identified during or after the production process. It deals with continuous review, examination, evaluation and taking adequate corrective measures for effectiveness, efficiency and productivity.
- Assessment Quality Assurance involves evaluating and verifying the effectiveness of the overall quality assurance processes and systems within the organisation. It emphasises on compliance with prescribed standards, regulations and continuous improvement.

On the basis of the types of quality assurance revealed, it is pertinent to state without reservation that total adoption of these types of quality assurance in the management of education will drastically reduce defects in the programmes and systems to the barest minimum. When management effectively discharges their duties appropriately, preventing errors from the beginning, detecting and correcting issues which are likely to reduce programme quality, then education will stand tall without blemish.

It is worthy of note that quality assurance revolves around four (Cs), (critical thinking, creative thinking, communicating and collaboration) which management must be intentional

about. Stimulating teachers and students to think outside the box is one way of achieving quality, communication and team work is another dimension. This is because no one person can function as a team. Clarity, goal direction and drive, coordination and control, and team work build a positive light. This is evident in Adam Robbins, the author of “Middle Leadership Mastery” who always outlines his (4Cs) approach (clarity, curiosity, culture and candour) and directs on how it can be applied in every setting for attainment of goals. It is essential that management requires religious application of the (4Cs) of quality assurance for actualisation of quality.

## Quality Assurance and Quality Control

The term quality assurance and quality control are used interchangeably but have different meanings and strategies. Assurance could mean the act of giving confidence, the state of being certain, while control implies an evaluation to indicate needed corrective responses, the act of guiding or the state of process in which the variability is attributable to a constant system of chance causes. Quality assurance is a planned activity within the manufacturing process that help to ensure the overall quality and a safety of the product, while quality control focuses on the overall quality of a firm’s output (Eisner, 2022). In educational management, quality assurance focuses on proactive systems and processes to prevent issues and ensure consist quality, whereas quality control is reactive, identifies and addresses problems in final output.

## Differences and Similarities between Quality Assurance and Quality Control

S/N	Quality Assurance	Quality Control
1.	It is proactive	It is reactive.
2.	It follows standard operation procedures, managing suppliers, auditing projects using quality audit checklists.	It is concerned with end product, involving post-production processes such as testing, inspection, product sampling, quality control checklist applications products and product peer review (measuring activities).
3.	It is long term in nature.	It is short term in nature.
4.	It requires participation of all to be successful.	It involves tasking of a specific team.
5.	It is preventive.	It is corrective.
6.	It is process oriented.	It is product oriented.

### Similarities:

Policies, procedures, methodologies:

Both processes follow standards defined by the organisation to achieve high quality, but they each feature a unique approach.

Securing high- quality Product: They both help to deliver high quality product to the customer.

Preventing major issues: They prevent, identify and fix issues as early as possible in order to reduce costs and Continuous improvement: They review, evaluate and correct issues.

As a matter of fact, quality assurance and control play vital and distinct roles in the management of education, as well as share common goals. To buttress this opinion, Diama (2023) maintained that they are inseparable parts of overall quality management (QM). There benefits to educational organisation are not in doubt as they:

- Streamline regulatory audits;
- Build a culture of continuous improvement; and
- Nurture a more engaged workforce.

### **Roles of Educational Managers in Quality Assurance**

Haven discussed the role of quality assurance in education, its enforcement is paramount. One thing is to identify factors and strategies of operation, and another is to implement. Knowing what to do without doing it is useless. This is where the role of managers of education becomes imperative. According to Ololube (2024), with the discovery of some characteristics of successful quality assurance system such as:

- Emphasising clear purposes;
- Legitimacy;
- Interaction between internal and external processes that is dynamic;
- More focus on internal processes, as well as flexibility and trust in higher education institutions;
- Appropriate follow-up procedures and actionable feedback;
- Quality control on a regular and cyclical basis, considered as a process;
- Caution and flexibility when it comes to tying results to findings.

It makes it clear that the presence and active participation of a leader must play to bring these characteristics to reality. In this regard, the managers must exhibit the following roles to achieve this:

- Leadership and vision (which consists of setting quality standards and developing strategic plans;
- Quality monitoring and evaluation (assessing academic programmes, monitoring teaching and learning; and analysing students' outcomes;
- Staff development and support (providing professional development opportunities: coaching and mentoring, recognising and rewarding excellence;
- Stakeholder engagement (communicating with stakeholders: Engaging with employers and industry partners; fostering a culture of quality;
- Quality assurance processes (developing and implementing quality assurance policies; conducting audits and reviews; identifying and addressing quality.

Managers of education can ensure that their institutions maintain high-quality academic programs, teaching and learning, ultimately benefitting students, employers and the society as a whole by the fulfilment of the above roles. In the words of Manafa and Ihwarulam (n.d), poor implementation of quality assurance practices in educational institutions most times result to low quality in education. Observations have shown that some managers of education are faced with challenges in skills required in the management of schools. Periodic seminars are most times not organised and school facilities are often times not maintained regularly.

In the bid to ensure quality in education, the interests, hope and aspirations of the employee should not be subdued by the institution. The individual worker has expectations from

his performances in the organisation. One is to achieve results for the organisation, and another is for his personal interest. Therefore, the humanitarian theory of administrative principles should not be down played, as employees are to be treated fairly like humans with feelings and not like machines. In this scenery, administration of incentives and motivation should be considered. For when there are incentives, motivation is automatically charged towards the assurance of high productivity.

### **Challenges of Quality Assurance**

In as much as there are prospects of quality assurance, there are also challenges. Quality assurance in education has been faced with numerous challenges ranging from:

- Inadequate funding;
- Lack of qualified staff;
- Inadequate infrastructure;
- Insufficient resources for teaching and learning, as identified by (Usman, 2023).

In addition, the following factors can hinder quality assurance in education:

- Resistance to change;
- Lack of institutional commitment;
- Inadequate data management;
- Regulatory requirements;
- Social expectations;
- Technological advancement;
- Globalisation and internationalisation;
- Assessing students learning outcome;
- Ensuring curriculum relevance;
- Managing diversity and inclusivity;
- Balancing theory and practice;
- Corruption and unethical practices;
- Lack of transparency and accountability;
- Brain drain and faculty development;
- Managing change and innovation.

### **Prospects of Quality assurance in Education**

- Improved academic standards;
- Accountability and transparency;
- Enhanced institutional effectiveness;
- Opportunities for innovation and improvement;
- Internationalisation and global recognition.

## **Quality Assurance Training in Education**

In Nigeria, quality assurance training in education focuses on equipping educators and administrators with the skills and knowledge to monitor, assess, and improve the quality of teaching, learning and student outcomes, ensuring adherence to standards and continuous improvement. The training typically covers:

- Ensuring that curriculum are relevant, effective and aligned with national standards;
- Providing educators with the necessary skill and knowledge to deliver high quality instruction;
- Developing and implementing effective assessment methods to monitor student learning and identify areas for improvement;
- Regularly assessing the effectiveness of educational programs and interventions;
- Ensuring that resources are adequately provided, judiciously used, and accounted for to achieve stated objectives and maintain high standards across all levels. Quality assurance training often employs hands on learning, internship, and real-world projects to impart the necessary skills.

## **Quality Assurance Agencies**

The following bodies are the key quality assurance agencies in education:

- National University Commission (NUC).
- National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE).
- National Board for Technical Education (NBT).
- West African Examinations Council (WAEC).
- Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB).
- National Examination Council (NECO).

These bodies ensure that educational standards are upheld. They monitor teaching quality, curriculum implementation, student learning outcomes, teaching and learning facilities, and institutional governance.

## **Strategies for improving Quality Assurance**

- Quality enhancement;
- Quality audit;
- Follow-up procedure after accreditation;
- International higher education network;
- Collaborative research;
- Adequate funding of education;
- Empowerment of academic;
- Stakeholders' feedback (Mba & Ugwulashi, 2019).



## CONCLUSION

Judging from the above discussions, quality assurance occupies a strategic position in the achievement of quality in the educational institutions and every other organisation. The purpose of quality assurance is to ensure that institutions of learning effectively and efficiently deliver quality education, training, research and community services and competencies which are necessary for national growth and development. Education as the key to individual and economic growth requires quality assurance for standardisation.

## Suggestions

The revelation of the effectiveness and efficacy of quality assurance and quality control in the educational organisation has given rise to state categorically that both bodies be institutionalised to manage and monitor the following for achievement of quality in education:

- Recruitment of competent and qualified staff;
- Procurement of essential facilities;
- Availability of school records;
- Admission process;
- Use adequate curriculum; and
- Government and stakeholders of education should collaborate to employ competent staff and also provide adequate infrastructural and instructional materials to enhance quality education.

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