QUALITY ASSURANCE: CONDITIONS AFFECTING IMPROVEMENT ON RESEARCH AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA.

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ABSTRACT

After many decades of trying to improve and expand educational opportunities, many African countries in spite of all the efforts continued to face crises in the area of research and policy development. Among the factors affecting policy developments in Africa are: Inadequate funding, lack of Publication of Research findings for making classroom decisions, Centralization and Decentralization of power, inadequate training and retraining of workforce, Bureaucracy and Political influence. Re-thinking on professional development, involving teachers more on research works, collaborative enquiries and standard setting in profession across the universities in teaching profession should be part of reformed to bring African countries closer to what is in operation in other developed countries. To help solve these problems, recommendations are made to ensure maintenance of standard across different universities and countries, need for all embracing curriculum to allowed exchange of students from one country to another and the need to carry industries along in the planning and policy implementation so that there will be minimal complains about incompetency among the University graduates when fully engaged in employment.

KEYWORDS

Funding in Education, Publication of Research findings, Centralization and Decentralization of Power, Bureaucracy, Professional Development, Quality Control.
INTRODUCTION

The promise of education as found in the universal acceptance of the principle of education for all. No doubt, education is one of the most powerful agents for social, political and technological development of any nation and it takes place at different levels: primary, secondary and tertiary level of education. That notwithstanding, developments in education are visible and more rapid in advanced countries like Japan, United states of America and Britain where policies are adhered to and quality of service closely monitored. This paper highlights some challenges and problems which need to be attended to for African countries to achieve greatness through education provided across the universities.

Among the factors affecting policy developments and implementation to which universities have to address include:

a. Inadequate funding of education or universities.

b. Lack of publication of Research findings for making classroom decisions.

c. Centralization and decentralization of power.

d. Bureaucracy and political influence.

e. Training and retraining of workforce.

f. Quality assurance through supervision and monitoring of activities.
(A) INADEQUATE FUNDING

There is a popular saying that no nation can develop beyond the quality of its education but provision of quality education also depends greatly on how education is funded in each nation.

Taiwo (2012), argued that education which is a lifelong process has a purpose, are of different types and takes place at different levels. When the programmed are properly planned, it is a means of socialization, upholding and promoting norms and culture and for advancement in conformity with the societal ideologies, expansion and formation.

In many African countries there are inequalities in educational access and inadequate funding in education sector. This account for why the quality of education provided in African countries or Universities cannot be compared to those in advanced countries where facilities, instructional materials and teachers are well paid promptly (Albrecht and Zuderman, 1994.

(B) LACK OF PUBLICATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS FOR CLASS ROOM DECISIONS

It can be argued that, in Africa, education is not given attention it deserves as government only pay lip service to provision of finance or funding of research works in tertiary institutions. Although all the universities talk about teaching and Research work, where available the findings from these research works hardly extended far or used in programmed planning (Mulemwa, 2005).

This is to say that the findings resulting from the researches are hardly used in the planning of activities meant for the students. If there is enough awareness of Journals and exchange of these publications among the universities across nations, much will be achieved. Apart from that it will also contribute to the growth and development of the universities and assist inter universities awareness and exchange of information.
CENTRALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION OF POWER

From the available information (Bloom, 1985) there are evidences suggesting that African countries have not been negligent in their pursue of education and their support for proper planning. But unfortunately, long term planning and subsequent efforts to implement any new policy suffer from the short term needs of appointed officials to consolidate their authority to demonstrate their power of their offices. That is, long term planning is often a paper activity intended to placate a wide spectrum of the citizenry in all regions of the country. In order words, long term objectives are far enough removed to allow for changes in accordance only with the political realities affecting the original plans. Therefore planning objectives may not be carried out or completed within the extant of a government, and subsequent efforts may vary considerably from original plans.

At times national policy to improve educational reform can include intentions to provide appropriate educational services and opportunities to meet the unique condition and needs of certain locality or state in a country and at such there is monopoly and centralization of power, not allowing each state or region to do in accordance with dictates of the environment (Dewey, 1961).

In the Decentralization, setting government usually attempts to demonstrate its commitment to serving all segments of the population in the most meaningful way possible. Unfortunately such a policy once formulated cannot be readily implemented for various reasons: inadequate qualified and trained staff to work in a particular areas of the country, lack of willingness to accept innovations and cultural barrier.

BUREAUCRACY AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE

According to Ogunlade (2002) many policies are delayed unnecessarily in the implementation when trying to follow due process. Although this aspect differs from one country to the other, political priorities have effect in the implementation of certain governments’ curriculum policies. In African countries, political situations and due process put in place are critical in determining the level of available support for the development, implementation and maintenance of educational projects. At times the development and dissemination of plans and proposed activities varies to give impression for a change. This changes in government usually means a change in ministry or tertiary education heads. This is due to the fact that any changes in government at Federal or State level will undoubtedly lead to the appointment of new department or division, down the line, thus leading to frustration or delay in completion of a project or reform.
(E) TRAINING AND RETRAINING OF WORKFORCE

For efficiency, with current happening innovation and reforms beyond the requisite basic skills and training in the universities, serving teachers would have to undergo retraining for an update, information, acquisition of new skills and mastery of new ways of carrying out their assignments (Musa and Musa, 2007). To achieve this would require eliminating some of what has been taught previously, to provide the curricula change for studies directed at local needs (Awang, Jindal and Barbr, 2013).

According to UK aid (2015) many States in Nigeria and Africa in general are faced with many challenges including problems of unqualified and trained science teachers, non-usage of activity based method and poor infrastructural facilities with many relying on the skilled acquired during their school days.

(F) QUALITY ASSURANCE THROUGH SUPERVISION AND MONITORING OF ACTIVITIES

Apart from monitoring classroom activities by certain personnel in the Ministries, in some countries agency or associations are often established for the purpose of setting standards for which all must adhered to. These agency include WAEC, JAMB, NUC, NCCE and so on.

It can be argued that one way to ensure speedy human resources development and obtain a realistic education within a region is through a check and balances (Osunade, Zerbigie, 2006 and Osagie, Ibadin, 2007). Lecturers being a partner in the policy formation, planning and implementation have to be up and doing and follow the laid down rules and regulations. In most cases criteria or guidance are given in form of the goals or objectives to be achieved.
RECOMMENDATION

It on the basis of all identified challenges, the following recommendations are made to assist in solving these problems.

1. Government should endeavor to respond promptly to issues concerning funding of education in the universities. The budgetary allocation to the education sector should be reasonable and high enough to cater for all the demands.

2. Adequate attention should be given to quality research works in the universities and research findings should be widely publicized across different nations.

3. Practice of continuity should be encouraged such that any changes in government does not affect already designed policy, lead to removal of heads of ministries, parastatal or agencies.

4. There should always be a timetable indicating when an innovation is to begin or introduced to a system and any changes in the already designed should be communicated to the affected states or ministries.

5. Bureaucracy should be flexible to permit variation and prompt responses as challenges arise. Files should not be left in an official stable for more than 24 hours for necessary action to be taken without delay.

6. To ensure maintenance of standard across different universities and countries, there must be an all embracing curricula to allow for exchange of students from one country to another and agencies and industries should be carried along in the policy implementation.

Bloom, B.S. (1985). Developing Talent in Young People In Valentine, NY and


