

CHAPTER 5

QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES IN TEACHER EDUCATION: THE CASE OF THE NATIONAL TEACHERS' INSTITUTE, KADUNA, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This case study discusses the quality assurance procedures and practices of the National Teachers' Institute (NTI), Kaduna. It first highlights the institute's QA procedures and practices and then shows how the QA mechanisms adopted by NTI have facilitated the attainment of its goal of producing teachers of reasonable quality whose classroom performance is comparable with that of the teachers produced by conventional colleges of education. This modest achievement is not without problems, such as inadequate funding and the need for more staff who are sufficiently grounded and skilled in the methods and techniques of ODL. Some of the lessons learned have been highlighted, and it is hoped that these lessons will be valuable to ODL practitioners in other developing countries with similar historical and socio-political backgrounds.

1. BACKGROUND

Higher education in Nigeria has witnessed unprecedented expansion since independence in 1960. From only a few institutions in 1960, the higher education sector has now grown to over 150 institutions in the form of universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. Despite this huge increase in numbers, the sector has not been able to meet the exponential rise in the demand for higher education. For example, while there are no more than 100,000 places in the universities, over half a million candidates compete for these places each year (FME 2003).

To meet this demand, nearly all the tertiary institutions offer part-time degree and diploma programmes and at least 14 tertiary institutions offer or claim to have ODL programmes which are operated through the so-called satellite campuses. The teacher-education sub-sector has also expanded significantly in response to shortfalls in the supply of teachers needed for the implementation of the Universal Basic Education

Programme which was launched in 1999. There are now 64 teacher-training colleges with a total graduate output of 30,000 each year.

The increase in the number of higher education institutions offering sub-degree, undergraduate and postgraduate courses using distance-learning techniques has received mixed responses from the government and the public.

On the one hand, there is a sense of relief that higher education institutions are making a paradigmatic shift from elitism to egalitarianism, and thus are taking the issue of access and equity very seriously and it is argued that at last universities are responding to the phenomenal rise in demand for higher education because formal conventional forms of education have failed to meet this demand. For example, data from the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board, which selects candidates for admission into tertiary institutions, indicate that less than 10 percent of qualified applicants are offered admission in any given year. Therefore, some stakeholders see the proliferation of open and distance learning (ODL) programmes as a welcome relief. On the other hand, however, the expansion of ODL has also generated a different set of responses, particularly from the government and segments of the general public who, while acknowledging the necessity of using ODL to promote access and equity, see the unregulated growth of ODL as a threat to the quality of higher education and even to access and equity which, paradoxically, this phenomenal growth of ODL programmes seeks to promote.

It is in this context that the National Council on Education, the highest policy-making body in the country, directed that all the so-called satellite campuses established by nearly all the tertiary institutions should be closed by December 2000 and a regulatory system based on well-defined norms and standards be established. The overriding concern was the quality of ODL programmes and the parity between ODL and the conventional educational provision. Since 2001, every ODL institution is required to demonstrate that the quality of its delivery system and its graduates are comparable to those of the conventional institutions based on the same set of performance indicators.

2. QUALITY ASSURANCE AT THE NATIONAL TEACHERS' INSTITUTE, KADUNA

A key problem in actualising the universalisation of primary education in most developing countries is *how to produce a sufficient number of teachers of high quality*. When the federal government launched the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme in 1976, it realised that the number of teachers being produced by conventional teacher-training institutions was grossly inadequate. There was, therefore, the need to exploit the potentials of ODL in order to address the then existing shortfalls in teacher supply, if the goals of the UPE scheme were to be actualised. This was the context that led to the establishment of the National Teachers' Institute (NTI) in 1978. Decree 7 of 1978, which established NTI, empowered it to:

- (a) Upgrade under-qualified and untrained teachers
- (b) Provide refresher and other upgrading courses for teachers
- (c) Organise workshops, seminars and conferences which would assist in the improvement of teachers
- (d) Conduct examinations
- (e) Carry out research in conjunction with other bodies on any matter relevant to educational development in the country

- (f) Formulate policies and initiate programmes at all levels of education designed to improve, by way of research, the quality and content of education in Nigeria
- (g) Assess from time to time the training programmes offered by the institutions controlled by or associated with the institute, with a view to ascertaining the professional competence of those institutions
- (h) Offer such assistance, either alone or in co-operation with educational bodies as may be requested by the institutions controlled by or associated with the institute
- (i) Foster and enhance international co-operation in the education of teachers
- (j) Perform such other functions as necessary or expedient for the full discharge of all the functions of the Council under the Act

Furthermore, in Section 7(2), the enabling decree states that without prejudice to the generality of its provisions, the institute shall have and exercise the following powers “to provide such courses of instruction either alone or in association with such Universities and other Institutions whether in Nigeria or not, as the Council may determine, and to conduct examinations, and award such diplomas and certificates to those reaching a certain standard as a result of those examinations as may seem appropriate to the Council.”

The institute offers four programmes:

1. The Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), which is a four-year post-secondary programme with an enrolment of 93,000 students
2. The Advanced Diploma and Postgraduate Diploma Programmes with an enrolment of 8,000 students
3. The Pivotal Teacher Training Programme (PTTP) (which was last offered in 2003 with an enrolment of 29,000)
4. The Grade Two Teachers’ Certificate (TC II) Programme for teachers who do not possess the TC II, with an enrolment of 103,000 students

In addition, the institute conducts workshops aimed at disseminating new knowledge and skills for enhancing on-the-job performance of primary and junior secondary school teachers.

There are two dimensions of QA at the National Teachers’ Institute, namely the internal and the external. Internal QA refers to those processes and practices that are designed and executed by NTI in order to ensure that its products are of high quality and are comparable with those of the conventional institutions in the country; while External QA refers to procedures carried out by accreditation bodies set up by the government, notably the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE). This study focuses only on Internal QA as follows.

The institute’s Internal QA mechanisms cover the following operational areas:

- Admission policies
- Course approval and review
- Assessment regulations and mechanisms
- Monitoring and feedback processes
- Staff selection and development
- Staff appraisal

2.1 Admission policies

The admission policies of the institute are exactly the same as those of the conventional institutions and are approved by the National Council on Education and the relevant accreditation bodies so that only qualified students are admitted. This is done to ensure parity and uniformity in the quality of students admitted to and the final output from all the teacher-training institutions in the country. This practice is understandable given the prevailing prejudices and misconceptions about the nature of ODL and the quality of its products, but it also raises questions about the “openness” of NTI as an ODL institution, given the stringent criteria for admission into its programmes.

2.2 Course approval and review

The Programme Design and Development (PD&D) Division of the Department of Academic Services of the institute develops proposals for course offerings for consideration by the Governing Council. The process of approval and review involves the following steps:

- A survey of the learning needs of the target group (for whom the programme is to be designed) conducted by the Planning, Research and Statistics (PRS) Division.
- Development of a draft proposal by PD&D and a critical discussion of the draft by selected academic staff of the Institute and experts from the 12 cooperating universities (i.e., the universities with which NTI collaborates on all aspects of programme design and implementation). The purpose of involving these 12 universities in programme design and implementation is to ensure that the curriculum is of high quality and comparable with that of similar courses offered by other teacher training institutions in Nigeria. This exercise also helps in determining the extent to which the draft curriculum can meet the learning needs identified by the survey and facilitate the attainment of the goals of the programme.
- Submission of the proposal to the Board of Studies, the institute’s Management and the Governing Council for consideration and approval. The final approval is given by the Council, which also sets the timeframe for implementation and approves the funds required for the same. Each course on offer is reviewed after four years of the first offer. The review exercise covers the curriculum, instructional materials, and the delivery, management and monitoring systems, and is based on the process outlined above.

2.3 Assessment regulations and mechanisms

The institute’s procedure for evaluating students’ learning has two components: continuous assessment (CA) comprising tests, assignments, and practicals; and examinations conducted at the end of each semester. As specified in the National Policy on Education and the National Minimum Standards for Teacher Education, CA constitutes 40 percent of the overall assessment, while the related examination constitutes 60 percent. All Study Centres are required to generate their CA scores based on at least three tutor-marked assignments, and tests taken from a set of modules. Uniformity in assessment is maintained with the help of marking schemes for all the assignments/tests.

To ensure that quality and standards are maintained uniformly at all the Study Centres, all CA scores are moderated centrally at the institute’s headquarters using external moderators drawn from the collaborating universities. Similarly, question papers and

scores for all examinations are moderated centrally using external examiners drawn from all over the country. Rules and regulations regarding eligibility to sit for examinations, conduct of examinations and scoring/grading have been published in the form of a handbook on examinations, copies of which have been circulated to all state offices and Study Centres. This information is also contained in the students' handbook which is issued to every student at the time of registration. A handbook on CA has also been published and circulated to all the study centres.

2.4 Monitoring and feedback processes

Monitoring is an important aspect of the institute's quality assurance activities. It provides formative and summative data that are used for improving course design and content and also for determining the extent to which objectives are being met. There are four types of monitoring practised at NTI: Subject Monitoring, Administrative Monitoring, Teaching Practice Monitoring and Examination Monitoring. Further, monitoring is conducted at four distinct levels, viz. headquarters, zonal offices, state offices and study centres. For purposes of monitoring a Quality Assurance Framework (NTI 2000 and NTI 2001) was developed and published in the form of a handbook called the *Monitoring Guide* for assessing the inputs, processes and output of the institute's programmes. It contains instruments that seek to measure:

- The quality of various transactions: delivery of instruction, teaching practice, continuous assessment and examination procedures, and the overall management of the programmes
- The quality of subject matter in the study materials (curriculum content)
- The quality, efficiency and effectiveness of course tutors
- On-the-job performance of the graduates

The objectives of monitoring and evaluation are:

- To determine the extent to which the approved policy guidelines are adhered to in programme delivery
- To identify the problems that may militate against the realisation of the goals and objectives of the institute's programmes
- To identify the various resources that can help improve the effectiveness of the field offices
- To provide information on the basis of which improvements in instructional materials and facilities can be brought about
- To improve the professional development activities and performance of the field office coordinators, centre supervisors and course tutors so as to ensure effective delivery of instruction
- To assess the suitability of the staff involved in programme implementation

An innovative aspect of the monitoring exercise is the involvement of the State Primary Education Boards (which are the employers of primary school teachers), the State Ministries of Education, the Nigerian Union of Teachers, and the Federal Inspectorate Service. The membership of each monitoring team in each state is drawn from these agencies and the National Teachers' Institute. The involvement of staff from these agencies helps NTI in responding to their needs and expectations as employers of NTI's graduates and also in engendering trust, support and credibility for NTI's programmes.

2.5 Staff selection and development

The selection criteria for full-time and part-time staff are defined by the Governing Council based on the guidelines given by the appropriate accreditation bodies. The guidelines are the same for both ODL and conventional institutions, and the level of compliance by NTI is assessed periodically by the accreditation bodies.

To ensure that the staff do possess the requisite knowledge and skills for performing their jobs, a five-year staff development programme was developed in 2001. It focuses on enhancing the institutional capacity of NTI to actualise its mandate. There are two types of training: i) that which enables staff to acquire additional postgraduate qualifications (e.g., PGDE, M.Ed. and Ph.D.) and ii) that which takes the form of workshops and seminars aiming at disseminating new knowledge and skills for improving on-the-job performance. These workshops and seminars focus on areas that are most relevant to the institute's needs: curriculum design and development, learner support services, instructional design, development and production of audio and video instructional materials, programme evaluation and computer appreciation. Attendance at such workshops and seminars is compulsory for the academic staff selected to attend them. In addition, special workshops and seminars are organised for Course Tutors and Centre Supervisors. These are aimed at enhancing their knowledge and skills and thus ultimately students' learning. For such staff development activities and other capacity-building programmes, the institute receives support from various funding agencies, including the Commonwealth of Learning.

2.6 Staff appraisal

Staff appraisal procedures are similar to those generally applicable in the public service. All permanent staff are required to fill their Annual Performance Evaluation Report (APER) forms at the end of every year and submit them to their departmental heads, who assess the submissions and pass on their recommendations to the Management for its noting and action if required. The APER form focuses on variables such as productivity and output, personality, communicative abilities, diligence, versatility, physical and emotional stability, moral uprightness and relationship with colleagues.

As for the part-time course tutors at the Study Centres, their performance is assessed every quarter during the subject monitoring exercise using the instruments contained in the Quality Assurance Framework alluded to earlier (see sub-section 2.4). The instruments focus on the quality of delivery of tutorials, particularly the coverage of content and tutors' professional competence, relationship with students and general attitude to work (e.g., attendance, meeting deadlines for the submission of continuous assessment scores, etc.).

Apart from the QA mechanisms described above, the institute also requests external consultants to critically study the quality of its graduates periodically (e.g., Baikie et al. [2005] and Tee-Kay Consultants [2004]), and/or requests its development partners such as the Commonwealth of Learning to provide a consultant to review an aspect of the institute's programme delivery and management systems and make appropriate recommendations as to how these may be improved. For example, Koul (2004) was engaged by the Commonwealth of Learning to review the Learner Support and Delivery Mechanisms of the institute's programmes. The services of such external consultants and resource persons have been of immense benefit to the institute. The far-reaching recommendations they have made and which the institute has implemented have helped to transform and strengthen the QA processes and practices outlined above and have generally enhanced the quality and efficiency of the institute's delivery and management systems.

3. EFFECTIVENESS OF NTI'S QA PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES

To outline the level of success attained in the promotion of quality, we turn to:

- i) The findings in the report of a study entitled “An Evaluation of the Nigeria Certificate in Education Programme” (Baikie et al. 2005) commissioned by the Institute’s Governing Council
- ii) The findings in “An NTI-World Bank Tracer Study on the Pivotal Teacher Training Programme (PTTP)” (Tee-Kay Educational Consultancy Services 2004)

3.1 *The Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE)*

The NCE is the approved minimum teaching qualification required to work in Nigerian schools. NTI’s distance taught NCE was launched in 1990 in response to the need for more qualified teachers in the system and the desire to meet the needs of a large number of Grade II teachers wishing to be upgraded to NCE level. So far the institute has produced 67,000 NCE graduates and 93,000 students are currently enrolled in the programme. In 2003, the Governing Council engaged a team of external consultants to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the NCE programme. The objectives of the study were to:

- Assess the teaching effectiveness of the graduates of the NTI NCE by Distance Learning System (DLS) in the classroom
- Examine the status of the learning environment of the Study Centres with emphasis on the physical and infrastructural facilities
- Examine students’ academic and professional performance across cycles
- Examine the professional profile of the course tutors and supervisors in terms of their qualifications, experience and eligibility to teach and supervise the courses assigned to them
- Examine the existing learner support system
- Determine whether or not and to what extent the state coordinators involve relevant stakeholders, especially the Local Education Authorities and the State Primary Education Boards, in the implementation of reforms and policies related to the NTI NCE DLS programme
- Assess the general status of the NCE DLS programme in the light of the above and make appropriate recommendations necessary to improve the quality and standard of the programme and to move it forward

I will highlight the major findings that give an indication of the relative quality of the NCE by Distance Learning System (DLS). These are as follows:

- The graduates of the NCE DLS were effective in their classroom teaching and their performances were good. They were found to perform well in relation to abilities, skills and knowledge in the following aspects of classroom teaching: lesson preparation, communicating in English and the mother tongue, motivating and sustaining learners’ interests, and record keeping.
- The printed self-instructional modules were rated very highly by the students and the stakeholders (i.e., the Ministry of Education and the State Primary Education Boards that ultimately employ the NTI graduates).

- The results of the comparison of NTI's NCE (by DLS) graduates with those of conventional colleges of education showed no significant difference in their classroom performance.
- Although the course tutors have the requisite qualifications prescribed by the accreditation body and the institute's Governing Council, most of them need training on the methods and techniques of open and distance learning.
- The attempt to use audio materials to enrich students' learning has recorded only limited success and most students rely exclusively on the print-based self-instructional modules.

3.2 The Pivotal Teacher Training Programme (PTTP)

The PTTP is an 18-month post-secondary course which took off in August 2000 in response to the then existing shortfalls in teacher supply. When the Universal Basic Education programme was launched in 1999, it was estimated that at least 30,000 additional teachers would be required between 2000 and 2006 for the effective implementation of the programme, and the institute was directed by the Federal Ministry of Education to design and implement the PTTP to satisfy that need. Twenty-nine thousand (29,000) trainees have so far graduated. Federal government funding for the programme ceased in 2004, so it has been discontinued. The National Council on Education has directed that any state which needs the PTTP must be ready to fund it, and there are indications that some states are willing to do so.

In order to determine the effectiveness of the PTTP, the World Bank and the institute commissioned a nationwide Tracer Study of the PTTP graduates. Some of the terms of reference of the study were:

- To determine the extent to which the graduates of the PTTP have acquired the knowledge and skills for teaching in the primary schools
- To determine the performance and effectiveness of the PTTP graduates vis-à-vis their expected roles and duties in the primary schools
- To determine the aspects of the PTTP that have been most effective in adequately preparing the PTTP graduates for the realities of the Nigerian primary schools

The findings of the study indicated that:

- 98.1 percent of the PTTP graduates sampled for the study were found to be effective and only 1.9 percent were rated as ineffective.
- The content of the PTTP curriculum was good, and the PTTP graduates were well prepared for it.
- The PTTP graduates' classroom performance was good. They exhibited confidence, showed adequate knowledge of the content, were very friendly with the pupils, showed adequate skills in class management and learner evaluation (Tee-Kay Educational Consultancy, 2004).

In general, not only were the NTI graduates found to be effective in the classroom and comparable to their colleagues from formal conventional colleges of education, but the overall internal functioning of the delivery, management and monitoring systems of the institute also have improved and are currently more effective than they were a couple of years ago. Moreover, based on the recommendations of external consultants, particularly Baikie et al. (2005) and Koul (2004), additional changes and improvements have been effected in the past year to address key problems and inadequacies that

can affect QA adversely: i.e., data storage, retrieval and processing; late release of examination results and inadequate staff. Some of the crucial recommendations are outlined as follows:

- Strengthening the capacity of the department of field operations and students' services which supervises zonal and state offices and Study Centres and regularly conducts all the monitoring exercises mentioned earlier
- Making substantial investment in building the capacity of both the full-time and the part-time staff focusing on the design and delivery of courses and the management of ODL processes
- Building more links and partnerships with tertiary institutions, particularly the National Open University of Nigeria, for pooling their resources in areas like personnel and materials development and advocacy for ODL in Nigeria
- Making additional investment in information and communications technologies initially for programme management and subsequently for programme delivery

With regard to the last recommendation listed above, concrete steps have already been taken. VSAT has been installed at the headquarters and a local area network (LAN) and a virtual library too have been established. Funds have been provided and Sidmach Technologies Nigeria Limited were appointed as consultants for the installation of VSAT in the six zonal offices and 37 state offices as well as the establishment of a wide area network (WAN) linking the headquarters, zonal and state offices under the Online Candidates' Examination, Registration and Administration Solution (ONCERAS) project. ONCERAS seeks to upgrade the existing ICT facilities, expand their use in programme management and remove all the existing bottlenecks relating to data entry and processing, data storage and retrieval, particularly in relation to student registration and the processing of examination results. A major component of ONCERAS is the provision of adequate ICT infrastructure and the recruitment, training and re-training of the related staff.

4. QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES IN NTI: SOME VALUABLE LESSONS

The QA procedures and practices described in this study took more than two decades to evolve and are continuously being subjected to critical reviews and transformations in response to new technological developments and changes in the socio-economic and political contexts in which the institute operates. Several useful lessons have been learned in this evolutionary and context-bound process. Here I highlight some of the practices that have helped in engendering a QA system that, despite its imperfections, helps in achieving some of the key objectives of the NTI ODL programmes.

4.1 Development of self-instructional modules of high quality

One of the most important factors that contributed to the modest success of NTI is the high quality of its self-instructional modules that it produces and distributes among its students. These modules are rated highly by not only the students and tutors but also by both the ODL and the conventional tertiary institutions in Nigeria and some West African countries (e.g., Sierra Leone and the Gambia). As research has consistently shown, well-designed and well-written modules engender good levels of learning achievement among students and facilitate effective achievement of educational objectives.

4.2. Monitoring

There are three aspects of the NTI monitoring system that contribute to programme efficiency and effectiveness. These are broadening the scope of monitoring to include all relevant processes and practices relating to programme management and delivery using the Quality Assurance Framework; comprehensive nationwide monitoring and evaluation covering all state and zonal offices and Study Centres once every quarter for formative purposes and the prompt remediation of lapses/weaknesses identified during the monitoring exercise; and the involvement of major stakeholders such as the State Ministries of Education, the State Primary Education Boards, the Federal Inspectorate Service and the Nigeria Union of Teachers in the quarterly nationwide monitoring of programmes so as to promote the credibility of the programmes. The involvement of these stakeholders also promotes programme acceptability and ownership among stakeholders and the wider community.

4.3 Capacity-building

In the past few years, especially since 2001, the institute has invested significant funds in enhancing the knowledge and skills of academic staff in curriculum design and development, programme evaluation, test-item development and audio and video script writing. In this regard, support has been received from the Commonwealth of Learning, the British Council and the BBC. The institute also developed and implements a staff development programme that a) sets departmental quotas for training of staff at M.Ed. and Ph.D. levels and b) provides for organising in-house workshops and seminars that are intended to update the knowledge and skills of teachers in various aspects of ODL. An important outcome of this is the emergence of core professionals in these areas and the engendering of high levels of motivation among the staff which has in turn led to tremendous improvement in productivity and the quality of output. Indeed the institute's experience in the past few years clearly indicates that providing opportunities to staff for continuing professional development strongly motivates them and raises their morale far more than extrinsic motivators such as allowances, etc., have achieved so far.

4.4 Use of external examiners and moderators

Part of the strategy adopted by the institute for QA and for promoting the credibility of its programmes among the general public and the stakeholders is the use of external examiners and moderators drawn from the collaborating universities and other tertiary institutions. This has helped in convincing the skeptics that the NTI programmes are subjected to the same rigorous processes of quality assurance as those of formal conventional tertiary institutions and therefore the quality of its products is comparable with that of these institutions. This is important in view of the fact that there is some skepticism among some stakeholders about the quality of the products of ODL institutions, including their graduates.

4.5 Use of a decentralised programme management and delivery system

The institute operates a decentralised programme management system made up of four tiers for the process of decision making and the implementation of such decisions, namely the headquarters which deals with policy, admission of candidates, materials design and production, planning and administration of examinations, funding and strategic planning;

the six zonal offices which coordinate all the activities of the 37 state offices; the state offices which coordinate the activities of the local Study Centres; and the Study Centres where registration and the conduct of tutorials/practicals and examinations take place.

The power to take some important decisions relating to programme delivery and management has been devolved to the zonal and state offices and Study Centres. This four-level structure has been of immense use in enforcing norms and standards in the system as a whole and has helped in promoting a sense of belonging and organisational loyalty in the zones, states and study centres.

5. TOWARDS A CULTURE OF QUALITY

This study has discussed the quality assurance procedures used at NTI and has tried to show how these procedures and the related processes have helped in attaining the objectives of the institute. The NTI experience helps us in answering two basic questions: i) how can institution-wide commitment to quality assurance be engendered? and ii) how can the staff of ODL institutions, or for that matter the staff of higher education institutions, be made to imbibe a culture of quality so that they have a high level of sensitivity to quality assurance in their professional work?

A key factor in developing the appropriate set of attitudes, ideas and beliefs that will promote and sustain quality is *institutional leadership*. Heads of higher education institutions must demonstrate, in words as well as action, their firm commitment to quality assurance and must motivate their staff to have a high level of awareness of how their activities and attitudes impact negatively or positively on the quality of ODL programme management and delivery systems. For example, prior to 2000 (i.e., before the present NTI Management was in place), the emphasis was on boosting enrolment in the NCE (under the DLS programme) with little attention given to the institute's capacity to monitor it adequately and ensure that standards are not compromised. With the advent of the present leadership, which is more concerned with the quality of output rather than mere quantitative expansion, drastic action (including a reduction in the number of Study Centres from 492 to 380) has been taken to shift the focus to quality concerns such as the resuscitation and strengthening of the monitoring department, the adoption and utilisation of the new information and communications technology in programme management and the provision of adequate funds for monitoring, programme evaluation and capacity-building. These steps have engendered a paradigm shift from mere quantitative expansion to quality management and have made a big impact on the quality of NTI's programmes.

Related to the importance of institutional leadership is *the availability of adequate funding*. It is often the case, at least in Nigeria, that bureaucrats, who allocate funds to higher education institutions, tend to be more impressed by quantitative expansion (i.e., meeting enrollment targets) than the less obvious procedures and processes that aim at promoting quality of outcomes. It is this phenomenon, manifested in the reluctance of politicians and bureaucrats to recognise the importance of allocating sufficient funds to quality assurance, that partly explains the near total collapse of the federal and state inspectorate services. Quality assurance is not a cheap enterprise and requires adequate funding from the government if the desired results are to be achieved. No matter how committed the leadership and the staff of an institution may be, they will achieve little if funding is inadequate.

Achieving an institution-wide commitment to quality assurance requires not only good leadership and adequate funding, but also *a model of programme management* that appropriately *decentralises* decision-making processes so that all the *levels* of staff feel

that they are part of the processes to the extent that prompt action is taken to address any problem that may arise at any point in the system. This is necessary particularly if the clientele is spread across the country and the centralised management model is prone to delayed reaction to problems in the system. At NTI, now zonal and state offices have been suitably empowered to take certain decisions that need not be referred to the headquarters, and this is an essential component of the institute's quality assurance system.

Finally there is the need to *harness the potentials of the new information and communications technology (ICT)* to sustain and improve the quality of the programmes of ODL institutions. The specific ways in which ICT may be used, however, depends on the ground realities of each institution in each particular country. The most obvious use of ICT is its use for programme delivery. At NTI, however, the use of ICT has so far been limited to programme management, particularly the computerisation of staff and student data and the payroll system; use of e-mail to enhance communication among headquarters, zonal and state offices; and the establishment of a virtual library which facilitates access to innovative ideas and practices relating to ODL.

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