



Quality Assurance of University Education: Whose Responsibility?

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Abstract

This study sought the opinion of stakeholders in university education, to know who should be responsible for quality assurance of university education in Nigeria. Descriptive research of survey design was employed in the study. The population consisted of all public university staff members, students and the employers of Nigerian university graduates in south-west Nigeria, while the sample comprised of 50 staff members and 200 students each from 3 federal and 3 state universities, and 50 employers of Nigerian university graduates each from the 6 states in southwest, Nigeria. The findings revealed that quality assurance of university education is a joint responsibility among all stakeholders, with greater responsibility falling on the government.

Keywords: Nigerian university education, Quality assurance, Whose responsibility?



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1. Introduction

Knowledge through education seems to have become an important factor for any political, social and economic development of any nation, and on this premise every society is becoming increasingly dependent on knowledge and how it can be used to improve human lives. Corroborating this assertion, [Oladipo et al. \(2010\)](#) submitted that education in general and university education in particular is fundamental to the construction of knowledge economy and society in all nations. Consequently, every nation invests on its education sector to ensure that its university education is of good standing and rated high globally. [Bello-Osagie and Olugbamila \(2012\)](#) reported that government investment in university education is to ensure it can play its roles in producing high capacity graduates who can help transform the country. However, it is perceived that stakeholders and more importantly employers are now complaining about the quality decline in university education in Nigeria ([Oyewole, 2009](#); [Okajo-Iweala, 2012](#)). [Oto \(2006\)](#) submitted that major employers of Nigerian graduates have widely agreed on quality decline in higher education in the country.

Organizations succeed or fail to the extent to which they are able to satisfy their customers ([Tajomariwo, 2009](#)). It is perceived that in spite of the external and the internal quality assurance processes put in place in the country, there are still series of complaints in the print and electronic media about quality decline in Nigerian university education ([Ibijola, 2014](#)). Different arguments have been advanced for this, as every stakeholder seems to be shifting blame as to who has been responsible for the perceived decline in quality. Most arguments are based on the fact that, the government has been responsible for this decline in quality, due to inadequate funding of the system. [Aboluwade \(2012\)](#) reported that the major problem of education in Nigeria is inadequate funding which according to him is the mother of all other problems such as decayed facilities and lack of instructional materials.

[Ekpo \(2002\)](#) asserted that there has never been a time that adequate money is sent to match the wage bills in the Nigerian university system. Corroborating this assertion, [Inoyo \(2012\)](#) posited that the federal government was not sincere with the educational sector by committing only 8.5 percent of its annual budget to education, while [Aina \(2007\)](#) argued that funding of universities by the federal government below the UNESCO recommendation of 26% of the nation annual national budget has corresponding calamitous effect on teaching and research. To support teaching and research activities according to [Thompson and Wood \(2005\)](#) anticipated revenue sources must be aligned with planned expenditures for without good budgets, there are no schools. Based on this arguments, many of the stakeholders believed that inadequate funding of Nigerian public universities have been the immediate and the root cause of other problems that have undermined the issue of quality assurance of university education in the country. On the contrary, [Materu \(2007\)](#) reported that, in a case study of quality assurance agencies in some African countries including Nigeria, it was revealed that there was no evidence of any link between quality assurance results and funding allocations to institutions or units.

The quality of university educational delivery has been strongly linked to stability, because a stable university environment will avail the students of the required number of lecture hours for every course they take ([Uvah, 2005](#)). However, the frequent shifts in government policies have led to instability in the university system. For instance, the frequent change of government in Nigeria especially during the 1990s, led to non- implementation of agreements between government and university labour unions on several occasions. This gave rise to incessant strikes and long closures of the Nigerian university system during the period.

Some stakeholders argued that quality assurance of university education should be the responsibility of the regulatory agencies such as, the National Universities Commission (NUC) that has been statutorily charged with the functional goal of producing qualitative, self-reliant and globally competitive graduates through its interaction with the Nigerian university system. How effective and efficient these regulatory agencies have significant impact on the quality of its education ([Ibijola, 2015](#)). There have been reports that the Commission has not been performing optimally ([Okojie, 2013](#); [Ibijola, 2014](#)). The greatest challenges before the NUC in Nigeria is its inability to ensure that a Nigerian university is listed among the first 100 or 200 universities in the world ([Okebukola, 2006](#); [Mafuyai, 2012](#)). Subsequently, some stakeholders are calling for the scrapping or an overhaul of the Commission, due to its poor performance ([Ade- Ajayi, 2003](#); [Akinyanju, 2012](#); [Atoyebi and Oyeleke, 2013](#); [Okwuofu and Aminu, 2013](#)).

The role of the university leadership is also perceived as very crucial in quality assurance as it has significant role to play in attracting funds and ensuring proper allocation of funds to projects. It also has the responsibility of attracting and retaining the right caliber of staff and students, and the management of stakeholders such as; the university governing Council, Senate, academic Boards, local authorities, government departments, citizens, students, parents, alumni, industry, among others. However, while universities' leadership complain of underfunding, government accuses them of inefficiency, lack of probity and transparency in the use and disbursement of funds. [Aminu \(1986\)](#) accused Nigerian universities of poor strategic planning in its developmental programmes and argued that large part of the capital fund in some Nigerian universities is tied to useless uncompleted projects. On the contrary, [Okebukola \(2012\)](#) posited that if fund allocated to universities annually are transparently and judiciously applied or spent, or if 95% of such fund is applied to education without any leakage, the system will jump several percentage points in quality. It is in this connection that [Stevenson \(2004\)](#) identified accountability as an obligation of any institution that is heavily subsidized by government.

The procedure of internal quality assurance generally rely on sincere self-critique and self-analysis. These internal processes are vital to ensuring the continued maintenance of standards of teaching, research and public service. [Woodhouse and Carmichael \(2005\)](#) asserted that internal mechanisms or approach to quality assurance allows institutions to set their own goals which must be consistent with fitness for purpose. According to [Gonzalez \(2005\)](#) a study conducted on a university in Chile, revealed that through self-evaluation the need for curricula change and incorporation of new methodologies to courses was observed. On this premise, [Akinkugbe \(2001\)](#) concluded that any institution that is incapable of designing its own curricula and syllabuses and been constantly innovative about them does not deserve the title of a university. On this premise, Boards of various Faculties should ensure that curricula are reviewed as time and technology changes, and every Faculty for purpose of quality must strive to exceed the provisions of the Minimum Academic Standard (MAS). Consequently, this study was carried out to

ascertain the level of involvement of each of these stakeholders in quality assurance of university education in Nigeria, and to investigate who should be responsible for quality assurance of Nigerian university education.

2. Statement of the Problem

There are so many literatures on issue of quality assurance in higher education, and more importantly on university education in Nigeria. In spite of this, the challenges facing quality assurance seems to remain with the Nigerian university system. Some authors and researchers have posited that the issue of quality decline can be attributed to the inability of government to meet the UNESCO 26% annual budgetary allocation to education, while some blame the government regulatory agencies for their inefficiency and ineffectiveness. The university leadership and the Faculty are also seen by some authors and researchers have been responsible for the quality decline. The problem of this study therefore is to investigate the level of involvement of each of these stakeholders in quality assurance of university education in Nigeria, and to investigate who should be responsible for quality assurance of Nigerian university education.

3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate who should be responsible for quality assurance of university education in Nigeria. The study examined the roles of government, the regulatory agency, university leadership, and the Faculty in quality assurance. The opinion of stakeholders in university education was sought on ‘who should be responsible for quality assurance of university education in Nigeria with the purpose of proffering solution(s) to the problem of quality decline in Nigerian university education. In addressing the problem of the study, one general question was raised and one hypothesis generated.

3.1. Research Question

Is there any significant difference among the university staff, students, and employers’ opinion on, who should be responsible for ensuring quality of university education?

3.2. Research Hypothesis

i. There is no significant difference among the university staff, students, and employers’ opinion on, who should be responsible for ensuring quality of Nigerian university education.

4. Methodology

A descriptive research of the survey type was adopted in the study. The population consisted of staff members and students from public Nigerian universities, and the employers of Nigerian university graduates in south-west Nigeria. Proportionate, stratified, and simple random sampling techniques was used to select 1,800 respondents in all, which comprised 300 staff members and 1,200 students from the six universities sampled, and 300 employers of Nigerian university graduates. The sample comprised of 50 staff member (teaching and non-teaching) and 200 students from each of the sampled universities, and 50 employers each from the six states covered by the study. Self-designed instrument tagged, Quality Assurance of University Education in Nigeria: Whose Responsibility (QAUE), was used to collect data. The instrument was validated by experts. QAUE had reliability co-efficient of 0.89. The instrument (QAUE) was divided into Sections A and B. Section A was for bio data of the respondents, while Section B consisted of one item that sought respondents’ opinion on ‘who should be responsible for quality assurance of Nigerian university education’. The respondents indicated their responses for Sections B, using Government, NUC, University leadership, Faculty, and All of the above. Scoring was done based on simple percentage. Data obtained from the instrument were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics i.e. simple percentages and bar charts were used to answer the general question, while Chi-square analysis was used to test the hypothesis for significance difference at 0.05 alpha level.

5. Results and Discussion

Question 1: What is the university staff, students, and employers’ opinion on ‘who should be responsible for ensuring quality of Nigerian university education’?

In order to answer this question, respondents’ scores on Section B of the instrument on, who should be responsible for ensuring quality of Nigerian university education (QAUE) were analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentage. The findings are presented in [table 1](#) and graphically represented in [figure 1](#).

Table-1. University Staff, Students, and Employers’ opinion on, who should be responsible for quality assurance of Nigerian university education

Variable	N	University Staff		N	Student’s		N	Employers	
		f	%		f	%		f	%
Government	300	120	40.0	1200	309	25.8	300	120	40.0
NUC	300	30	10.0	1200	49	4.1	300	11	3.7
University Leadership	300	14	4.7	1200	77	6.4	300	14	4.7
Faculty	300	2	0.7	1200	35	2.9	300	-	-
All of the above	300	140	46.7	1200	730	60.8	300	149	49.7

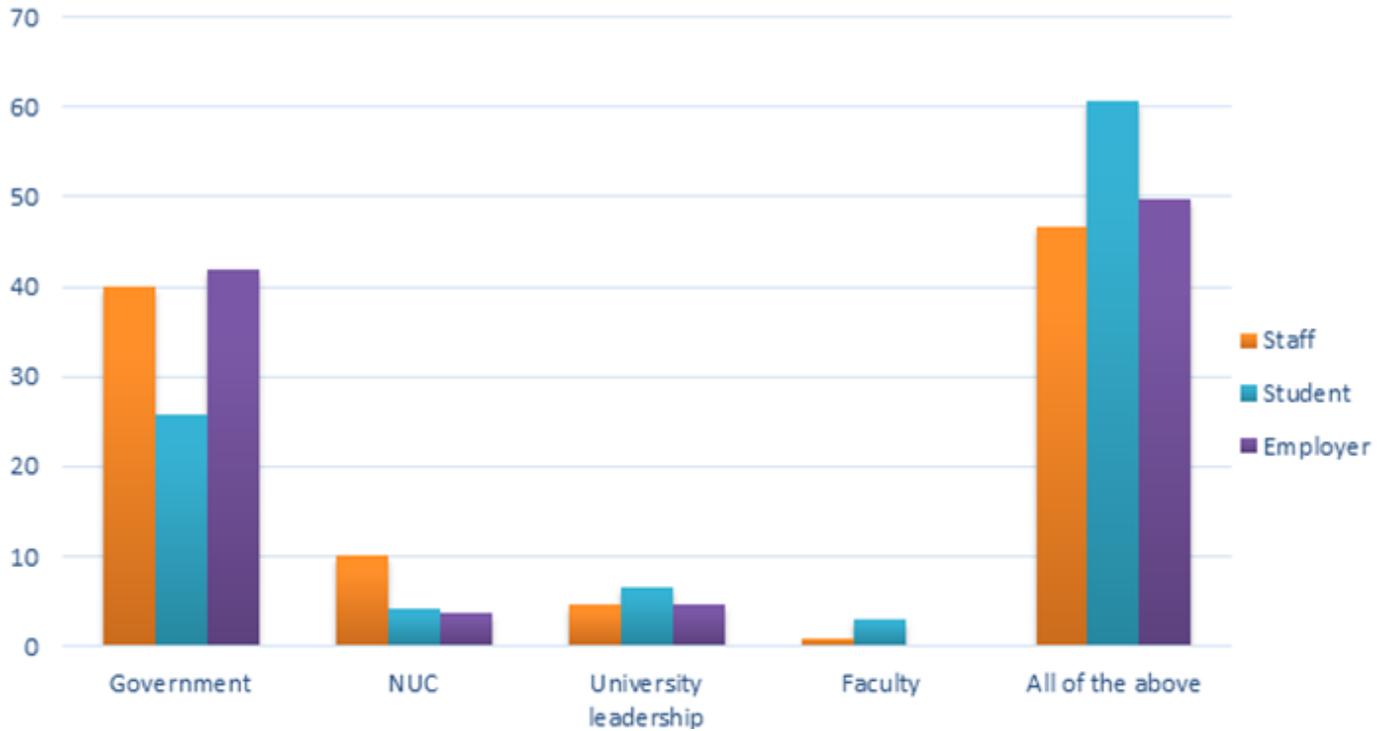


Figure-1. Graphical Representation of Staff, Students and Employers' Opinion on Who Should Be Responsible For Ensuring Quality of Nigerian University Education

Table 1. shows that the Nigerian government, NUC, University leadership and the Faculty are all responsible for ensuring quality of Nigerian university education. Responses on ‘All of the above’ had the highest frequency (%) of the University Staff (46.7), students (60.8) and employers of Nigerian university graduates (49.7).

Table-2. Summary of Respondents’ opinion on, who should be responsible for quality assurance of university education

Government	N	F	%
NUC	1,800	549	30.5
University Leadership	1,800	90	5.0
Faculty	1,800	105	5.8
All of above	1,800	37	2.1
		1019	56.6
		1,800	100

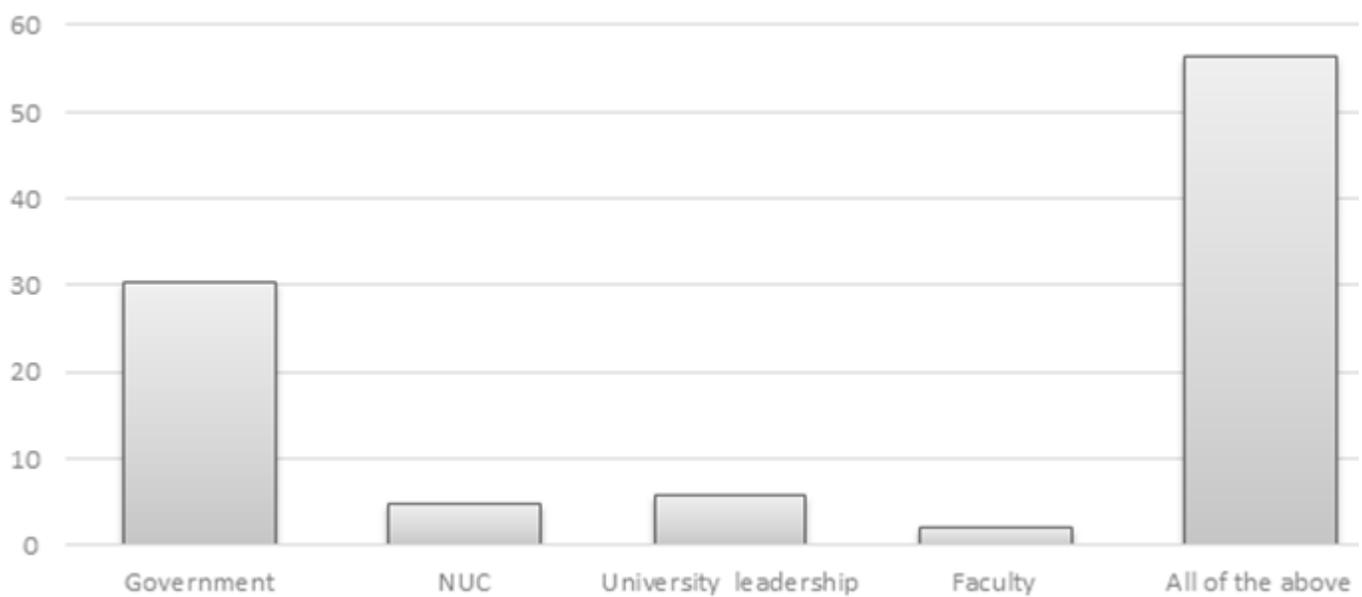


Figure-2i. Bar Chart Showing Respondents' Opinion on who Should Be Responsible for Ensuring Quality of Nigerian University Education

Table 2. shows that majority of the respondents agreed on ‘All of the above’, i.e. the government, NUC, university leadership and the Faculty are all responsible for quality assurance of university education. ‘All of the above’ had the highest frequency of 1,019 (56.6%) out of a total responses of 1,800. Next to that is the ‘Government’ with 30.5% responses, university leadership with 5.8%, Regulatory agency (NUC) with 5.0% and ‘Faculty’ with 2.1%. This implies that, the government, NUC, University leadership and the Faculty are jointly responsible for quality assurance. By implication, the failure of any of the stakeholders will have adverse effect on quality of university education.

6. Testing of Hypothesis

i. There is no significant difference among the university staff, students, and employers’ opinion on ‘who should be responsible for quality assurance of Nigerian university education’.

In order to test the hypothesis, the scores on university staff, students, and employers' responses on 'who should be responsible for quality assurance of Nigerian university education' QAUE were obtained and compared for statistical significance at 0.05 Alfa level using chi-square analysis.

Table-3. Chi-square Analysis showing the opinion of the university staff, students and employers of Nigerian university graduates on 'who should be responsible for quality assurance of Nigerian university education'.

	Status								D f	χ_c^2	χ_c^2
	Employers		Students		Staff		Total				
	N	%	N	%	N	%					
All of the Above	149	49.7	730	60.8	140	46.7	1019	56.6	79.925		
Faculty	-	-	35	2.9	2	0.7	37	2.1			
University Leadership	14	4.7	77	6.4	8	2.7	99	5.5			
NUC	11	3.7	49	4.1	30	10.0	90	5.0			
Government	126	42.0	309	25.8	120	40.0	555	30.8			
Total	300	100.0	120.0	100.0	300	100.0	1800	100.0			

*P<0.05 (Significant result)

Table 3 shows that there is significant difference among the university staff, students and employers' opinion on who should be responsible for quality assurance of Nigerian university education' ($\chi^2=79.925$, $p<0.05$). The null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference among the opinions of the university staff, students and employer on 'who should be responsible for quality assurance of Nigerian university education'. In order to locate the sources of pairwise significant difference at 0.05 level, Scheffe Posthoc test was used as depicted in table 4.

Table-4. Scheffe Posthoc analysis of students, staff and employers of Nigerian university graduates perception on the quality of Nigerian university education

Source	Students	Staff	Employer of Labour	Mean	N
Students		*	*	103.10	1200
Staff			*	37.44	300
Employer of Labour				28-34	300

* Mean difference is significant at 0.05 level.

Table 4 shows that there was significant difference between the perception of students and staff on the quality of Nigerian university education at 0.05 level of significance. Also, the mean difference between university staff and employers of labour, university students and employers of labour was statistically significant at 0.05 level on the perception of the quality of Nigerian university education in each case.

7. Discussion

The study showed that majority of the respondents in each of the groups i.e. university staff, students and the employers agreed that the government, NUC, university leadership and the Faculty are jointly responsible for quality assurance of Nigerian university education. It therefore implies that if every stakeholder in university education could play the expected role in quality assurance issues, the Nigerian universities would rank higher among African and world universities. Although the finding revealed that quality assurance of university education is a joint responsibility, however, it was revealed that of all the stakeholders, the government carries the greatest responsibility.

This finding is in agreement with the submission of Aina (2007) who argued that funding of universities by the federal government below the UNESCO recommendation of 26% of the nation annual national budget has corresponding calamitous effect on teaching and research. The finding also corroborates the argument made by Thompson and Wood (2005) when they noted that teaching and research activities must be supported by good budget, and that without good budget, there are no schools. The finding agrees with the assertion made by Aboluwade (2012) who reported that the major problem of education in Nigeria is inadequate funding which according to him is the mother of all other problems such as decay facilities and lack of instructional materials. However, the finding negates Materu (2007) who submitted that there was no evidence of any link between quality assurance results and funding allocations to institutions or units in a case study of quality assurance agencies in some African countries including Nigeria.

8. Conclusion

The finding of the study revealed that every stakeholder is important in quality assurance of university education, and that any deficiency on the part of government, the regulatory agency (NUC), the university leadership or the Faculty would have adverse effect on quality assurance. However, the finding also revealed that funding of the system by government is the main issue in quality assurance of university education in Nigeria.

9. Recommendation

In view of the established findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

- (i) The Nigerian government should improve on its budgetary allocation to university education;
- (ii) The National Universities Commission, as the regulatory agency in-charge of Nigerian university education, must ensure optimal level of performance to improve on the quality of university education in Nigeria;

(iii) The Nigerian university leadership must play its part in attracting funds and ensuring proper allocation of funds to projects, attracting and retaining the right caliber of staff and students, and the management of other stakeholders in university education. It should ensure that funds allocated to universities annually are transparently and judiciously spent without any leakage; and

(iv) Faculties should ensure that curricula are reviewed as time and technology changes. Every Faculty for purpose of quality must strive to exceed the provisions of the Minimum Academic Standard (MAS). The Faculty should be sincere in its self-critique and self-analysis of its internal quality assurance for continued maintenance of standards of teaching, research and public service.

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