



**QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION: THE
CASE STUDY OF SA'ADATU RIMI COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, KANO AND
FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, KANO**

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Abstract

This study examines the nature of Quality Assurance policies and practices in the Federal College of Education (FCE), Kano and Sa'adatu Rimi College of Education Kumbotso (SRCOE), Kano. Two research questions were formulated. The population of the study included one hundred academic staff from the two colleges. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. Analysis of data revealed that both colleges have in place bodies responsible for quality assurance. It was also revealed that both have problems with their quality assurance policies implementation as a result of lack of political stability, resources, commitment and the engagement of students for their learning and preparation for incoming students being more pronounced. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that FCE, Kano and SRCOE, Kano should utilize other methods/tools in ensuring quality assurance in education, such as need assessment, consultative meetings, alumni surveys, exit interviews with prospective graduates, colleague evaluation of teaching and SWOT analysis, among others.

Keywords: Quality assurance, implementation policy, higher education, colleges of education.

Introduction

For many years, higher education institutions in developed countries have had Quality Assurance systems and arrangements to improve the quality of their teaching, research and direct community service activities. In recent years, Quality Assurance has also gained favour in tertiary institutions in developing countries (Lim, 1999). Such developments have been motivated by the challenges facing tertiary institutions many of which relate to the changes that are taking place in the labour market and to which these institutions have to adjust.

It is evident that today's colleges are confronted by various pressures and tensions resulting from both internal and external pressures. Many scholars (Griessel, 2002; Kisuniene, 2004; and David, 2016) have expressed concern about the quality of education provided by colleges and the protection of consumers of that education (Pillay, 2003). There is general concern that new developments like reduced public funding and rapidly increasing tertiary institutions enrolments may lead to lower academic standards (Zemsky, 1997).

In response to the aforementioned challenges and public concerns regarding quality, institutions and governments have emphasised more stringent Quality Assurance policies and arrangements in higher institutions of learning. The importance placed on Quality Assurance is demonstrated by the move in developed countries towards reputable, internationally recognised higher education quality assurance authorities – for example, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in the U.K., the Association of Accrediting Agencies in Canada, the Comite National d'Evaluation in France, the Consejo Superior de Education in Chile, the Consejo Nacional de Acreditacion in Columbia, and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council in India (David, 2016).

In line with these trends in the developed world, Nigeria has taken steps to establish similar national Quality Assurance systems in order to ensure the international credibility of the programmes offered in their colleges and tertiary institutions, thus making their higher education systems competitive on the global market. This was by establishing commissions and agencies, such as NUC, NCCE, NBT, and IJMB as well as Quality Assurance units in all institutions of higher learning.

Problem Statement

There has been an outcry on the quality of education provided by educational institutions in Nigeria. This has attracted the attention of the government and compelled it to put in place policies to ensure quality in education. Colleges of education are mandated to ensure quality in the education they provide to students and, to achieve this, they established units in the colleges to carry out the task of quality assurance. Experience has shown that new policies often met with some challenges at the implementation phases where the implementation is carried out haphazardly. The problem of this study, therefore, lies in investigating the implementation of quality assurance policies in FCE, Kano and SRCOE, Kano.

Research Questions

The study sought answers for the following questions:

1. How do FCE, Kano and SRCOE, Kano implement their quality assurance policies?
2. What are the challenges facing the quality assurance policies in the two colleges?

Literature Review

Quality, as a concept, has been defined differently by different stakeholders. This is because it is multidimensional and means different things to different stakeholders. Quality can be defined as “fitness for purpose” (Opara, 2010). It encapsulates the concept of meeting commonly agreed precepts or standards. Such standards may be defined by law, an institution, a coordinating body or a professional society. In the diverse arena of higher education, fitness for purpose varies tremendously by field and programme. Quality refers to the standard of a phenomenon when it is compared to other things like it: how good or bad something is, that is, to be of good/poor/top quality or of a high standard. In this context, it is associated with the ‘monitoring and evaluation component of education’ to see whether the outcome is good and of the intended standard.

Quality is the ability or degree with which a product, service or phenomenon conforms to an established standard and which makes it relatively superior to others. With respect to education, this implies the ability or degree with which an educational system conforms to the established standard and appropriateness, of the inputs available for the delivery of the system (Fadipe, 1999). Quality in education therefore means the relevance and appropriateness of the education programme to the needs of the community for which it is provided.

Quality Assurance is a set of activities or procedures that an organization undertakes to ensure that standards are specified and reached consistently for a product or service. Its goal is to create reliable systems by anticipating problems and designing procedures to avoid as many errors and faults as possible (Kisuniene, 2004). It is a systematic management and assessment procedure adopted by higher education institutions and system in order to monitor performance against objectives and to ensure the achievement of quality outputs and quality improvements.

Quality Assurance can be either an external or internal process. External Quality Assurance refers to the review by an external agency (e.g. a national Quality Assurance Agency) or body (e.g. a professional body), which evaluates the operations of a university (institutional) or of its programmes to ascertain the level of compliance with set minimum standards. External quality assurance is mainly carried out through the instrumentality of accreditation and involves, as indicated earlier, self-study, peer review and a reporting system. Internal quality assurance, on the other hand, refers to the internal policies and mechanisms of a university or programme for ensuring that it is fulfilling its purposes as well as the standards that apply to higher education in general or to the profession or discipline, in particular (IIEP, 2006). Indeed, most tertiary institutions from inception design and implement various internal activities to ensure that certain agreed standards of performance are being met. Examples of such are the external examination system, self-assessment system, student-lecturer assessment, etc.

There are three main approaches to quality assurance in educational institutions i.e. accreditation, assessment and audit. Accreditation is an evaluation of whether an institution or programme meets a threshold standard and qualifies for a certain status. Obtaining accreditation may have implications for the tertiary institution itself (e.g. permission to operate) and/or its students (e.g. eligibility for grants) (Woodhouse, 1999). The focus of accreditation is comprehensive, examining the mission, resources, and procedures of a tertiary institution or programme (Dill, 2000). The output of an accreditation is a yes/no decision, though graduations are also possible (Woodhouse, 1999).

Assessment is an evaluation that makes graded judgements about quality, in this respect it goes beyond accreditation that makes a binary judgement (Dill, 2000). Assessment asks “how good are your outputs?” The output of an assessment is a quantitative evaluation, a grade (whether numeric, literal or descriptive) (Woodhouse, 1999).

A quality audit checks the extent to which the institution is achieving its own explicit or implicit objectives (Woodhouse, 1999). As cited in Woodhouse (1999) “ISO (Standards New Zealand, 1994) defines quality audit as a three-part process, checking 1) the suitability of the planned quality procedures in relation to the stated objectives; 2) the conformity of the actual quality activities with the plans; and 3) the effectiveness of the activities in achieving the

stated objectives”. Audit asks ‘are your processes effective?’ The output is a description of the extent to which the claims of the tertiary institution are correct (Woodhouse, 1999).

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was used for the field study. Two colleges of education in Kano state were purposively selected for the study. The population of the study includes all academic staff of the two colleges. A sample of 50 lecturers was conveniently selected from each of the colleges for the study. Data was collected through a 23-items on two-point scale researcher developed questionnaire tagged “Quality Assurance Policy and Practice Questionnaire (QAPPQ)” with reliability coefficient of 0.73 obtained through test-retest method. The validity of the instrument was determined by three lecturers – two from the Directorate for Quality Assurance and one from Department of Educational Psychology, all from SRCOE, Kano, whose corrections and suggestions were incorporated into the final draft of the questionnaire. Scores obtained from the questionnaire were coded and analysed using frequency count and simple mean.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data collected through the research questionnaire were analysed and presented below:

Research question 1: How do FCE, Kano and SRCOE, Kano implement their quality assurance policies?

Table 1: Implementation of quality assurance policies in FCE, Kano and SRCOE, Kano

	College	Responses	
		Yes	No
Does your college have Quality Assurance policies?	FCEK SRCOE	50 (100%) 50 (100%)	0 0
Is there a responsible body for the implementation of Quality Assurance policy in your college?	FCEK SRCOE	50 (100%) 50 (100%)	0 0
Did you participate in any Quality Assurance related activities in your college in the last 10 years?	FCEK SRCOE	40 (80%) 35 (70%)	10 (20%) 15 (30%)
Does your college employ one or more of the following as methods/ tools of Quality Assurance?		Yes	No
Need assessment for programme/curriculum design	FCEK SRCOE	13 (26%) 14 (28%)	37 (74%) 36 (72%)
Regular program/curriculum evaluation/review	FCEK SRCOE	22 (44%) 16 (32%)	28 (56%) 34 (68%)
Assessment of learning outcomes	FCEK SRCOE	35 (70%) 37 (74%)	15 (30%) 13 (26%)
Consultative meetings with key stakeholders	FCEK SRCOE	15 (30%) 11 (22%)	35 (70%) 39 (78%)
Institutional self-assessment	FCEK SRCOE	40 (80%) 33 (66%)	10 (20%) 17 (34%)
External examiner	FCEK SRCOE	45 (90%) 44 (84%)	5 (10%) 6 (12%)
Alumni surveys	FCEK SRCOE	0 0	50 (100%) 50 (100%)
Exit Interviews with prospective graduates	FCEK SRCOE	0 0	50 (100%) 50 (100%)
Colleague evaluation of teaching	FCEK SRCOE	2 (4%) 3 (6%)	48 (96%) 47 (94%)
Student evaluation	SRCOE FCEK	20 (40%) 23 (46%)	30 (60%) 27 (54%)
SWOT analysis	SRCOE FCEK	- -	50 (100%) 50 (100%)

From the responses in Table 1, it is clear that both colleges maintain some quality assurance policies, as all the respondents indicated that their institutions have quality assurance policies in place and that there is a body responsible for the implementation of quality assurance policy. The Table also indicated that 80% from FCE, Kano and 70% from SRCOE, Kano have participated in quality assurance related activities in their colleges in the last 10 years.

With regard to the methods and tools of quality assurance employed by the colleges, responses from the respondents indicated that the most common tools/methods employed by

the two colleges were the assessment of learning outcome (FCE = 70%; SRCOE = 74%), institutional self-assessment (FCE = 80%, SRCOE = 66%) and external examiner (FCE = 90%, SRCOE = 84%). Other methods, such as need assessment, consultative meetings, alumni surveys, exit interview with prospective graduates, colleague evaluation of teaching and SWOT analysis were not fully employed. Only five respondents use the colleague evaluation of teaching, three from SRCOE, Kano and two from FCE, Kano.

The Table thus revealed that both institutions are subjected to external examinations in form of accreditation by NCCE in the opinion of 84% of SRCOE, Kano and 90% of FCE, Kano staff. However, other means of implementing Quality Assurance policies as identified by the researcher: Need assessment for programme/curriculum design, regular program/curriculum evaluation/review, consultative meetings with key stakeholders, colleague evaluation of teaching and student evaluation apply to the colleges only in small measures, while alumni surveys, exit Interviews with prospective graduates and SWOT analysis are not applicable to them.

From the result in Table 2, the respondents in the two colleges considered lack of political stability, resources, commitment and engagement of students for their learning and preparation for incoming students constitute the major problems facing Quality Assurance policies in the two colleges.

Discussion of Findings

The first research question seeks to find out if both colleges have bodies responsible for carrying out quality assurance activities. In this regard, the study found both to have in place bodies responsible for ensuring quality assurance. This finding is in line with David (2016), who reported that colleges of education have quality assurance policies, which they use to achieve quality in the education they provide to their students. The finding also supports Okebukola (2010), who found in his study that tertiary institutions in Nigeria are concerned with quality assurance because of its relevance to education.

The second finding of the study is that both colleges have problems facing the implementation of quality assurance policies, which include lack of political stability, resources, commitment and the engagement of students for their learning and preparation for incoming students, among others. This finding is similar to that of Okebukola (2010), who

reported that the major problem facing tertiary institutions in Nigeria in implementing quality assurance policies are lack of adequate funding and lack of commitment by the management.

Research question 2: What are the challenges facing the quality assurance policies in the two colleges?

Table 2: Challenges facing quality assurance policies in the two colleges of education

From your point of view what hinders/facilitates the implementation of Quality Assurance in your institution?	College	Responses	
		Hindrance	Facilitator
Government intervention in internal affairs of institutions	SRCOE	10 (20%)	40 (80%)
	FCEK	13 (26%)	37 (74%)
Political stability	SRCOE	33 (66%)	17 (34%)
	FCEK	42 (84%)	8 (16%)
External quality regulation requirements and expectations	SRCOE	9 (18%)	41 (82%)
	FCEK	7 (14%)	43 (86%)
Higher education law	SRCOE	0	50 (100%)
	FCEK	0	50 (100%)
Institutional and student enrolment expansion policy	SRCOE	14 (28%)	36 (72%)
	FCEK	6 (12%)	44 (88%)
Institutional commitment and support for quality	SRCOE	13 (26%)	37 (74%)
	FCEK	17 (34%)	33 (66%)
Commitment and support of academic community for quality	SRCOE	9 (18%)	41 (82%)
	FCEK	15 (30%)	35 (70%)
Resources (e.g. finance and expertise, etc)	SRCOE	46 (92%)	4 (8%)
	FCEK	48 (96%)	2 (4%)
Commitment and engagement of students for their learning	SRCOE	40 (80%)	10 (20%)
	FCEK	38 (76%)	12 (24%)
Preparation of incoming students	SRCOE	41 (82%)	9 (18%)
	FCEK	45 (90%)	5 (10%)

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that SRCOE and FCE, Kano maintain quality assurance policies by establishing a body saddled with the responsibility of monitoring and ensuring quality in the teaching and learning. The two colleges have been found to have implemented all the three major approaches to quality assurance in education, which are accreditation, assessment and audit. They also were found to have some challenges facing their quality assurance policies, especially in the area of political stability, resources (including finance and human resources) and students' attitudes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study also, the researcher has made some recommendations:

1. SRCOE and FCE, Kano should utilize other methods/tools in ensuring Quality Assurance in education, such as need assessment, consultative meetings, alumni surveys, exit interview with prospective graduates, colleague evaluation of teaching and SWOT analysis
2. Since the two colleges' quality assurance policies are affected by political instability, there is the need for the administration and staff to come to terms as quickly as possible to solve the political problems.
3. There is the need for government to provide financial assistance to the colleges, so as to implement effective quality assurance policies

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