

## **Fostering Quality Teaching in Higher Education Institutions**

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### **Abstract**

*Fostering quality teaching is sine qua non to achieving educational goals in any nation. Globally, education is a critical tool for social, economic and political development and these goals of education can be fully attained if quality teaching is available to students, especially in higher education institutions. Higher education of good quality is significant for Nigeria to become globally competitive. Thus, this article identified teacher-factors, inadequate funding, government factors, lack of resources, lack of information communication technology facilities, frequent labour disputes and closures of universities, lack of vibrant staff development programmes, and student factors serve as a clog in the wheel of attaining quality teaching in Nigerian higher education institutions. It is, therefore, recommended that Nigerian government should meet up with the 26 per cent education spending as recommended by UNESCO. Besides, reform in existing higher education institutions in Nigeria can be attained via collaborative efforts between government and other sectors of Nigerian economy.*

**Key words:** Fostering, quality teaching, higher education

## **Introduction**

The use of pedagogical techniques to produce learning outcomes for students is referred to as quality teaching. Quality teaching involves several dimensions, which include effective design of curriculum and course content, a variety of learning contexts (independent study, project-based learning, collaborative learning, experimentation, etc.), soliciting and using feedback, and effective assessment of learning outcomes (Hénard & Roseveare, 2012). Fostering quality teaching involves different levels which are interdependent. According to Hénard & Roseveare (2012), support for quality teaching takes place at three inter-dependent levels. These levels are at the institution-wide level that includes projects such as policy design, and support to organisation and international quality assurance system; programme level comprising actions to measure and enhance the design, content and delivery of the programme within a department or a school; and individual level, which includes initiatives that help teachers achieve their mission, encourage them to innovate and to support improvements to student learning and adopt a learner-oriented focus. Quality teaching, however, becomes a mirage without quality teachers to foster the teaching.

To produce human resources with high quality, there is the need for education with high quality. According to Hussain (2015), there is the need to improve the quality of education and develop education standards that contain global and international issues in accordance with the demand of facing global challenges. Certain issues such as what should all students be expected to know and understand about the world; what skills and attitudes will student need to confront future problems, which most assuredly will be global in scope, how are the global and international dimensions of learning being addressed by the new academic standards; what do scholars from the international relations discipline and experienced practitioners of global education believe students should know, and how can these insight best be incorporated into the existing standard; what global and international education guidelines are appropriate for precollegiate education; and how school implement these guideline when confronted with so many other problems are germane to fostering quality teaching in higher education institutions.

On the basis of the above issues, it is crystal clear that quality education is very significant in order to provide educational components, which are essential, to the students. According to Obasi, Akuchie and Obasi (2010), in Nigeria, there have been different debates on the decline in teaching quality in Nigerian public university systems. Teaching, nowadays, at the tertiary institutions level is carried out by qualified but unprofessional teachers, even despite the establishment and the law establishing the

Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (1993), majority of these teachers have up-to-date not complied with the dictates of the law. That is, any teacher in Nigeria must be a professional teacher. It is a known fact that there cannot be a quality control without quality assurance. Therefore, if teachers teaching at the tertiary institutions are unprofessional and are not made to comply with the dictates of TRC law, then; the products from our various tertiary institutions will not meet up with the expected international standard.

### **Conceptualising Fostering, Quality Teaching, Higher Education**

#### ***Fostering***

Fostering, according to Mba (2018), is a process through which the stakeholders in education bring up, nurture, and promote the growth and development of quality teaching in higher education institutions. Thus, fostering as conceptualised in this paper means to encourage the development or growth of quality teaching in higher education institution.

#### ***Quality Teaching***

Quality teaching is doing whatever it takes, ethically and responsibly by the teachers to ensure that students learn and that they leave the institution with a passion for learning. According to Ellis (2013), quality of teaching is its fitness for the purpose of promoting learning. In the context of this paper, quality of teaching is seen as its fitness for the purpose and of the purposes of promoting learning in higher education of learning.

#### ***Higher Education***

Higher education institutions of learning are centres for imparting knowledge and skills into the learners (Adebisi, 2014). Whatever skills acquired must be translated into practicality for it to benefit individual and the society at large. Higher education is otherwise referred to as tertiary education. The National Policy on Education of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004; Section 8, No. 58, p. 30) defines tertiary education as “the education given after secondary education in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics including those institutions offering correspondence courses”.

### **Factors Hindering Quality Teaching in Nigerian Higher Education**

There are some factors that are militating against quality teaching in Nigerian higher education. Having said that there cannot be quality teaching without quality

teachers, most of the challenges facing quality teaching are diverse in nature. Ojedele (1999) states that studies have reported that there are composite factors affecting students' academic achievement: the school related factors, home-related factors and environmental related factors. Thus, in this paper, factors such as teacher-factors, inadequate funding, government factors, lack of resources, lack of information communication technology facilities, frequent labour disputes and closures of universities, lack of vibrant staff development programmes, and student factors were considered germane to hindrance of quality teaching in Nigerian higher education.

### ***Teacher-factor***

Teachers are the main determinants of quality education and are expected to be effective and committed. One of the challenges to the attainment of quality higher education in Nigeria is the lack of academic staff. According to Asiyai (2013), teachers are the hub of any educational system. Teachers determine the quality of education because they transmit educational policies into practice and action. There is no gainsaying the fact that without adequate number of inspiring, well-informed teachers, fully prepared to meet their responsibilities in our schools, we cannot have good education and without good education, we cannot hope for long to meet successfully, the challenges of a changing world. According to Salau (2009), teachers are considered the most important factor in students' learning; a bridge between students and quality. Teachers' deficiencies either in knowledge, pedagogical skills or motivation spells doom for the system.

### ***Inadequate funding***

Inadequate funding is the most critical challenge that has threatened the attainment of quality teaching in Nigerian higher education. Inadequate funding of education has been a bane to educational development in the country. Asiyai (2013) maintained that a major constraint to attaining academic excellence in Nigerian universities is financial constraints which made many academics and non-academics to be working under difficult circumstances. Many institutions of higher learning in Nigeria were unable to build lecture halls, students' hostels, equip laboratories and workshops and payment of staff salaries, research grants, allowances and medical bills (Asiyai, 2013). To buttress inadequate funding in Nigerian higher education, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN)/The Academic Staff Union of University (ASUU) Re-negotiation Committee (2009) realised as widely acknowledged that the key to the survival of Nigeria in the 21st

century lies in the country's ability to produce applied and theoretical knowledge in science, technology and humanities and hence the Renegotiation Committee arrived at a consensus on the need for a rational and scientific procedure for determining the funding requirements to begin the revitalising the Nigerian university system. It is however pathetic that the Nigerian governments have not showed enough commitment towards adequate funding of higher education, despite its devastating effect on quality teaching.

### ***Governmental factor***

One other challenge to quality delivery in education is poor policy implementation. The antecedent effect of poor quality delivery is the terrible low performance of graduates of institutions of higher learning in Nigeria in their world of work and the alarming incidence of examination malpractice. In Nigeria policies are written by knowledgeable writers who have foresight and believe strongly in what they write for the future but the problem comes when it comes to translating theory into practice by implementers (Asiyai, 2013). Nevertheless, certain factors could be said to be inhibitors to smooth implementation of educational policies and thereby resulting to poor quality delivery. Factors such as government underfunding of education and poor utilization of available funds by the school managers e.g. vice chancellors, rectors, provosts, deans of faculties, heads of department, etc. are contributory factors to poor quality education.

### ***Inadequate resources***

Quality higher education is dependent on the quality and quantity of human and material resources put in place in institutions of higher learning. The absence of educational facilities such as science laboratories, workshops, students' hostels, libraries and electricity will affect the quality of education. For good quality delivery, these facilities must meet the minimum standard specified by the National Universities Commission (NUC), the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National Council for Colleges of Education (NCCE). In order to ensure quality teaching and learning, the class size must be small for effective students/teacher interaction. Regrettably, the lecture halls are overcrowded with majority of the students standing at the corridors during lectures in most institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. Apart from this, the libraries in most institutions of higher learning in the country are stocked with obsolete textbooks and without current journals and textbooks. For an institution to be strong academically, it must have a formidable library put in place. This explains why the

top universities of the world (Harvard, Cambridge, Tokyo and university of California) are academically of high strength and quality (Asiyai, 2013). The acute shortage of educational facilities in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria has led to decline in the quality of higher education in the country. For example, in most universities and colleges, the science laboratory and vocational and technical education workshops are empty, lacking the equipment needed for effective teaching and learning. It is not uncommon to see a student graduating from chemistry department without handling volumetric analysis apparatus. The undesirable conditions of institutions of higher learning in Nigeria have been worrisome to many scholars (Odetunde, 2004). Students of institutions of higher learning in Nigeria are learning in dilapidated buildings which are poorly ventilated, illuminated, furnished and environmentally depressing and disabling situations. Even many lecturers share small offices.

Worried about the poor quality of graduates of higher education institutions in Nigeria, the National Universities Commission carried out a need assessment survey which was reported by Okebukola, (2005) and highlighted the following:

- Only about 30% of Nigerian students' population has adequate access to classrooms, workshop, lecture halls, laboratories and libraries.
- Deficient libraries in terms of currency and number of books, journals, and electronic support facilities.
- Inadequate academic calendar resulting from staff unions' industrial action premised on low salary, wages/welfare and students strikes often time related to inadequate facilities.
- Lack of practical experience, often times resulting from deficient facilities.

These factors above are all threats to quality attainment in higher education in Nigeria.

### ***Inadequate information communication technology facilities***

Another challenge to quality attainment in higher education in Nigeria is lack of information communication technology facilities in institutions of higher learning. As part of her education reform effort Nigerian government adopted information communication technologies in all levels of education since information communication technology integration in educational practices is meant to improve teaching and learning, enhance higher education research, enhance collaboration among peers and improve quality of education. Unfortunately, most institutions of higher learning in the country, there is acute short of computers, multi-media projectors, electronic white

boards, and automation of lecture halls and lecturers offices. Even majority of the institutions are not linked with functional internet connectivity. According to Asiyai (2013) these new digital technologies make possible a learning revolution in education. As rightly noted by Onuma (2007) information and communication technologies could be used to prepare lesson plan, collect data and analyze students' achievement. Curriculum content could be enriched through search from the internet by teachers. Through such internet search, information and relevant school practices which are unknown to teachers and students and which cannot be found in textbooks, can easily be downloaded for use. Information and communication technology in education has been continuously linked to higher efficiency, higher productivity and higher educational outcomes, including quality of cognitive, creative, and innovative thinking (Adeyemi & Adeyemi, 2014).

### ***Frequent labour disputes and closures of universities***

A protracted challenge to quality higher education in Nigeria is the incessant staff union disputes and subsequent closures of the institutions. Closure of the institutions affects staff productivity and the realisation of educational aim and objectives. Asiyai (2013) provided a catalogue of strikes by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU) within fourteen years. The catalogue revealed that there were too many strikes, some of which lasted up to six months. According to Adeyemi & Adeyemi (2014), the variables causing the frequent trade union disputes include poor conditions of service of staff, non implementation of unions and government agreements, lack of autonomy and academic freedom and poor funding. The incessant closure of higher education institutions in Nigeria is evident in the long industrial strike by the Academic Staff Union of Universities.

The disruption of academic programmes of institutions of higher learning affects students learning outcomes, since lecturers find it difficult to complete the course work. The frequent disputes and strike galore by university staff and students leave students with little or no time to complete both their theoretical and practical work. In most cases a semester's course work is sandwiched to few weeks during which lectures are rushed to accommodate the time lost to strike. This type of academic rush is a big threat to attainment of quality in higher education in Nigeria.

### ***Inadequate staff development programmes***

Majority of institutions of higher learning in Nigeria lack staff development programme for training and re-training of staff (Asiyai, 2013). Vibrant staff development programme on a continuous basis will help academics and non-academics to clarify and modify their behaviour, attitude, value, skills and competencies. In this way, they grow and develop in their knowledge and thus become more effective and efficient in the performance of tasks. Staff development is paramount because knowledge of today is only sufficient for today. In this era of knowledge explosion and emergent knowledge based economy, staff development should be the priority of any nation. Peretomode (2008) argued that the weakness of post graduate programmes of some institutions of higher learning in Nigeria required a strong staff development programme for staff. He maintained that universities are staffed by lecturers who are not familiar with the topography of educational landscape and have never been expected to formulate their own philosophies of education or their own views about teaching and learning.

In support of the above assertion, Asiayi (2013) reported that lack of staff development programmes accounted for the decline in quality of tertiary education in Nigeria. Similarly, Adeyemi & Adeyemi (2014) noted that an employee who is not trained and exposed to continuous retraining in the modern methods and new discoveries in his or her field will soon become irrelevant to the organisation. Due to lack of opportunity for retraining and non-mentoring of junior lecturers by professors, the junior lecturers are not exposed to new ideas, facts, theories and research findings in higher education. On the fact that the deficiency of teacher education programme in Nigeria is noticeable, the calls for addition training of teachers if quality in higher education is to be attained in the country.

### ***Student factors***

Another impediment of quality teaching in higher learning in Nigeria is the increasing activities of secret cult groups, kidnappers and other vices. The higher education institutions in Nigeria are under siege barded and almost ruined by secret cults (Adeyemi & Adeyemi, 2014). As a result of the activities of cult groups and kidnappers' majority of students, lecturers and their families live in perpetual fear. Some of these cult groups indulge in arm robbery, rape, assassination and infrastructure destruction. They cheat in the examination openly and threaten lecturers when caught. While academic and senior staff of universities in the country are being hunted by kidnappers and those kidnapped are made to pay huge sum of money as ransom before they are released. The



tensions induced on members of higher education institution communities as a result of the activities of these secret cult groups and kidnappers tend to generate negative impacts on quality of higher education in Nigeria. Another big challenge to administrators of institutions of higher learning in Nigeria is students' uprising. Handling demonstration and strikes by students in protest of their rights or government insensitivity to demands by the civil society.

### **The Path to Fostering Quality Teaching in Higher Education Institutions**

The following strategies are proposed by Basavraj & Santa (2015) to encourage the development or growth of quality teaching in higher education institution:

#### **1. Dedication and Commitment**

Dedication and commitment of teachers plays a crucial role in improving the quality of education and shaping the future of nation.

#### **2. Motivation**

A teacher should act as a motivational force and should be able to create a learning environment in which students are encouraged to think carefully, rationally and express their thoughts and decide on the situations and difficulties. It is the responsibility of teacher to create a context in which the students' desire and ability to learn can work most effectively. A teacher should act as the role model for the students.

#### **3. Skill Development**

Skill development is crucial to the success of students in the job market. Skill development of students, on par with their counterparts elsewhere is an important aspect of enhancement of quality of higher education. With liberalization and globalization of economic activities, the need to develop skilled human resources of a high caliber is imperative. Consequently, the demand for internationally acceptable standards in higher education is evident. Therefore, preparing the students to achieve core competencies, to face the global requirements successfully is very important. This requires that the teachers should be innovative, creative and entrepreneurial in their approach, to ensure skill development amongst the students. By various means such as establishment of collaborations with industries, social organizations, networking with the neighborhood agencies/bodies and fostering a closer relationship between the "world of skilled work" and the "world of competent-learning", it is possible to develop required skills.

#### **4. Imparting Value Based Education**

It is said that skills are of less importance in the absence of appropriate value systems. Hence, teachers should shoulder the responsibility of inculcating the desirable value systems amongst the students. The seeds of values sown in the early stages of education, mostly aimed at cooperation and mutual understanding, have to be reiterated and re-emphasised at the higher educational institutions, through appropriate learning experiences and opportunities. Values are the guiding principles of life, which are conducive to all round development. They give direction to life and bring joy, satisfaction and peace to life. In ancient India, more importance was given to morality, honesty, duty, truth, friendship, brotherhood, etc and these were considered to be the themes of Indian culture and society. Imparting value based education was the only aim of the teachers of ancient age. But in the present scenario, due to large number of changes, there is a considerable decrease in the quality of value based education.

#### **5. Impact of Caliber**

It has been revealed by many research studies that the caliber of teachers has tremendous impact on the caliber of the students. Hence, a teacher, who is a permanent learner has to update the subject knowledge continuously and should be aware of latest development in their subject.

#### **6. Lateral Thinking**

Lateral thinking is solving problems through an indirect and creative approach using reasoning that is not immediately obvious and involving ideas that may not be obtainable by using only traditional step-by-step logic. Teacher should take initiative to nurture and nourish the students to develop lateral thinking.

#### **7. Use of Resources**

Efficient use of resources helps to produce uniquely educated, highly satisfied and employable graduates. Motivated teachers can enrich their teaching with resources and co-curricular activities. Use of ICTs in teaching/learning process makes the lecture effective and improves the quality of teaching. Continuous updating of teaching methods and use of innovative teaching methods help to improve the quality of teaching.

## **8. Curriculum Design**

The quality of higher education can be enhanced by designing need based curriculum, keeping in view the demands in the employment sector at national and international level.

## **9. Special Attention to Research**

Promotion of research is crucial for improving the quality of higher education system. It is one of the factors, which influences the quality of teaching. Educational research must be strengthened as an instrument for improving educational quality and results of such research must be communicated to teachers in a better way. The link between classroom teaching and research is extremely important. It must be a link operating in two directions:

- i) Information to the teachers about latest findings.
- ii) Information to the researchers about the problems.

## **10. Academic Development**

Rasavraj & Sarita (2015) affirmed that to teach is the life-long process of learning. Therefore, teachers are the most important components of the higher education system. Academic development of teachers is crucial and necessary for the success of the higher education system because teachers are the prime movers and catalysts for all round development of students. Teachers play a significant role not only in improving the quality of higher education but also maintaining it; the professional competency of teachers has to be of such a high level so as to impart quality knowledge to the students. This would call the continuous upgrading of the professional development of the teachers, which is key guarantee of quality education. High quality in service training and professional development within the profession in order to keep in touch with new findings in their subjects and to obtain continuous support for the improvement of their teaching. Teachers need continuous self-development to generate knowledge that goes to contribute towards inculcating high professional competency among students. Development of teachers depends on many factors. It is closely linked with:

- The quality of research
- Participation in national and international seminars
- Faculty exchange programs
- Upgrade of qualifications

- Exposure to recent developments
- Writing of books and papers
- Collaborating with fellow researchers in other higher education institute

These activities help to impart quality education to students.

### **11. Quality Awareness and Self Evaluation**

Ability to improve the quality of education is the ability to reflect on their own teaching, critically examine the methods used and looking for alternative ways of teaching. To create increased quality awareness and help teachers to improve their teaching methodology and skills may be of crucial importance to improve quality in education. One major way of doing this is to systematically evaluate the own teaching and its results. Evaluation helps to improve their own work. This also helps to discuss about newer effective methods to use in the teaching and to discuss about the choice of the best teaching methods.

### **12. Professional Freedom**

Professional freedom of the teacher is of crucial importance in developing quality in education. Professional freedom does not mean that the teacher can do whatever he likes, but that the teacher, who knows the students, is the person best equipped to decide which methods to use in order to create an optimal leaning situation. There has to be a general thrust in the creativity of the teacher. Authorities can give suggestions to teachers regarding the use of newer teaching methods through service training, professional development programs and other means. But authority should not dictate about method to be used by teacher. The teacher should enjoy academic freedom in the discharge of professional duties.

A teacher plays a crucial and demanding role in the process of students learning by creating a context in which the students' desire and ability to learn can work most effectively. The task of the teacher in the higher education system involve the creation of a learning environment in which students are encouraged to think carefully, rationally and to express their thoughts and to decide on the situations and difficulties they wish to confront and resolve. The teacher helps students to achieve their own aims and adopt notion that underlines the higher education. Therefore, the quality of performance of the teachers is of paramount importance.

### **13. Professional Ethics**

Professional ethics of teachers is an important issue. The complex task of teaching and many other responsibilities shouldered by teachers underline the questions related to the responsibilities and duties of teachers. This has also been reflected in a growing discussion on professional ethics among teachers. Promotion of professional ethics also helps to fight against corruption.

### **Conclusion**

Education without quality teaching cannot be effective and quality teaching cannot be obtained without quality teachers. The achievement of educational goals becomes realistic only through quality teaching. The importance of quality teaching cannot be overemphasized since it has to do with whatever it takes, ethically and responsibly by the teachers, to ensure that students learn and that they leave the institution with a passion for learning.

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