

Achieving Quality Assurance in Nigeria University System through Strategic Human Resources Development

Enu, D. Bette PhD; Omoogun, A. Clemency; Oji, G. Odu; Ekuri, E.E.; and Okeme, Isaac
Faculty of Education,
University of Calabar, Nigeria.

Abstract

This paper examines how quality assurance can be attained through Strategic Human Resources Development in Nigerian University system. The purpose is to ensure quality control and maintenance of acceptable standards in the University system. To seek solution to the problem, three research questions were posed. The sample for the study was made up of three hundred and sixty (360) academic staff randomly selected from the various Faculties and Institutes of the University of Calabar, Nigeria. The three research questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results of the analysis revealed a significant relationship between Quality Assurance and Human Resources Development.

Keywords: *Quality Assurance; Human Resources Development, Quality Education; Higher Education.*

Introduction

The quality of Nigerian University system is strongly dependent on the effectiveness of the concept of quality assurance whose central concern is the maintenance of standard. This made Mkpa (2007) to conclude that for Nigeria education to function at the level of quality which is the aspiration of everyone in the society, the citizens who are the products of the school system must be able to reach some acceptable measures of common understanding on the complexity of the educational system, particularly the university education to be able to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The quest to pursue vigorously the goal of the current university system within the framework of globalization has even made the issue of quality assurance very apt.

The importance of quality assurance according to Esu & Anyanwu (2007) in any institution of learning cannot be over emphasized. They observed that the outcomes of examination and sustenance of standard/quality in our education system can provide useful information to the general public and other interested parties on the value of education delivery system. Moreso, it ensures accountability regarding investment of public funds. To achieve the above, much need to be invested in terms of human resources profile of a country. There is need to intensify and diversify University programmes for the development of higher level of manpower within the content of the needs of the nation. To enable Universities do this, there will be more effective machinery for the identification of the manpower needs of the demoralized human beings (FRN, 2004 pp.38).

Government should devote a substantial amount of money to fund the system and make it more functional to meet the complex challenges of the present society. Even as much is not been done to make education in

Nigeria a priority, public expectation is that Universities should provide relevant and qualitative education and training to its teeming population through which the much-needed high-level manpower would be supplied to the economy. This situation heightens the concern for committed administrative management and quality control. All these are measures to ensure quality university education.

The concept of quality education is jealously guided by the need to promote quality assurance in school. According to Okebukola (2006) it is a process of evaluating the fitness for purpose of an institution or programme via measurement against prerecorded standards which examines effectiveness and efficiency of the input, process and output elements of teaching and learning. From the background of standard maintenance, quality education has been defined as encompassing such educational pursuits that guarantees the building and maintenance of modern social facilities. This means that certain infrastructures are built and made to function. There should be a scale of goodness against which the whole system of education might be rated or measured (Awokoya, 1979). In line with the above, Aminu (1984) also defined quality education as encompassing two concepts—efficiency and effectiveness. Efficiency related to the quality of graduates. It includes the average amount of subject matter learnt, the depth in which it is mastered in terms of tasks the graduate can perform and the length of the learning experiences. He maintained that efficiency in education is the ratio of the average quality of the graduate output from the input. Aminu's definition of quality education is more relevant and suitable to the present study whose trust is to ensure quality assurance in Nigeria University education. In furtherance of this noble goal of quality education, the government must redirect its focus and adopt a positive attitude towards universities to ensure effective mobilization of human resources towards national development.

Furthermore, Yesufu (2000) observed that no country can be adequate both in quality and quantity wise, in the skills and expertise that will sustain the economy efficiently and indefinitely, or to cope with exponentially growing consequences of new technology, growing and changing consumer and service demands of a rising and sophisticated population, national security, etc. The nation in order to survive in the face of globalization must devote a high proportion of its budgetary allocation towards effective mobilization of its human resources in terms of number, quality and mix to ensure optimum output.

Similarly, Anyanwu, Oyefusi, Oaikhenan & Dimowo (1997) noted that the basic problem of most of the underdeveloped countries is not poverty of natural resources but underdevelopment of their human resource profile. They maintained that the first consideration in development is the building up of human capital. This means improving the knowledge, skills, motivation, capacities, hopefulness and the mental and physical health of all members of the community. Furthermore, that there is a close, almost proportional relationship between education and training and production capacity because most development in the world today are accounted for by human resource through a viable and an accountable education system.

The Problem

The low quality of Nigerian graduates has become an issue of serious concern as most members of the public seem to be dissatisfied with the performance of the University System. Some critics claim that the standard of education has fallen and will continue to go downward. Fundamental to this contention of poor performance of the University System is the government's inability to adequately fund the system, a situation which has led to non-provision of books in libraries, insufficient seats in lecture halls, epileptic electricity supply and crowded hostel accommodation. Others include lack of motivational incentives for University lecturers, lack of research grants, funds for staff development as well as general intellectual holocaust leading to the educational phenomenon of brain drain. Given this weak background, it becomes necessary to

investigate the situation. Therefore the central thesis is how do we achieve quality assurance in Nigerian University System through Human Resource Development?

In the light of peculiar problem that characterized Nigerian University system and the quest to achieve quality assurance, the following research questions are raised to guide this study:

1. What is the relationship between human resource development and quality assurance?
2. How can the human resources need be strategically planned to meet up with the specialized nature of the present Nigerian universities system?
3. Are universities capable of making qualitative contributions towards national development?

Methodology

Sample

The respondents for the study were randomly sampled from the pool of academic staff across the various faculties and institutes of the University of Calabar. A total of three hundred and sixty (360) academic staff were used for the study.

Instrument

A questionnaire named Achieving Quality Assurance in Nigerian University System was the major instrument used for data collection for this study. The instrument has four sections designed to provide data on (a) Demographic variables (b) The link between Human Resources Development and quality assurance (c) Strategic planning of human resource (d) University contribution to human resource development. The instrument has reliability indices ranging from 0.59-0.76 for the three sub-scales of the questionnaire, using Cronbach alpha reliability method. The questionnaire was administered by the researchers and collected at the spot. While descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data. Results are presented on table 1,2 and 3.

S/N	ITEM	S/A/A	D/S/D
1.	A high human resource profile guarantees quality assurance	250 (69.7)	110 (30.3)
2.	Motivating academics enhances quality assurance	360 (100)	0 (0)
3.	Provision of text books improves the quality of education	300 (83)	60 (17)
4.	Regular supply of Journals lends to improvement in the quality of educations	300 (83)	60 (17)
5.	University lecturers should be given sufficient research grants	240 (67)	120 (33)

The result in table I reveals that, 250 representing 69.7% of the total respondent agreed that, a high human resource profile guarantees quality assurance; while 110 (30.3%) disagreed. 360 (100%) agreed that motivating academic enhances quality assurance, while non of the respondents disagreed 30 (83%) of the total respondents agreed that provision of text books improves the quality of education; while 60 (17%) disagreed 300 (83%) also agreed that regular supply of journals leads to improvement in the quality of education ; while 60 (17.2%) do not agreed. Finally, 240 representing 67% of the total respondents agreed that university lecturers should be given sufficient research grants; while 120 (33%) disagreed.

The result in table 1 shows that, the percentages of agreement for all the five items are higher than 50. This result therefore implies that there is a significant relationship between human resource development and quality assurance.

Research Question Two

Table 2: Strategic Planning of Human Resources

S/N	ITEM	SA/A	D/SD
1.	Government training of academic in areas of need promotes quality assurance in University	360 (100)	0 (0)s
2.	Strategic recruitment of manpower enhances quality education	340 (94.6)	20 (5.4)
3.	Human resource development should be a priority of university	135(37.5)	225 (62.5)
4.	University academic programmes should be on human resource need	300 (83)	60 (17)
5.	National Manpower Board should be involved in planning of human resource in universities	300 (83)	60 (17)

From table 2, it can be observed that, 360 representing 100% of the total represents agreed that government training of academics in areas of need promotes quality assurance in university. The table also indicates that, 340 (94.6%) agreed that strategic recruitment of manpower enhances quality education; while 20 (5.42) disagreed. 135 (37.5%) agreed that human resources development should be a priority of university; while 225 (62.53) disagreed. Also 300 (83%) agreed that, university academic programmes should be on human resource need; while 60 (17%) disagreed. 300 also representing 83% of the total respondents agreed that national manpower board should be involved in planning of human resource in universities, while 60 (17%) disagreed.

The results of the analyses indicate that the percentages of agreement for all items except item 3 are higher than 50. This implies that the human resources need to be strategically planned to meet up with the specialized nature of the present Nigerian universities system.

Research Question Three

Table 3: University Contribution to Human Resources Development

S/N	ITEM	SA/A	D/SD
1.	Universities help in training desired human resources need of the country	340 (94.6)	20 (5.4)
2.	Without Universities no meaningful human development can be achieved	360 (100)	0 (0)
3.	Universities help in moulding the moral character of its citizens	360 (100)	0 (0)
4.	Sustainable policies will encourage universities to contribute to human resource development	198 (60)	162 (40)
5.	Universities should diversify the training of desired human resource	198 (60)	162 (40)

As it can be observed in table 3 above 340 representing 94.6% of the total respondents agreed that universities help in training desired human resource need of the country; while 20 (5.4%) disagreed. 360 (100%) agreed that without universities no meaningful human development can be achieved. 360 (100%) also agreed that universities help in moulding the moral character of its citizen. 198 (60%) agreed that sustainable policies will encourage universities to contribute to human resource development; while 162 (40%) disagreed. Also 198 (60%) of the total respondent agreed that universities should diversify the training of desire human resource; while 162 (40%) disagreed.

The result of the analysis reveals that the percentage of agreement for all the items are higher than 50. This result therefore means that universities are capable of making qualitative contribution to words national development.

Discussion

The result of the study shows that there is a significant relationship between human resource development and the quality of education in Nigerian universities. The findings of the study is supported by section 8 (64) A and C of the National Policy on Education (2004) relating to higher education which states there is need to intensify and diversify University programmes for the development of high-level of manpower within the context of the needs of the economy and effective machinery for the identification of the manpower needs of the economy.

The finding of Awokoya (1979) is also in line with the findings of this study He had concluded that he sees quality education as encompassing such educational pursuits that guarantee the building and maintenance of modern social facilities. This means that certain infrastructures are built and made to function. He went further to suggest that there should be a scale of goodness against which the whole system of education, the achievement of students or the effectiveness of the teachers might be rated or measured.

Aminu (1984) also sees quality education as encompassing two concepts efficiency ad effectiveness. Efficiency according to him is related to the quality of graduates. It includes the average amount of subject matter learnt, the depth in which it is mastered in terms of tasks the graduate can perform and the length of the learning experiences. He maintained that efficiency in education is the ratio of the average quality of the graduate over the average cost per graduate and the greater efficiency will produce greater output from the input.

Supporting the above, Ellah and Umanah (2000) quoting Fafunwa (1974) observed that in the 1960's the government intensified efforts in the training of human resources for the higher education levels. The Ashby Commission set up in 1959 observed that the foundation for qualitative higher education should be laid at the primary and secondary school levels, and noted that a sustained human element is the first vital step toward achieving quality education and should be given a priority.

The result in table 2 revealed a relationship between strategic planning of human resources and quality assurance in Nigeria universities. Corroborating this relationship. Yesufu (2000) clearly observed that no country can be adequate both in quantity and quality in the skills and expertise that will sustain the economy efficiently without the government devoting a substantial proportion of its budgetary allocation towards the strategic planning of it human resources both to ensure optimum output.

Furthermore, Anyanqu et al (1997) noted that the basic problem of most of the underdeveloped countries is not poverty of natural resources but the underdevelopment and under- utilization of their human resources... that there is a close, almost proportional relationship between education and training and production capacity. For most of development in the world today are accounted for by human resources development through education.

Conclusion

Sustainable human resources development is an essential element in the development process as it is a means towards attaining the desired development. Education goals can only be realized through human resources. Promoting the quality of activity demands certain challenges. As it related to quality in Nigeria University education that is facing complex challenge of globalization with a loud public outcry of it downward academic performance, there is an urgent need for the government and all stakeholders to mobilize available resources to encourage the building of sustainable human resources in Nigeria university system.

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