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QUALITY ASSURANCE IN SCHOOL SYSTEM: A NECESSITY, NOT OPTION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
This paper explored the concept of quality assurance within the school system, highlighting its necessity for enhancing educational outcomes. Quality assurance in education involves implementing policies and processes to ensure that educational standards are met and continuously improved. It is a systematic approach that includes curriculum development, effective teaching practices, student support services, and strong school leadership. The study emphasizes that quality assurance is crucial for addressing challenges such as inequalities in educational access and administrative inefficiencies. By focusing on key components and addressing common gaps, schools can improve student performance, enhance their reputation, and foster stakeholder trust. In conclusion, effective quality assurance frameworks are essential for promoting accountability, transparency, and excellence in the educational industry.

Keywords: Quality assurance, School system, Necessity, Nigeria

Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right, as emphasized by international agreements like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981). It's crucial for individual and societal development, boosting empowerment, productivity, health, and reducing social issues

like child labour (UNESCO, 2022). This is why ensuring access to basic education for all is a global priority.

The importance and linkage of education to the development of any society is well known. It is in recognition of this importance that the international communities and governments over the world have made commitments for citizens to have access to education. Meanwhile, it has been documented that across the globe, there are inequalities in educational access and achievements as well as high levels of absolute educational deprivation of both children and adults. In order to confront these challenges, the rights based approach, which emphasizes on the quality assurance in educational sector, has been advocated for.

Quality assurance in a school system refers to the comprehensive processes and mechanisms a school employs to ensure and enhance the quality of education it provides. It involves systematically monitoring, evaluating, and improving various aspects of the school's operations to meet established standards and achieve its educational goals.

Concept of Quality Assurance

In today's competitive industrial landscape, where maximizing profit is a fundamental corporate objective, the implementation of robust quality assurance frameworks is essential. These frameworks serve to optimize operational processes, ensure efficient resource utilization, and foster a culture of continuous improvement in output, ultimately contributing to a corporation's ability to effectively compete in the open market (Bhuiyan, N., & Islam, M. A. 2023).. To survive in the business world, such a corporation must ensure that its products are of good quality, properly controlled, before reaching the consumers. Quality assurance is an effective way of skilfully managing any affair or situation so that stated objectives can be easily obtained. Thus, in order to promote administrative effectiveness in our schools, our plan must reflect the consideration of the effective use of quality assurance mechanism (Khatri, et al. 2024). The method of administration used in business management can also be applied to school system for the purpose of efficiency and effectiveness (Getzels and Guba, 1952).

Li, X., et al. (2024), believed that business management aims at profit-making and thus ensures maximum utilization of its workers in

order to stand the competition of its other business counterparts and be able to satisfy its consumers with quality products. Similarly, the school system can be viewed from the perspective of a corporation expected to serve the society in which the corporation is located. There is no doubt whatever, that the expectations of the society or a group of people may differ from what the corporation has for them. When this occurs, it is the responsibility of the management to recognise the diverging interests of the society and to ensure that the needs of the society the corporation is meant to serve are clearly identified. But this does not mean that the management should endanger its survival in order to satisfy a particular group.

Concept of School System

The concept of a school system encompasses a structured and organized framework designed to provide education to a defined population. A school system is a hierarchical organization of educational institutions, personnel, and resources established to deliver educational services from early childhood to the tertiary level (UNESCO, 2022). This organized structure facilitates the systematic delivery of curriculum and instruction. The primary function of a school system is to ensure equitable access to quality education for all learners within its jurisdiction (World Bank, 2023). Effective school systems are characterized by clear policies, efficient administration, and well-trained educators. Quality school systems prioritize continuous improvement through data-driven decision-making and regular evaluation of their processes and outcomes (OECD, 2024). Furthermore, these systems play a crucial role in the social and intellectual development of individuals. "Schools serve as vital institutions for fostering not only academic knowledge but also social skills, values, and responsible citizenship (UNICEF, 2021). Ultimately, a well-functioning school system is a cornerstone of societal progress and individual empowerment. Investing in a robust school system is fundamental to national development and the creation of a knowledgeable and skilled citizenry (African Union, 2023).

Quality Assurance and the School System

Quality assurance in the school system is a systematic process aimed at ensuring and enhancing the quality of education provided. Quality

assurance in education refers to the policies, processes, and activities implemented to guarantee that educational standards are met and continuously improved (Vlasceanu et al., 2007, cited in European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 2020). This involves establishing clear benchmarks and monitoring performance against these standards. Effective quality assurance mechanisms help to identify areas of strength and weakness within the school system, facilitating targeted interventions for improvement (UNESCO, 2021). These mechanisms can include internal evaluations and external reviews. Internal quality assurance involves self-assessment and continuous monitoring by the school itself, while external quality assurance often involves independent bodies assessing the school's performance against set criteria (Stella, 2022). The ultimate goal is to foster a culture of continuous improvement within educational institutions. A strong emphasis on quality assurance promotes a proactive approach to enhancing teaching, learning, and overall school effectiveness (World Bank, 2023). By implementing robust quality assurance frameworks, school systems can better serve their students and stakeholders. Ultimately, the implementation of rigorous quality assurance contributes to greater accountability, transparency, and enhanced educational outcomes for all learners (African Union, 2024).

Components of quality assurance in a school system:

1. Curriculum Development and Review:
    - Ensuring that the curriculum aligns with national or state standards and is relevant to students' needs.
    - Regularly reviewing and updating the curriculum to incorporate new knowledge and best practices.
    - Providing teachers with the necessary resources and support to effectively implement the curriculum.

2. Teaching and Learning Practices:
    - Employing effective teaching methodologies that cater to diverse learning styles.
    - Providing ongoing professional development for teachers to enhance their skills.
    - Monitoring classroom instruction to ensure quality and consistency.

- Assessing student learning through various methods, including formative and summative assessments.

3. Student Support Services:
    - Providing guidance and counseling services to students to support their academic, social, and emotional well-being.
    - Offering special education services for students with disabilities.
    - Creating a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students.
4. School Leadership and Management:
    - Establishing a clear vision and mission for the school.
    - Providing effective leadership that fosters a positive school culture.
    - Managing resources efficiently to support teaching and learning.
    - Engaging parents and the community in school improvement efforts.
5. Assessment and Evaluation:
    - Regularly assessing student learning outcomes to track progress and identify areas for improvement.
    - Evaluating the effectiveness of teaching practices and school programs.
    - Using data from assessments and evaluations to inform decision-making and drive continuous improvement.
6. Accountability and Transparency:
    - Establishing clear accountability mechanisms for teachers, administrators, and the school as a whole.
    - Communicating school performance data to parents and the community.
    - Seeking feedback from stakeholders to identify areas for improvement.

Leadership and the Quality Assurance in School System

The fact is that the ultimate goal of any corporate body is to make a profit so as to remain in business. Similarly, the aim of the school is to produce an individual who will be useful not only to himself but to the society in general. Bush, T., & Glover, D. (2023), observed that

management is usually faced with everyday problems of dealing with the society it serves, so also is educational leadership. Every day new rules are surfacing and continue to shape the theory and practice of educational leadership. As in business management, the school also has its consumers. In this respect, the parents can be regarded as the interest groups, the teachers and the school managers as employees, and the students as the consumers. The general public represents the society as a whole. Just as the business consumers are after quality products, students, parents and the society at large are also after academic excellence which can only be achieved through a proper monitoring system otherwise known as 'quality assurance' (Ayinde,2022).

Common Gaps in Quality Assurance in Schools:

Quality assurance in education is a continuous process of evaluating and improving the quality of education provided by a school or educational system. It aims to ensure that students receive a high-quality education that meets their needs and prepares them for success in their future endeavors. However, there are several common gaps in quality assurance in schools that can hinder its effectiveness.

1. **Lack of a clear definition of quality:** Quality assurance can be difficult to implement if there is no clear definition of what constitutes quality education. This can lead to inconsistencies in evaluation and improvement efforts.
2. **Insufficient data:** Quality assurance relies on data to track progress and identify areas for improvement. Schools may lack the necessary data collection and analysis systems to effectively monitor the quality of education they provide.
3. **Lack of stakeholder involvement:** Quality assurance should involve all stakeholders, including students, teachers, parents, and administrators. Schools may fail to engage stakeholders in the quality assurance process, which can lead to a lack of buy-in and effectiveness.
4. **Inadequate resources:** Quality assurance can be resource-intensive, requiring investments in data collection and analysis systems, professional development for teachers, and other resources. Schools may lack the necessary resources to effectively implement quality assurance.

5. **Lack of follow-up:** Quality assurance is not a one-time event. It requires ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure that improvements are being made. Schools may fail to follow up on quality assurance initiatives, which can lead to a lack of sustained improvement.

How to Address Common Gaps in Quality Assurance in Schools:

1. **Develop a clear definition of quality:** Schools should work with stakeholders to develop a clear definition of what constitutes quality education. This definition should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART).
2. **Invest in data collection and analysis systems:** Schools should invest in data collection and analysis systems to effectively monitor the quality of education they provide. These systems should be able to track student progress, teacher effectiveness, and other key indicators of quality.
3. **Engage stakeholders:** Schools should engage all stakeholders in the quality assurance process. This can be done through surveys, focus groups, and other methods. Stakeholder feedback should be used to inform quality assurance initiatives.
4. **Allocate adequate resources:** Schools should allocate adequate resources to support quality assurance initiatives. This includes investing in data collection and analysis systems, professional development for teachers, and other resources.
5. **Establish a system for follow-up:** Schools should establish a system for following up on quality assurance initiatives. This system should include regular monitoring and evaluation to ensure that improvements are being made.

Impact of Quality Assurance on Student Outcomes

- **Improved Academic Performance:** Effective quality assurance leads to better teaching, relevant curriculum, and targeted support. This results in improved student grades and test scores.
- **Enhanced Skills and Competencies:** Quality assurance ensures students develop the skills needed for success in higher education and the workforce.

- **Increased Employability:** Students from schools with strong quality assurance systems are more likely to be employed after graduation.
- **Greater Student Satisfaction:** When students feel supported and challenged, they are more satisfied with their education.
- **Positive Learning Environment:** Quality assurance promotes a safe and inclusive environment where students can thrive.

Impact of Quality Assurance on School Reputation

- **Attracts High-Quality Students:** Schools known for quality education attract motivated students and families.
- **Enhances Credibility:** A strong reputation for quality makes the school more credible and respected in the community.
- **Attracts and Retains Talented Teachers:** Top teachers want to work in schools with a commitment to quality.
- **Increased Funding Opportunities:** Schools with good reputations may have access to more grants and funding.
- **Improved Stakeholder Relationships:** Quality assurance fosters trust and collaboration with parents, alumni, and the wider community.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The need for an effective quality assurance in today's educational industry cannot be questioned. This is because of the falling standard of education in Nigeria which is giving more concern than satisfaction and it calls for attention by all the stakeholders. Already, there is evidence of confusion and inefficiencies plaguing the type of educational system we have, resulting from poor monitoring system and administrative ineffectiveness. Therefore, this paper recommended that the quality assurance mechanisms must be put in place by all schools, and monitored by necessary bodies/authorities for compliance.

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