



Fostering Quality Teaching In Higher Education Institutions: Best Policies and Practices

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Abstract

Education is the key to national development and only teachers hold the key for social and national integration. Teacher is the pivot on which every educational enterprise revolves and only intellectually promising, morally stable and qualified persons are needed to engage in teaching. This is because the success or failure of any nation depends largely on the quality of its educational system. In Nigeria, the attention paid to all levels of teaching in the school system underscores the importance of teacher education particularly at higher institutions which the purpose of its establishment was for research improvement and development in all sectors of the economy. The quality of teaching calls for critical and immediate attention due to its propensity to determine the quality of human resources in all the other sectors of labour market. The concern of this paper therefore is the need to improve the quality of teaching in higher education institutions. The paper analyses the teaching situation in higher institutions in Nigeria and suggests strategies that can redirect and reinvigorate quality teaching at this level of education. The study concludes that training alone does not guarantee good and quality teaching but willingness to learn to teach on the part of the teachers can significantly achieve and sustain our aspiration. The paper recommends annual professional development for teachers at all levels of educational system as well as training and retraining of teachers on major pedagogical and didactic breakthroughs among others.

Keywords: Teaching, Quality teaching, Higher education institutions, Educational system

Introduction

Since the turn of the millennium, the rate of change in sophistication and complexity of systems around the world has been exponential with the rate of technological advancement being the most significant culprit. Consequently, these have brought with it increased threats as well as opportunities across the globe, from

unprecedented global interconnectivity to cyber space threats. As such, the status quo requires equally advanced intellects with the ability of critical thinking and creative intuition to manage these threats and to take advantage of the opportunities. Lawal, and Akogun, (2016), asserts that the capacities of every individual and stakeholder are required for a



fighting chance in the face of the Sophisticated and quantum dimensional changes in the world today. This scenario consequently implicates no other than the teaching and learning institution which is the platform that fabricates the said critical and creativity individuals needed to sustain the situation. In order for a society to be adequately prepared to outlast these challenges, quality teaching and learning process should be fostered in our Higher Education Institutions (HEIS). Drazena and Mirela (2015) suggests that citizens of an increasingly complex community, country and globalized world need the skills, critically reflective processes and creative approaches in order to cope successfully. It is at the back of this necessity that the topic of this paper "Fostering Quality Teaching in Higher Education Institutions- Best Policies & Practices" has been derived. This topic has garnered significant interest and attention among educationists and education policy makers alike and therefore, substantial work and resources have been provided on the subject matter. However, researchers have addressed the topic from quite varying perspectives and put forward different ideologies which have posed a bane in the path to proffering a universal and consistent methodology for defining quality teaching policies and practices in Higher Education Institutions. Consequently, this paper harnesses the various schools of thought with the aim to establish their point of synergy and agreement in order to reveal a pragmatic rationale for formulating

policies and practices that will serve as blueprint for enshrining the ethos of quality teaching and learning in the higher institutions of learning.

This paper will tread with caution and not jump into conclusion as it has been observed with several literature reviewed that have addressed this topic of quality teaching strictly in isolation from its "cause" and "effect" components. In other words, the systemic and organic approach to address this topic would be to begin from the "cause", which is the initial training received by teachers and progress to the "effect", which is the quality learning received by students. The subject therefore, is analyzed based on these triangle of concepts; quality teacher training, quality teaching and quality learning. And this paradigm is almost customized for the Nigerian situation that has established deficiencies in the management and policies of its teacher training colleges. This is to state that prior adequate attention and consideration need to be given to teacher training in the effort to foster quality teaching in Higher Educational Institutions. Going forward, the literature therefore focuses on building the case for the identified dimensions of the "quality teaching" as the subject matter, that is quality teacher training and quality student learning.

The Concept of Quality Teaching

Since quality teaching has been defined as the use of pedagogical techniques to produce learning outcomes for students and which uses



several dimensions that includes; effective curricula and course content design, a variety of learning formats and effective assessment of learning outcomes (Henard & Roseveare, 2012). It is therefore, imperative that quality learning be factored in the equation as it is the feedback (effect) of every quality teaching effort. In a similar situation, Drazena and Mirela (2015) identified student's engagement the most powerful instrument for improving quality teaching in higher educational institutions. This is because students are the direct beneficiaries of teaching (whether qualitative or deficient), and are thus the sources of crucial feedback for the system. Therefore, as part of the requirements for teaching excellence, teachers must have the knowledge of psychological components of learning (that is, knowledge of cognitive and other motivational learning processes as well as the sources of students' cognitive, motivational and emotional heterogeneity) in addition to the pedagogical components.

Teacher remains the most important human character in the life of the learner. He/she is entirely different from the parents of the learner. The teacher is the most important factor guaranteeing quality and excellence in the school system. The teacher aims at attaining high moral values of a given society for the good of the individual and the society. Hence, the teacher, the teaching and the students become the major and significant characters for a transformed education system and the society of these players in education,

the teacher becomes the most important factor. This is because no nation can rise above the quality of its educational system and no educational system can rise above the quality of its teaching force.

The process of imparting skills, knowledge and attitude referred to as "teaching" could be regarded as a systematic presentation of facts, ideas, skills and techniques to students. Teaching is referred to as what they do in order to bring about learning. This shows teaching as an act of imparting or a process of making somebody to acquire skills or do something. Thus, one can say "I am teaching the pupils how to read and write". Consequently, in the school setting, it is appropriate to describe teaching in the context of activity. It is in this context that Bamisaiye (1989) views teaching as a "specialised skill that is used in the development of formal knowledge in the learner. Teaching could therefore be defined as systematic series of activities through which the teacher seeks to interpret his/her specific task in relation to modification of learners' state of knowledge. Teaching is the action of person to make learning possible. Facilitating learning is therefore, the purpose of teaching. It becomes clear that for a nation to become a dynamic and great nation, she has to provide all necessary and relevant instructional and infrastructural facilities needed to foster quality teaching. This will also enhance the effectiveness and quality of her teaching force that trains the much needed manpower. This is no



doubt why the Federal Government of Nigeria in the National Policy on Education (NPE) in an effort to show the important place of teacher in national development states that teacher education will continue to be given a major emphasis in all our educational planning because no nation can rise above the quality of its teachers. In essence, the aim is the improvement of the quality of the teachers in order to improve the quality of education and the recipients in Nigeria.

Quality therefore could be explained in terms of the value attached to a thing. It is the expected result in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and standard. For example, when we say the quality of education has fallen, we may be comparing the past and the present, or people say the quality of public school is poor, we may be comparing public schools with the private owned schools. In education, quality could be explained as how much and how well children learn and the extent to which their education translates into a range of personal, social and developmental benefits. The Dakar Framework for Action - Education for All, declared that access to quality education was the right of every child. It affirmed that quality was at the heart of education a fundamental determinant of enrolment, retention and achievement. Its expanded definition of quality sets out the desirable characteristics of learners (healthy motivated students), process (competent teachers using active pedagogies), content (relevant curriculum) and system (good

governance and equitable resource allocation. The 6th goal of EFA emphasizes the need for a stimulating pedagogy. It is the teaching and learning process that brings the curriculum to life that determines what happens in the classroom and subsequently the quality of the learning outcomes. To Avalos (1991), the question of quality is somehow explainable in the context of relativism. She stressed further that what is meant by quality is of course an explainable question. As it concerns teacher training, judgement about quality is dependent on what is considered to be the appropriate outcome of such training or more specifically, what kind of teacher the system is supposed to produce and how effective their predicted teaching performance would be.

From the above submissions, it becomes necessary and desirable that teacher training institutions that are saddled with responsibility of producing highly intelligent,, conscientious and dedicated classroom teachers, equipped with all needed pedagogical skills deserve special and critical attention and assessment at all times. Teachers at all levels need retraining particularly those at the Higher Education Institutions. This is because Higher Institutions in Nigeria, the Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, and Monotechnics are established to carry out researches for promotion of human capital development. Thus, teachers in these categories require regular assessment in terms of training and



retraining to maintain and sustain quality teaching. What then is quality teaching?

Quality as a concept is subjective in itself until it is defined in relative terms and this is because it describes the fitness of something for a purpose which in this case is teaching. According to Cishe (2014), quality teaching can be understood from two principles: the identification of students' cognitive development as a major objective of educational systems and the role of education in promoting shared values, responsible citizenship and creative and emotional development. All these point to the fact that quality teaching must only be measured through its impact on the learners. The culprit that has necessitated this paper has no doubt metastasised throughout all endeavours and walks of life and alarming is its toll on the quality of teaching that is being offered by teachers in our Higher Education institutions. This culprit, that is, competition arises in the form of the requirements for promotion and recognition within the academia. These requirements are perversely counter-intuitive in the sense that they jeopardise the *raison d'être* of our higher institutions of learning by awarding more credits and recognition to research works and publications at the expense of the curation of novel teaching pedagogy. In a similar effort, Lawal (2016) observed that the focus has been on research in the assessment, accreditation and recognition of

universities and less on the didactic process and student performance.

This tradition has become enshrined in the substance of our Higher Education Institutions and consequently among our teachers and this bill can only be charged on our various teachers' professional bodies and associations. Is it appropriate to indict these professional bodies? Well, the logic of this verdict lies in the fact that teachers' professional bodies only convene sessions and conference with the theme centered around the presentation of results from researches and studies conducted on a topic of interest. Attendance at conferences is counted towards recognition and achievements, even more so when a paper is presented while these recognitions go on to be used as basis for promotions at the various higher institutions. There is hardly anything questionable with this approach, but something amiss however, is that conferences do not require from members feedbacks on notable discoveries about a new teaching methodology and how it has impacted on the learning process of the students. These conferences can be better leveraged as the platform to promote such practices where teaching methods can be presented and debated for subsequent pilot testing and eventual validation for recommendation. Such an effort is more beneficial to the learners and does more justice to the essence of the teaching profession. In other words, an intuitive strategy would be to focus and apportion more value and incentive on the discovery



and synthesis of novel paradigm in teaching that is much suited to the sophistication of our environment and that guarantees the graduation of learners that are capable of sustaining the society in the face of the complexities and intricacies of the challenges that abound today. The improvement of quality teaching has been attributed to teachers' innovation which requires institution-wide policies, according to Fabrice, Cris & Thanh, (2014). And this can only be achieved by providing teachers with support through sponsorship for adequate professional development and an optimum teaching environment.

Elements of Quality Teaching

Cishe (2014) is of the opinion that quality teaching is the use of pedagogical techniques to produce learning outcomes for students. Without mincing words, these "pedagogical techniques" are the fundamental pieces in the quality teaching puzzle and are; the knowledge of the teacher in curriculum and course content design, the adaptation of appropriate learning contexts suitable for the students' profile and implementation of effective assessment strategy to measure the degree of students' reception of the content. This should go without saying that all the qualities highlighted are indicators of teacher quality.

A report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) highlighted

some challenges being faced among some of its member states (that include 35 countries spanning Europe, North and South America and Asia-Pacific) in the achievement of its imperative quality teaching mission in which the recruiting and retaining of quality teachers are implicated. The report states thus; in addition to the ageing of the teaching workforce, some experience high rates of attrition among new teachers and the shortage of quality teachers in high-demand subject areas and disadvantaged schools. There is also concern about attracting high achieving and motivated candidates into teacher education programmes and the lowering of qualification requirements in the certification and licensing of new teachers (OECD, 2017). Each of the highlighted issues has impacted negatively on the quality of teaching received by learners in the OECD states and this can be said to be illustrative of the global scenario. In its opinion, UNESCO (2000) cited in Lawal & Akogun, (2016) suggests that a support structure is required at the level of the learning system to implement policies, enact legislations, distribute resources and measure learning outcomes so as to have the best possible impact on leaning for all. The element of quality teaching is largely defined by the structure, that is, policies designed to foster its evangelism, that is, practice. In other words, the policies must have such characteristics that make them institutionally appealing (that is, they can integrate seamlessly into the existing structure without major trade-



offs) and effortless to practice. According to Schulman (1987) categorization of indicators of teacher knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge were identified and distinguished. General pedagogical knowledge involved the principles of classroom management and organization that are cross-curricula, while the latter entails the knowledge which integrates the content knowledge of a specific subject and the pedagogical knowledge for teaching that subject.

Formulation of Policies and Practices for Quality Teaching

There is no gain reiterating that a quality teaching policy is as complex to formulate as it is technical to effectively implement. This is because the issue crisscrosses the labyrinths of administrative (educational management) and academic (teaching practice) philosophies which are more often than not, conflicting. Otherwise, the dilemma as reported in the OECD report of the situation among its member states would have been long solved and perhaps, we in the developing world would have had a blueprint for our solution. The formulation of a quality teaching policy and practice is a multi-strata endeavour and as such must be all encompassing. By being multi-strata suggest that it requires to be implemented at a number of levels and the contents and ideologies must align across these inter-dependent levels to allow an organic and streamlined inter complimentary global effect. In order

to foster quality teaching, therefore, the following levels at which support for quality teaching can be focused has been identified. Going with a generalisation to specialisation (top-bottom) paradigm, the levels of quality teaching initiation are:

- Institution-wide Level - at this level, elements of the quality teaching efforts include; the design of the overall policy and the support structure for the holding institution and mechanisms for quality assurance.
- Programme Level - support at this level comprise actions to design and measure the suitability of the content and structure of teaching materials as well as its delivery at course, departmental and (or) faculty levels.
- Individual Level - this is a much customized effort that is learner-focused and intended to allow teachers to get student-specific feedback by motivating them in innovation to improve student learning ((Henard & Roseveare, 2012; Drazena & Mirela, 2015).

Requirements for Sustainable Policy Formulations

Agree on Institution-wide Definition of Quality Teaching: The fundamental step towards fostering quality teaching in Higher Education Institutions is to share a common picture of what the term means within the institution and this will enable the development of a compliance framework and enforcement of such. This definition should be made to encompass as much issues as possible in relation to the subject matter. For instance, agree on



what efforts or achievements qualify as quality teaching efforts, the culture and practices that must become institutionalized in order to confirm path towards teaching excellence and eventually, the expected profile of students at the culmination of their programmes (that is, a reflection of learning outcomes). This approach is crucial in order to develop institution-wide vision, assumptions and vocabulary, the entire community should participate in developing the definition of quality teaching (institution leaders, faculty, administrative staff and students) (Fabrice., Cris, & Thanh, 2014).

With respect to the intricacies and complexities involved in realizing a holistic and uniform quality teaching policy, Fabrice, Cris, & Thanh, (2014) suggests that all other institutional policies be made to align and resonate around the quality teaching policy and equally in that regard proffered some tools that will ensure consistency of those other policies with the objectives of quality teaching enhancement. These tools according to Fabrice and his team include;

- Identifying the impact of each policy in terms of quality;
- Regular review of policies in order to promptly detect inconsistencies;
- Assessing the consistency of departmental and programme policies with the institution-wide framework;
- Benchmarking policy coherence with similar organizations.

From the get-go, it is quintessential that the component policies must be represented in terms of their individual purposes towards achieving the overall goal. This is important in order to adequately and efficiently allocate resources (material, personnel and time) among much impactful efforts. This is important in order to guard against wasted efforts which can breed feeling of frustration when there appears to be a lack of measurable progress on the project. Going forward, it is equally necessary to regularly review and revise the framework for consistencies at all levels of the institution to achieve a sustainable policy. Finally, policy should be designed to be easily understandable, with clear messages, expectations and comparable with that of related organizations, preferably those with success records. This serves to generate confidence and provide credence to the process.

Assign Quality Teaching Ambassadors and Allocate Responsibilities: Assignment of roles and responsibilities among institutional staff members promises much vested interest towards the achievement of the objectives throughout the institution community. This strategy is astute because it will borrow a collective strength through the camaraderie and esprit de corps that exist among staff members. These ambassadors will lead the campaign and work to provide checks and balances, if you like, across departments, units, directorates and individuals, making certain of optimum compliance as well providing



necessary support as may be required by every stakeholder.

Provide Support and Reward for Quality Teaching Efforts: Similar to the recognition given to teachers for carrying out and reporting on research projects, the quality teaching task force at institutions should offer complementary incentives (or funding, as the case may be) for individual teacher's quality teaching efforts and their compliance to the campaign. Such incentives must be made valuable as well as to contribute significantly towards promotional and appraisal exercises. Support for this purpose can be offered in the form of teacher development initiatives that enhance and stimulate the teachers' pedagogic instincts and ingenuity. Academic development according to Volbrecht and Boughey (2004) was described in terms of an integration of all elements of the institution, that is, teachers, students, curricula and research through an encompassing collection of measures designed toward the realization of an enhanced quality in teaching and learning processing in higher educational institutions.

Define Quality Teaching Measurement and Evaluation Strategy: Overall clarity and consistency is the watchword in the successful formulation of any institution wide policy particularly one that generates tremendous interest from different group such as this. It is in effect a fundamental requirement to avoid ambiguity in setting the quality teaching measurement indices and

evaluation benchmarks. Also, the policy must not be misconstrued as a phony designed to catch out wanting teachers but must be accepted as a genuine and progressive policy framed to encourage teaching excellence

Conclusion and Suggestions

It is substantial to conclude that training alone does not guarantee good and quality teaching but willingness to learn to teach on the part of the teachers can significantly achieve and sustain our aspiration. Establishing a universal teaching policy is as daunting as it is laborious. In this regard, ensure that quality teaching policy document is ratified by all quarters of the institution and as such subsequent review will require a quorum of signatories to pass through. Therefore, this paper suggests:

1. Annual professional development for teachers at all levels of educational system sponsored by the Federal, State and Local Governments.
2. Training and retraining of teachers on major pedagogical and didactic breakthroughs.
3. Sponsorship of annual think tank of educational scholars with the sole objective to either report or collaborate to initiate a novel pedagogic technique synonymous with the current educational climate and student orientation.
4. Provision of an optimum teaching environment for teachers in the country irrespective of whether a federal or state worker.



1. Harmonized Teacher Salary Scale (TSS) should be implemented across levels.
2. A professional teacher training qualification such as the Professional Diploma in Education (PDE) should be made a prerequisite for any teaching appointment.
3. As a matter of urgency, the Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) should not only register teachers but conduct annual supervision to schools at all levels for quality assurance.
4. Each institution should organize teacher of the year programme for recognition of outstanding quality teaching performers.

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