

# Quality assurance and the demand for accountability

[Profession](#), [Teacher](#)



Quality Assurance and the demand for Accountability in Primary Education in Nigeria By Isaac J. Kukwi Ph. D and Amos Iliya Being a Paper for the 1st National Conference of Faculty of Education, Nasarawa State University, Keffi - Nigeria from 11th — 14th June, 2012. Faculty of Education, Nasarawa State University, Keffi — Nigeria. Abstract This paper examines quality assurance and accountability in primary education in Nigeria. Strategies for establishing quality assurance in primary education are discussed to include effective supervision and inspection of primary teachers, provision of facilities and increased budgetary allocation for primary education among others. Some legal issues relating to quality assurance, evaluation and accountability in primary education are examined. Finally, conclusion was drawn and a major recommendation of improving performance in teachers' pedagogy in various subjects through capacity building programme, organization of workshops, seminars, conferences, part-time courses and distance learning programmes among others was provided. Introduction Quality assurance is a necessary tool for national development and bedrock of every society. It is through education that cultural heritages are transferred from generation to generation (Onyeachu, 2006). Therefore, there is every need to ensure quality education in all levels of education especially in the primary level because it is the foundation level. Section 3. 1 of the national Policy on Education (2004: 9) viewed primary education as " the education in an institution for children aged 6 to 11+ years old". The policy also describes primary education as the determinant of the success or failure of the whole educational system because all other levels are built upon primary level of education. Therefore, there is every need to maintain quality in primary

education in Nigeria. Quality connotes the standard of something when it is compared to other things like it, while assurance literally means ‘certainty’. Therefore, quality assurance is the process of ensuring that good standard is maintained. Quality assurance consists of a variety of processes. The starting point is defining quality, which implies spelling out what is considered as ‘quality’ derived from what is most valued and important in education. Monitoring and supervision among others are strategies for establishing quality assurance in primary education as well as demanding for accountability from teachers. Adepaju (1999) viewed accountability as an educational concept to relate mainly to a concern for furthering the educational effectiveness of school systems. Two perennial themes occupied accountability in recent time, on the one hand, it signifies a quest for efficiency, where efficiency implies a demand that public money not be wasted through fraudulence or incompetence. On the other hand, accountability implies an extension of the democratic quest for equality of educational opportunity. Therefore, the process of ensuring quality assurance seeks for accountability from the teacher on the resources and even pupils performance. Concept of Quality and Quality Assurance The term ‘quality’ has been at the core of the motivating forces for reforms in education. Quality has been variously defined by many Scholars. Hornby (2000: 953) defines quality as “the standard of something when it is compared to other things like it, how good or bad something is”. Fadokun (2005) characterised quality by three interrelated and interdependent strands; efficiency (eg better use of resources); relevance (eg to meeting human and environmental conditions) and ‘something more’ (eg to journey

a little further than mere efficiency and relevance). Ijaiya (2001: 297) views quality as " something everyone considers good and wants to have". Simply put, quality could be described as something that is relevant which every member of the society consider good and strives to possess for effective utilization. Quality assurance is the process of ensuring that good standard is maintained. Hence, Ciwar (2005: 2) defines quality assurance as " the practice of managing the way goods are produced or services are provided to make sure they are kept at a high standard". Primary level of education need to be managed in such a way that very high standard will be maintained. The need to maintain quality in education arises because, without quality, education becomes a waste. Ijaiya (2001) observed that without quality, education not only becomes wastage but also posses danger to the individual beneficiary and the society. To that effect, the worth of any educational system as an investment lies in its capacity to continuously serve its customers (students, parents, employers of labour, and the society) better and remain challenges providing for quality and quantity. Ehindero (2004) asserts that quality assurance focused on the: i. Learners' entry behaviours characteristics and attributes including some demographic factors that can inhibit or facilitate their learning. ii. The teachers' entry qualification, values pedagogic stalls, professional preparedness, subject background, philosophical orientation etc. iii. The teaching/learning processes including the structure of the curriculum and learning environment. iv. The outcomes, which are defined for different, skills and attitudes including appropriate and relevant instruments to assess these objectives. Finally, Fadokun (2005) sums the definition of quality assurance

in education as a programmed, an institution or a whole education system. In such case, quality assurance is all these attitudes, objectives, actions and procedures that through their existence and use, and together with quality control activities, ensure that appropriate academic standards are being maintained and enhanced in and by each programmed. Concept of Accountability in Education Accountability has been defined variously as responsibility, explicability and answerability. Accountability has traditionally been used with reference to service in the public interest, where the stewardship of public funds requires obligatory accounting. Ambiguity occurs when the term is wrenched from its time-tested legal and financial context and applied specifically to education, where there is as yet no body of tradition to explain and support its application. Encyclopaedia of Educational Evaluation provided a working definition of accountability which accommodates the myriads of recently offered glosses as “ accountability representing acceptance of responsibility for consequences by those to whom citizens have entrusted the public service of education. Such a definition applies, of course, not only to school systems but to any instructional programme that happens to use public funds. Accountability acknowledges the public’s right to know what actions have been taken in the schools it supports and how effective these actions have been. Further, this definition of accountability suggests that the ‘ redress’ implicit in the concept in more than the citizen’s right to demand the imposition of penalties for failure in accomplishment. Rather, it suggests that educators should be required to redesign educational activities to achieve educational effectiveness and efficiency. Anderson (1991) viewed accountability to imply

the responsibility and obligation of the public to provide supports, financial and moral, necessary to the provision of effective education. In addition, according to some writers, accountability systems imply that the public should participate in important educational decisions, sharing the power to set the goals of the system and programmes, to point out educational and training needs, and to suggest programs designed to satisfy those needs. In effect, accountability is the responsibility that goes with the authority to do something. The responsibility is to use authority justifiably and credibly.

Objectives of Primary Education in Nigeria Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004: 14) identifies the following objectives of primary education: i. To inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy, and ability to communicate effectively; ii. To lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking; iii. To give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society; iv. To mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child; v. To develop in the child the ability to adapt to the child's changing environment; vi. To give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity; vii. To provide the child with basic tools for future educational advancement, including preparation for trades and craft of the locality.

Interrelationship among Quality Assurance, Evaluation and Accountability in Primary Education At the primary education level, quality assurance is the responsibility of Universal Basic Education (UBE), State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and Local Government Universal Basic Education Board (LGUBEB). The entire process of quality assurance demands for accountability from the operators

of education which can be achieved through effective evaluation. Similarly, Ajayi and Adegbesan (2007) argue that, quality assurance is related to accountability both of which are concerned with maximizing the effectiveness and efficiency of educational systems and services in relation to their contexts of their missions and their stated objectives. Holt (1981) in Anikweze (2010) describes that in the process of evaluation, teachers are bound to make judgemental statements about what they have observed about the learners and how they visualize the school and the implemented curriculum of instruction. Such judgements reflect a value position that will inform future decisions. Thus, for teachers, evaluation in education should carry an additional responsibility of being a strategy curriculum innovation and a device for promoting professionalism. Such evaluation would rest on some formal assessment of actions, separate from their performances at school or localized level and based only on external evidence for their utility value. In effect, teachers should be held accountable for the performance of the output in school and in the society in general, as assessed by the observers of those who have consumed the educational diet. If educators are to be held accountable for students' performances, the desired performances must be clearly stated and specified in advance (considering goals and objectives) and the performance must be adequately measured. It follows that evaluation is an intrinsic part of a properly conceived accountability system. Indeed, accountability is unthinkable without proper evaluation. The evaluation should also provide information on how money has been spent and what return has been made on the investment. Teachers in primary schools have shown some reluctance to accept accountability

system due to: first, accountability overload, which refers to a condition in which the accumulation of accountability demands has become excessive or too much to the teacher. Secondly, primary school teachers feel that it is not they alone who produces outcome, that hard-to-change conditions outside their control may equally explain why pupils learn or do not learn. If accountability depends solely on evaluating educational outcomes of instruction, there would appear to be some justice in teachers' fear that the buck would be made to stop with them — and that therefore, all accountability systems are likely to become unduly negative and even punitive due to politics of evaluation. Accountability can be a far more positive concept when the parties to the total system (Teachers, Head-teachers, Boards of Education at all government levels and finally Legislature) have their roles responsible for making decisions and for the results of those decisions, and all the elements in education systems are equally responsible for improving education within the constraints that the society imposes. Administrators and Legislators must authorise information systems and disseminate the data to teachers, and they are also to be held accountable for assisting teachers by providing in-service training, retraining, or any other corrective action that the evaluation has shown is necessary. Legal Issues in Quality Assurance, Evaluation and Accountability Anikweze (2010) explains that certain aspects of what transpire in the process of evaluation and accountability often attracts the attention of the society in a way that sometimes led to litigation. Cases abound in which either events that take place during testing or the unsatisfactory handling of examination results become legal issues for court of law to determine.



Instances in Nigeria context include the following: 1. Resistance against Muslim girls on wearing veils (hijab) that cover from head to the truck under circumstances of widespread examination malpractice could be viewed as interfering with the personal freedom of individuals to dress the way it suits them. 2. A number of disciplinary measures are usually taken to penalize offenders caught cheating at examinations. The measures include expulsion from the school which could be challenged in a court of law. The question to be determined is whether there is any provision for expulsion as punishment for cheating at exams. Even if there is, has due process been followed in exercising this legal provision? For serious decisions involving cancellation of results, suspension and/or expulsion, the school authority must have enough evidence to prove the charges beyond reasonable doubt. To be on the safe side of the law, teachers should take note of the following issues concerning the law and evaluation according to Anikweze (2010): 1. Objectives grading of pupils is essential and can withstand any legal query. Ideally, court of law have no business presiding to determine pupils academics performance, at the same, teachers should always try to do the right thing. 2. Litigation takes a lot of time on both parties hence, it may be expedient to settle academic cases out of court. 3. Proper records regarding pupils' results should be treated as sacrosanct as possible. Strategies/ Activities involved in Quality Assurance in Primary Education There are many strategies/activities involved in quality assurance in primary education, these include: 1. Provision of Facilities Facilities are plants, buildings, equipment which enable people to carry out their activities effectively. Ehiqmetalor (2001) observes that pupils learn better when facilities like buildings, comfortable seats for students and

teachers are available and quality can be assured. 2. Provision of Instructional Materials Dike (1987) described instructional material as alternative channels of communication which teachers can use to compress information and make them move vividly to his learners. To ensure quality in primary education, instructional materials have to be provided in sufficient quantity. Primary school pupils who will always like to see, smell and even touch resource materials will need quality materials for meaningful learning.

3. Curriculum Relevance To assure quality, primary school teachers are expected to write their scheme of work as well as their daily and weekly lesson note from the first day the school re-opens to the last day. This to make sure that, learners learnt what is in the curriculum. 4. Constant Re-training of Primary School Teachers This is one of the ways of ensuring that quality is maintained at primary school level. Primary school teachers need to be re-trained from time to time for improving their methodological approaches to instruction. Bassey and Archibong (2001) are of the opinion that re-training of existing teachers to acquaint them or create awareness at a general level and highlight new ideas to the various subjects are some of the ways of assuring quality at primary education level. Re-training of teachers could be through seminars, workshops, symposia, in-service training e. t. c.

5. Adequate Number of Qualified Teachers Education is power, while the teacher is the dispenser of education, as such; the teacher holds the secret to the power. Therefore, quality cannot be assured in primary level of education, if schools are not equipped with adequate number of qualified teachers. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) had earlier recommended through the National Policy on Education that minimum

qualification into to teaching profession should be Nigeria certificate in Education. Sufficient number of teachers makes it possible to maintain the appropriate teacher-pupils ratio of 1-25 in the primary school. 6. Adequate Funding Fund refers to money needed for effective primary education. To maintain quality in primary education, Onyeachu (2008) notes that enough fund should be allotted for payment of teachers' salaries, building of new classrooms, renovation of school building, purchase of equipment, furniture and instructional materials. 7. Time Management Time is another thing that is needed for ensuring quality in the primary education. Ajayi and Oluchuku (2003) describe time as a major and essential resource that need to be managed by teachers in school. This is because all the activities such as preparing the lesson, teaching the lesson, preparation of instructional materials and other extra-curricular activities require specific time mapped out for them to be effective. Hence, time is a resource that could be meaningfully utilized to sharpen the quality of the output in teaching-learning situation.

#### Monitoring of Primary Teachers and Programmes

Monitoring is a process of watching and checking someone over a period of time in order to see what the person does so that necessary changes could be made. It also involves the process of collecting data at interval about ongoing projects or programmes within the school system. The aim is to constantly assess the level of performance with a view of finding out how far set objectives are being made. Ehindero (2001) monitoring in the primary school is done by the Head-teacher, is a way of ensuring quality. 8.

#### Supervision of Primary School Teachers and Programmes

The essence of supervision is to control education for quality in order to maintain desired

standard. Supervision involves staff as essential part of the process. It a way of advising, grinding, refreshing, encouraging and stimulating staff (Kukwi, Amos and Kaika 2011). Supervision in primary schools is direct responsibility of the Head-teacher.

### 9. Inspection of Primary School Teachers and Programmes

Usually, inspection involves an assessment of available facilities and resources in an institution with a view of establishing how far a particular institution has made prescribed standards. It is more of an assessment rather than improvement induced exercise (West-Burham, 1994).

Recommendations To assure quality and accountability in primary education in Nigeria, the following recommendations could be considered:

- i. Facilities needed for primary education should be adequately provided through collaborative effort of the school Administrators, parent — Teachers' Association (PTA), Philanthropist and government.
- ii. There is need to employ modern teaching methods and techniques (that are pupils' centred) in the classroom.
- iii. Full professionalization of teaching in the country to set a standard under which a qualified and well trained teacher must operate is highly imperative.
- iv. To improve performance in teachers pedagogical approaches in various school subjects, government should re-train teachers constantly through capacity building programmes, organization of workshops, seminars, conferences, evening programmes, part-time courses and distance learning.
- v. Effective supervisory organ should be injected into the system
- vi. There is need to harmonize the internal and external criteria of quality assurance and raising standard of excellence of the education system.
- vii. Government should endeavour to properly fund primary education in the country to meet the expectation of the society.
- viii. Finally,

more qualified teachers should be employed to teach in our primary schools. This is necessary because, it is the quality of teachers that determines the quality of the products. No education system can grow beyond the quality of its teachers. Conclusion In conclusion, while the Primary Education Boards are responsible for quality control, the teacher is at the centre of accountability. The parents of wards and the entire society demand for accountability on their wards performances and resources invested into education from the teacher. The teacher can only account for these, through effective evaluation of pupils' outcomes. Therefore, vocal critics who complain that education lacks accountability, either they know what they are talking about to specific areas or they are talking from ignorance. Hence, to achieve quality assurance in our primary schools, teachers, pupils, parents, government, and all stakeholders from the society must put ideas together.

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