

# African Quality Rating Mechanisms: A Key to Achieving the Nigerian Roadmap for the Tertiary Institutions

Prof. S. E. Omebe<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Isaac N. Nwankwo<sup>2</sup>, Dr. (Mrs) Chinyere A. Omebe<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Education Foundation, Ebonyi State University, bakaliki – Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Department of Educational Management and Policy, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anmambra State Nigeria

<sup>3</sup>Department of Science Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki- Nigeria

**Abstract:** *This paper discusses how the African Quality Rating Mechanisms could be used to achieve the Nigerian roadmap for tertiary institutions. Roadmap for the Nigerian Education Sector is the latest reform in the Nigerian education system. This reform covers four major areas which include (a) access and equity; (b) standard and quality assurance, (c) technical and vocational education and training; and (d) funding and resource utilization. The Federal Republic of Nigeria embarked on this reform with a view to revitalizing the nation's education system which is at the verge of collapse. The focus of this paper is on the tertiary institution. The four areas of the reform as they affect tertiary institutions in the country were covered. It examined the current state of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The paper also examined key factors responsible for the failures of past reforms to reposition the nation's education system at a comparative advantage. In the light of the above, the paper recommends the African Quality Rating Mechanism as a tool for achieving the Nigerian roadmap for tertiary institutions. The African Quality Rating Mechanism takes institutional diversity into account and builds in opportunity for institutional self-evaluation and reflection without institutional comparison.*

**Keywords:** African Rating Mechanisms, Roadmap, Tertiary Institutions, Educational Reform

## 1. Introduction

The Federal Ministry of Education is the organ of Government with the overall responsibility for laying down national and guidelines for uniform standards at all levels of education in Nigeria as enshrined in various statutory instruments, including the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria and national policy on education amongst others.

The role of the Ministry according to centers around the following: <sup>[1]</sup>

- Formulating a national policy on education
- Collecting and collating data for purposes of educational planning and financing
- Maintaining uniform standards of education throughout the country.
- Controlling the quality of education in the country through the supervisory role of the inspectorate services department within the ministry.
- Harmonizing educational policies and procedures of all the states of the federation through the instrumentality of the national council on education.
- Effecting co-operation in educational matters on an international scale.
- Developing curricula and syllabuses at the national level in conjunction with other bodies.

The education sector in Nigeria is on the concurrent legislative list, which makes it a shared responsibility of the federal, states and local governments. As a result, there exists a plethora of stakeholders including regulators, policy

formulators, examination bodies and the like who work together to give direction to the sector.

The education sector in Nigeria is further divided into three sub-sectors. The institutions under these sub-sectors are presented in the table 1.

**Table 1:** Structure of Education in Nigeria

ECCDE/Basic Sub-Sector	Post-Basic	US Letter Paper
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Childhood Care and Development</li> <li>• Primary Schools</li> <li>• Junior Secondary Schools</li> <li>• Nomadic and Adult Literacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior Secondary Schools</li> <li>• Technical Colleges</li> <li>• Vocational Enterprise institutions (VELs)</li> <li>• Vocational schools</li> <li>• Open Apprenticeship Centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universities</li> <li>• Polytechnic/ Monotechnics</li> <li>• Colleges of Education</li> <li>• Innovative Enterprise Institutions (IELS)</li> </ul>

### 1.1 General Challenges to Education in Nigeria

Specifically, the education sector has been inundated with a myriad of challenges. <sup>[1], [2]</sup> Some of the general issues along various sub-sectors of education are documented in table below:

Access and Equity	Standards & Quality Assurance	Technical & Vocational Educations Training	Funds & Resources Utilization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out-of-school children</li> <li>• Lack of essential infrastructure</li> <li>• Gender disparity</li> <li>• Poverty</li> <li>• Almajiri challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructural needs</li> <li>• Teacher development, motivation &amp; retention</li> <li>• Curriculum relevance &amp; review</li> <li>• ICT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Death of qualified teaching staff</li> <li>▪ Low societal estimation of vocational education</li> <li>▪ Inadequate number of technical and vocational colleges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budgetary allocation</li> <li>• Inadequate funding of schools</li> <li>• Poor management and utilization of funds</li> </ul>
<b>Institutional and Legislative Issues</b>			
* Inadequate capacity for policy formulation; * Ineffective, * Obsolete and outdated policies and legal frameworks; * Low private sector involvement			

### 1.2 Meaning of Education Reform

Reform in education is a mechanism by which educational system innovates, revitalizes and grows. Reform movements are not widely understood by people especially non expert as mechanism by which educational reformers innovate and revitalize the system. [3] observed that:

Reforms are necessary events in the process of education... Hence reforms in the school curriculum may be seen as measures toward the attainment of desirable ends of schooling within the constraints of assumed needs of the society, and the rationalized role of the schools.

In the same view, [4] showed clearly the extent to which education in Nigeria required (and still requires) reforms when he noted that in the last decades, there has been a constant babble of voices as educators, parents, government functionaries, the laymen, scholars and the press (with conflicting ideas) speak of the ills of our educational system and particularly the inadequacy of the school curriculum to develop individual Nigerians and the nation at the rates and tempo needed to put Nigeria in the world map. [5] Identified problems constraining education reforms in Nigeria as:

1. Improper planning of reforms such that in many cases, the programme commenced before the implementation details are worked out;
2. Delay in implementation such that, the implementation is commenced at an economic situation that is different from those projected in the plan;
3. Lack of necessary materials such as infrastructure, machinery and texts necessary for programme implementation;
4. Disregard for systematic planning/estimation of project cost; and

5. Frequent changes in government which often translate into change in political/education ideas.

The following ingredients for successful reform "Careful study before the launch, wide consultation to ensure the ownership by stakeholders, and sober reflection to confirm that there could be possible and workable alternative approaches. [6]

### 1.3 Why Reform in Tertiary Education in Nigeria

There are many reasons for reforms in the Nigerian tertiary institutions. According to [1], [7] they are as follows:

- Inadequate regulation of the Nigeria University System (NUS). Inclusion of education on the concurrent legislative list enables state governments to establish universities without recourse to minimum academic standards or guidance from the Commission.
- Inadequate academic staff in number and quality. The total number of academic staff in the NUS as at 2006 is 27, 394 but about 50,000 academic staff is required for effective course delivery across the disciplines. For the Polytechnic system, the required number of academic staff is 22, 702 while the actual is 12, 938. For the Colleges of Education, the actual is 11, 256 while the number of required is 26114.
- Lack of relevance of academic programmes. Loss of programme focus by some specialized universities to match graduate output to national manpower requirements.
- High incidence of cultism, examination malpractice and other social and academic vices
- Unstable academic calendar, particularly in unionized federal and state tertiary institutions (over 3 and half years have lost through incessant strikes within the past decade)
- Weak leadership
- Generally low quality graduates. The quality of graduates dropped from 72% in 1979 to 68% by 1999. Only 10% of the 130,000 students that graduate from Nigerian universities annually are able to secure paid employment.

### 1.4 Higher Education Reforms in Nigeria

In Nigerian higher education setting, several reforms have taken place. These include distance learning, information and communications technology (ICT), University autonomy, virtual library, the consolidation of the tertiary and university education sub sector, emphasis on entrepreneurship training, etc. [8] noted that there is current emphasis on strategic reforms in the universities" overall managerial and academic performance. The major reforms can be summarized as follows:

1. Increase of funding for higher education, separation of costs of academic activities from the regular overhead cost (for goods and services); scaling-up of the staff welfare system; and private-public sector partnerships in education funding. [9]
2. Asserting a higher education structure of governance and emphasis on institutional accountability, and growing requirement to pursue, ensure and improve quality in all strategic higher education activities

(didactic, research, curricula innovation, staff and budgeting).<sup>[10]</sup>

3. Emphasis in the need to connect more systematically higher education's outflow supply to the economy and labour market as well as to new forms of demand for higher education (permanent and recurring education, managerial formation). In addition, there is a trend from the students' side to be more interested in degree market value than to the strictly cultural one, following the entrepreneurship ideologies in higher education.
4. Emphasis on generic, creativity and productivity skills as well as the Post University Matriculation Examinations (Post UME) in the Universities.<sup>[11]</sup>
5. The Credit system which plays a pivotal role not only as a measure of students' commitment to each subject and study course, but also as an academic passport to certification and jobs.<sup>[12]</sup>
6. Accreditation systems: Evaluation groups made up of external academic staff and administrators routinely assess higher education institutions. The groups visit individual institutions to assess university organization and activities performance (research, teaching, administration) and propose improvements of academic performance.<sup>[13]</sup>
7. The establishment of minimum achievement standards (MAS) for each of the policy dimensions for the higher institutions<sup>[14]</sup>, and
8. The University autonomy, which was intended to address two intertwined problems. First, to reduce the bureaucracy with which public universities must contend. Second, to inject market mechanisms into the public university system.<sup>[15]</sup>

These reforms have the central aim of improving quality learning for students.

### 1.5 Nigerian Roadmap for the Tertiary Institutions

Tertiary education institutions are categorized into Universities, Polytechnics/ Monotechnics, Colleges of Education and Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IELS). These institutions are under the supervision of the National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE).

### 1.6 Focus of the Nigerian Education Roadmap

According to<sup>[16]</sup> the review of the state of the educational sector was focused along four (4) priority areas. Specific focus areas are presented in the schematic below:

<i>Access &amp; Equity</i>	<i>Standards &amp; Quality Assurance</i>	<i>Technical and Vocational Education and Training</i>	<i>Funding, Resources Mobilization and Utilization</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical Access</li> <li>• Quality Access</li> <li>• Economic Access</li> <li>• Equity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure</li> <li>• Teacher Quality</li> <li>• Motivation and Retention</li> <li>• Curriculum Relevance and Review</li> <li>• Learner Support Services</li> <li>• ICT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preference for University</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Academic Staff Availability</li> <li>• Infrastructure &amp; Teaching Facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budgetary Allocation</li> <li>• Access to Budgeted Funds</li> <li>• Funds Management and Budget</li> <li>• Implementation</li> </ul>

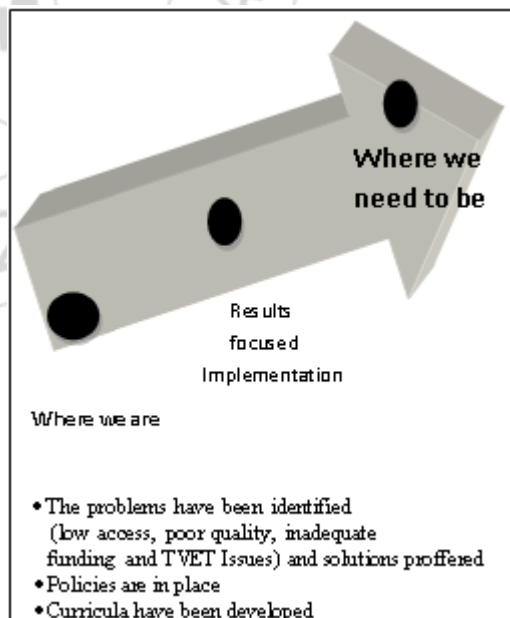
The sector has historically suffered from years of neglect and mismanagement and inadequacy of resources commensurate with national needs, population growth and demand. As a result, education as a strategic priority of the government has not been well positioned as a transformational tool and a formidable instrument for socioeconomic empowerment (Rufa'1, 2010). The focus of this paper is on tertiary education.

### 1.7 Implementation Plan for the Nigerian Education Roadmap

In order to address the identified problems in the sector, a strategy that will ensure results-focused implementation at the school level will be adopted. This strategy will be a phased implementation of the reform that transforms schools from their current status to high performing schools.

The first phase of implementation will occur at a stratified sample of schools including the unity schools and other selected demonstration schools. The programme will deliver comprehensive intervention rolled out through a well conceived replication strategy over the medium term to be reflected in the education sector plans and MTSS of all SmoEs and the FME.

Implementation of the roadmap will involve stakeholders, from other tiers of government, the organized private sector as well as international funding partners in ensuring that this attempt in comparison to previous attempts achieves the intended purpose of revamping the educational sector, and ultimately transforms all Nigerian schools into high performing schools that produce high achieving, functional and self-reliant students.



High performing Schools and high achieving, functional and self-reliant students

### Access and Equity

**Challenges:** The challenges of access in tertiary education remain formidable. The current rate of admission of 6% into tertiary level education as against the generally accepted



minimum of 165 for meaningful economic development brings out the challenges clearly. This is as a result of the low carrying capacity of tertiary institutions which stands at 150,000 for the Nigerian University System (NUS) while annual demand is about 1 million. For the Polytechnics System, the gross carrying capacity is 158, 370 while the actual is 340, 535 (more than 100% over-enrolled); and for the Colleges of Education 118, 129 while the actual is 354, 387. The situation is further compounded by preference for university education. On the other hand, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education are having difficulty attracting qualified candidates. For instance, in 2008/2009 academic session a total of 957, 172 applied for placement in universities as against 232, 598 and 58, 819 for Polytechnics and Colleges of Education respectively through JAMB. In terms of equity, there are disparities in the provision of tertiary education. Some segments of the Nigerian population especially those with special needs and other disadvantaged groups seem to be under-served. There are also disparities in gender participation, quality of education across the states and the location of government-owned tertiary institutions in the country. Other challenges include dearth of teachers, infrastructure and facilities for people with special needs and VTET.

## 2. Turn Around Strategies and Deliverables

The turnaround strategies and deliverable which have been articulated to address the foregoing challenges are highlighted below:

<i>Turn-Around Strategies</i>	<i>Deliverables</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unify the matriculation examinations for tertiary institutions (Universities, Polytechnics, IEIS and COEs).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unified tertiary matriculation examination (UTME) for students into all tertiary institutions</li> </ul>	2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase awareness and support for alternative routes to higher technical education through innovation enterprise institutions (IEIS) by aggressive branding and marketing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20% increase in access achieved</li> </ul>	2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement Government Policy on parity, in career progression, between HND and Degree holders;</li> <li>Implement the Presidential directive on the award of Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech) in core competent fields by polytechnics</li> <li>Implement the award of Bachelor of education (B.Ed) in core competent fields by Colleges of Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parity between HND and Degree holders</li> </ul>	2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore possibility of Colleges of Education awarding degrees on their own merit (based on established criteria) instead of in affiliation with other universities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report on the implications of accrediting COEs as degree awarding institutions</li> </ul>	2010

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand and/or improve facilities including physical and instructional facilities in existing tertiary institutions including NOUN, NTI and NMC to make them more relevant and globally competitive.</li> <li>Expand the activities and programme of NOUN and NTI without compromising quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved quality of institutions</li> </ul>	2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase carrying capacities in existing tertiary institutions</li> <li>Increase carrying capacity by 25% in programmes that have consistently earned full accreditation status without compromising standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased capacity of tertiary institutions</li> </ul>	2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote private sector and state government participation in the provision of tertiary education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased private and state tertiary institutions</li> </ul>	2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop guidelines for providers of off-shore degree and lifting the ban on non-recognition of off-shore degrees in Nigeria.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guidelines for providers of off-shore degrees</li> </ul>	2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen and expand open and distance learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved open and distance learning</li> </ul>	2010
<b>Turn-Around Strategies</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
(ODL) Systems in selected tertiary institution	Programs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure continuous gender-focused education programmes by considering policies such as quota-based admission, fees reduction, scholarships and other incentives based on gender</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>45% gender equity in science and technology-based programmes attained</li> </ul>	2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set admission quota for women and other persons with special needs to at least 45% across board noting the current admission status is between 33-39% in favour of females</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10% increase in access to students with special needs achieved</li> </ul>	2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide incentives to attract secondary school leavers to train as TVET, and special education teachers</li> <li>Mainstream special needs courses into teacher education curriculum.</li> </ul>		

### 2.1 Standards and Quality Assurance

**Challenges:** The quality of the graduates of tertiary institutions has continued to be an issue of concern among various stakeholders. This concern has been related to instability of the academic calendar, infrastructural decay and obsolescence of equipment in the face of population and academic staff shortages, among others. Other challenges include:

- Inadequate internal and external quality control mechanisms
- Over-stretching of existing facilities
- Out-dated legal framework
- Illegal institutions/ satellite campuses/external campuses
- Curriculum inadequacy

- Inadequate capacity in the institutions to undertake internal/peer quality assessment
- Weak support structure for students industrial work experience scheme (SIWES)
- Brain drain or human capital flight
- Divided interests by academic (moonlighting)
- Disruption in academic calendar
- Unethical behaviour in teaching and learning
- Disruptions in learning activities, insecurity of life and property due to cultism.
- Unethical practices of lectures (e.g. selling handouts, grades, „sorting“ etc).

## 2.2 Turn Around Strategies and Deliverables

The turnaround strategies and deliverables which have been articulated to address the foregoing challenges are highlighted below:

<i>Turn-Around Strategies</i>	<i>Deliverables</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
<b>Please see the special ETF intervention Project on page 70</b>		
• Provide and monitor direct teaching and laboratory cost grant (DTLC)	• 80% full accreditation status of programmes in tertiary institutions attained	2011
• Strengthen and provide support for innovation enterprise institutions (IELS)	•	
• Establish a National Vocational Qualification Framework (INVQF)	•	
• Establish National Commission for Vocational Education (NCVE)	•	
• Convert NBYE to National Commission for Polytechnics	•	
• Review and strengthen legal framework for tertiary institutions and regulatory agencies	•	
• Strengthen linkages with Experts and Academics in the Diaspora (LEAD)	•	
• Resuscitate Nigeria Expatriate Supplementation Scheme (NESS)	•	
• Strengthen the capacity of NUC and FME to monitor illegal and substandard and other vices.	• Increased monitoring capacity in NUC calendar	2010
• Develop strategies to ensure stability of calendar	• Stable academic calendar	2010
• Implement the FEC guidelines on eradication of cultism, exam malpractice and other vices	• Reduced cultism, exam malpractice, etc.	2010
• Enforce policy on ban of the sale of handouts by lecturers.	• Restored integrity of handouts/course materials	2010
• Strength the capacity of the Colleges of Education and institutions to produce more qualified teachers.	• Increased teacher education programs	2011

## 2.3 Technical and Vocational Educational and Training (TVET)

TVET at tertiary level is offered in the Polytechnics, Monotechnics, Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIS) and Colleges of Education (Technical). These are under the supervision of the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) respectively.

**Challenges:** Government policy in the past had not accorded polytechnic education its rightful place within the tertiary education sub-sector of the country. This can be seen in the placement of ceiling on career progression of polytechnic staff and graduates, relative low level of funding, despite the expensive nature of TVET, and poor conditions of services for staff.

Other challenges include:

- Limited access
- Preference for university education, while over 1.2 million applied through JAMB to the universities, just over 300,000 applied for the polytechnics
- Poor infrastructure and teaching facilities
- Inadequate academic staff in number and quality
- Lack of relevance of academic programmes to the need of industry; and
- General Low quality of graduates.

## 2.4 Turn around Strategies and Deliverables:

The turnaround strategies and deliverables which have been articulated to address the foregoing challenges are highlighted below:

<i>Turn-Around Strategies</i>	<i>Deliverables</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
• Implement the Presidential directive on the award of Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech.) in core competent fields by Polytechnics	• B. Tech. Curricula (in Electrical, Mechanical and Civil Eng. Technology, etc) for the Polytechnics developed	Dec 2009
• Equip adequately the Polytechnics and Universities of Technology	• B. Tech offered by Polytechnics in core competent fields.	2010
• Review and strengthen legal framework for Federal Polytechnics	• National Occupational Standards (NOS) in key areas produced	2010
• Increase carrying capacity by 25% in programmes that have consistently earned full accreditation status without compromising standards.		
• Upgrade and provide additional infrastructure, buildings and equipment in Polytechnics/ Monotechnics		
• Increase awareness and support for alternative route to higher technical education through IEIS by aggressive branding and marketing strategies.	• IELS launched with appropriate branding and nationwide publicity	April 2009
• Strengthen and provide support for IEIS by releasing the earlier	• 12 new IEIS programmes developed	April 2009

promised seed grants and expanding the capacity of the NBTE to effectively coordinate their activities.		
	•30 new IEI programmes	2010
	•120 new IEI programmes	2010
	•200 IEI programmes	2011
	•15, 000 increased enrolment in IEIS	2010
	•50, 000 increased enrolment in IEIs	2011
• Establish a National Commission for Vocational Education (NCVE)	•The National Council Qualification Framework (NVQF) completed	Dec. 2009
• Improve access to other non university institutions through unified tertiary matriculation examinations.	•Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examinations for Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and IEIs implemented	2010
• Increase the number of academic staff with Ph.D by provision of targeted scholarships and incentives	•Retention of academic staff enhanced by improved conditions of service •Number of academic staff increased annually by 10%.	2010
• Enhance the condition of service of the Polytechnics to attract and retain quality academic staff.	•Ph. D increased by 10% annually.	
• Improve the use and inclusion of ICT in TVET curricula and in implementation	•Improved ICT curricula	2010

<i>Turn-Around Strategies</i>	<i>Deliverables</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage proprietors of tertiary institutions to provide adequate and sustainable funding.</li> <li>• Ensure tertiary institutions develop self-reliance through internal sourcing of funds.</li> <li>• Improve other sources of funding through cost-sharing (e.g. re-introduction of Tuition fees), private sector involvements, Alumni, endowments, International Development Partners, Consultancy services, etc</li> <li>• Accelerate the implementation of the policy to refocus ETF to exclusively intervene in tertiary education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50% annual increase on present funding level of the next three years attained.</li> </ul>	2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicate 10% of recurrent allocation to research and ensure its effective utilization.</li> <li>• Reduce the proportion of recurrent costs of tertiary institutions by adopting strategies such as outsourcing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased funding for research</li> </ul>	2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide adequate funding to regulatory agencies in the annual national budget for activities involved in the orderly development of tertiary institutions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased funding</li> </ul>	2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restructure and strengthen the existing Scholarship and Student Loan Board.</li> <li>• Explore the introduction of tuition in tertiary institutions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restructured Scholarship Board</li> <li>• A position paper on the issue of tuition in schools</li> </ul>	2011

### 2.5 Funding, Resources Mobilization and Utilization

Challenges: The tertiary institutions draw a significant part of their funds from the proprietors (Federal Government, State Governments and Private proprietors) while the remaining part is internally generated from levies/charges/fees (for Private Institutions), international development partners, support from alumni associations, and linkages with industries in Nigeria and abroad. The bulk (80%) of what was appropriated for tertiary education especially from 2005 to 2007 was for personal cost and the remaining 20% took care of maintenance, development and other areas of overhead.

Over the years, funding of tertiary education has been on the increase. However, the funds have not been adequate for the institutions because the allocation from the proprietors fall short of what is actually required.

### 2.6 Turn Around Strategies and Deliverables:

The turnaround strategies and deliverables which have been articulated to address the foregoing challenges are highlighted below:

It is important to note that several educational reforms in Nigeria have failed to yield the desired result due to some of the problems identified in this work. On this note therefore, the writer advocates the use of a more vibrant mechanism in other to move the Nigerian tertiary education system forward. The African quality rating mechanisms is very important in this regard.

### 3. African Quality Rating Mechanisms (AQRM)

Revitalization of Higher Education (HE) is one of the nine priority areas of focus of the Second Decade of Education for Africa Plan of Action (2006-2015) which thematic priorities include production of knowledge and quality assurance. <sup>[17]</sup> Quality assurance of higher education institution is being promoted as part of an initiative aimed at revitalizing higher education and research in Africa.

To contribute to quality assurance, the African Union Commission (AUC) is spearheading the development of an African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) which aims to provide an objective measure of the quality of African higher education institutions through institutional self-assessment. The AQRM includes criteria against which institutions can assess their own quality levels. It is designed to assist



institutions to benchmark progress in quality development in every area of education provision and research.

Basically put, AQRM is an instrument of institutional self-assessment, based on criteria peculiar to Africa and African institution, with the purpose of promoting the improvement of the quality of institutions in Africa. This instrument is not a ranking instrument as it does not promote the listing of institutions in a league table. However, it is supposed to help institutions to rate themselves on some quality criteria and as well recognize the excellence residing within themselves. The instrument focus what quality means in the context of African higher education, and how quality might be measured or assessed.

The African Higher Education Quality Rating Mechanism has been developed as a tool that can be used for enhancing and ensuring quality in our institutions and education systems. It will help to enhance the quality of African higher education and support the work of national, regional and continental quality assurance bodies. It will also be instrumental in the process of harmonization of higher education programmes in Africa.

### 3.1 The Process to the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM)

The research approach that has led to development of the African Quality Rating Mechanisms for higher education programmes (AQRM) involved the following:

- i) Desk- top review of the worldwide web and a wide range of academic databases to (a) identifying key players in the field; (b) determine the current trends and initiatives internationally and in Africa (c) issues on ranking and rating.
- ii) Questionnaires were disseminated to a number of key stakeholders to understand perceptions and status of ranking and rating and to elicit input from key stakeholders on the value or other-wise of an African Quality Rating Mechanism for higher education.
- iii) Interviews were held with individuals to provide further input, into the focus.
- iv) Meeting of experts for discussion and critical review
- v) Discussion and brain-storming by the steering committee of the Bureau of Education Ministers.
- vi) Pilot – Run with 25 institutions.
- vii) Yearly exercise.

### 3.2 The Rating Mechanism

Rating is assessing performance based on a set of grades. Unlike, ranking, where all candidates for assessment are assumed to be the same, ratings are only effected on candidates belonging to the same category.

In applying rating to higher education, institutions are categorized (universities, polytechnics, monotechnics, broad-based, specialized, etc). The institutions are then rated within their own categories.

While ranking is an absolute measure that lists the first to last in any given field, rating sets out to categorize a broad range of qualities. Rating gives an indication of the overall

strengths of an institution and identified institutions that if similar standing in each of the categories rated.

The major feature of the African Quality Mechanisms are that:

- It is based on the blend of “fitness of purposes, and „excellence” approaches to quality.
- Takes institutional diversity into account.
- Employs a series of quality criteria but takes institutional context into account
- Seeks to build in opportunity for institutional self-evaluation and reflection
- No comparison of institutions.
- Rate quality as “Unsatisfactory”; “Satisfactory”, or “Excellent”, for the individual and over-all criteria.
- Helps institutions to know what steps to take for improvement.
- Helps institutions to recognize their areas of strength and weaknesses.

In the African Quality Rating Mechanisms, a series of quality criteria are proposed and assessed within the context of specific institutional missions.

When submitting institutional and programme information, each institution will be required to identify their specific focus area. This institutional focus or mission is used to weight the criteria for that specific institution. For example, where an institution is positioned first and foremost as a teaching and learning institution, criteria in this category will be weighted more highly than criteria in the research category. This approach allows for an integration of fitness for purpose and excellence approaches.

Level of Analysis

While quality can be assessed at various units of analysis (programme, department, faculty, and institution), the African Quality Rating Mechanisms will be focused on:

- (a) An institutional and
- (b) A programme levels of analysis

The institutional level criteria cover the following categories:

- Governance and Management
- Infrastructure
- Finance
- Teaching and Learning
- Research, Publications and innovation
- Community/ Societal Engagements.

The program-level criteria cover the following categories:

- Program planning an management
- Curriculum Development
- Teaching and Learning
- Assessment
- Program results

### 3.3 Rating Institutional Quality

For each specific criterion there are three possible scores:

- Unsatisfactory performance = 1;
- Satisfactory performance = 2; and
- Excellent performance = 3.

The quality rating mechanism takes the form of a rubric, and hence, for each level of performance for each criterion a description is provided detailing what performance at that level means. Based on the information and evidence submitted by an institution, a score (1,2 or 3) will be assigned for each criterion. These scores are automatically summed to provide a subtotal for each category of criteria, such as governance and management, infrastructure, finances and so on.

### 3.4 Rating Programme Quality

The programme quality rating worksheet functions in the same manner as the institutional quality rating worksheet. For each specific criterion, there are three possible scores:

- Unsatisfactory performance = 1;
- Satisfactory performance = 2; and
- Excellent performance = 3.

As for the institutional rating, a detailed format with descriptions of performance at each level is provided.

The focus of the programme level criteria is on determinants of quality applicable across programmes, rather than focused on specific types of programmes. For this reason, it is not necessary to weight criteria to take account of diversity across programmes. Once scores have been assigned for each criterion, subtotal per category of criteria is provided and a programme level total score computed.

### 3.5 Interpreting Institutional and Programme Scores

Using the quality rating mechanism as described above, one arrives at a total score for institutional quality and a total score for programme quality. The next step is to determine what this score means, firstly, in terms of rating the quality of institutions and programmes, secondly, in terms of identifying potential AU Centers of Excellence.

The following process will be followed:

The minimum (where all criteria are rated as 1), average (where all criteria are rated as 3) scores were calculated for programmes and institutions. These scores are shown in the tables below.

**Table 2:** Minimum, average, and maximum scores for Institutional Quality Rating

<i>Institutional Quality Rating</i>	<i>Scores</i>
Minimum	16
Average	32
Maximum	48

**Table 3:** Minimum, Average, and Maximum Scores for Programme Quality Rating.

<i>Institutional Quality Rating</i>	<i>Scores</i>
Minimum	32

<i>Programme Quality Rating</i>	<i>Scores</i>
Average	64
Maximum	96

Using the midpoint between minimum and average and between average and maximum the following categories for

rating institutional and programme level quality are proposed.

**Table 4:** Institutional Level Quality Ratings

<i>Institutional Quality Rating</i>	<i>Scores</i>
Unsatisfactory performance	24 and below
Satisfactory performance	25 -40
Excellent performance	41 and above

**Table 5:** Programme Level Quality Ratings

<i>Programme Level</i>	<i>Scores</i>
Unsatisfactory performance	48 and below
Satisfactory performance	49 -80
Excellent performance	81 and above

Institution and/or programmes that maintain an “Excellent Performance” rating for at least four years are proposed for consideration as AU Centres of Excellence. As noted above, the rating mechanisms will also support the AUC in making decisions about participation in the Mwalimu Nyerere Scholarship Scheme.

## 4. Conclusion

The quality rating mechanism should be based on a balance between quality defined as “fitness for purpose” and quality defined as „excellence“. The focus on fitness for purpose specifically takes account of the diversity of institutions with different visions, missions and focuses. For example, it is likely that some institutions will focus largely on teaching and learning; others on research; others might seek to provide services particularly relevant to their local community; while still others might provide a combination of each. For this reason, it is necessary to factor in a weighting mechanism to take account of institutional diversity. This will be very vital in achieving the Nigeria Education Roadmap having noted that there are so many failed educational reform agenda in the country. Each tertiary institution in the country can apply AQRM to see how far it has gone in the achievement of the focused areas of the Roadmap.

## 5. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to guide administrators in applying the AQRM for achieving a Nigerian roadmap for tertiary institutions:

1. The AQRM should be used to identify the extent to which the turnaround strategies are able to deliver within the timeline.
2. Each institution should be assessed using the AQRM to ascertain the extent it has gone in promoting access and equity in terms of enrolment and making provisions for those with special needs.
3. The AQRM should be used in finding out the extent to which each institution is able to use the turnaround strategies and deliverables to enhance standards and quality in its products given the peculiarities of the institution.
4. On TVET, the AQRM should focus on the extent to which each technical and vocational education or training school is able to improve its infrastructures and



teaching facilities and as well, design programmes that will attract more students.

5. On funding, resource mobilization and utilization, the AQRM should be used to assess the institutional ability to attract grants or generate funds through alternative sources and manage same efficiently for the school improvement.

## References

- [1] Federal Republic of Nigeria (2009). Roadmap for the Nigerian education sector. Abuja: Federal Ministry of Education.
- [2] Rufa'í R.A. (2010). The new national education roadmap: Towards reinventing the higher education sector. A keynote address presented at the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Association of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities (AVCNU), Prince Olagusoye Oyinlola Auditorium, Osun State University, Monday, 19<sup>th</sup> to Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> April.
- [3] Olukayode, A. (1984). Secondary school curriculum reforms in Nigerian system of education. In S. Adesina and S. Ogunsaju (Ed.) *Secondary Education in Nigeria*. Ibadan: University of Ife Press Ltd.
- [4] Adaralegbe, A. (1969). A philosophy for Nigeria education: *Proceeding of the Nigeria national curriculum conference*. Ibadan: Heinemann.
- [5] Igwe, L.E. and Nwankwo, I.N. (2008) (in press). Towards quality reforms in childhood education for rural development in Nigeria. Article submitted for publication in the *Nigeria Journal of Adult Education*. Department of Adult Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.
- [6] Ogum, E.E.O. (2007). *Reforms in the education industry: Challenges and the way forward*. A keynote address delivered at the 2007 annual conference of the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Thursday, October 11.
- [7] Federal Republic of Nigeria (2009). Roadmap for the Nigerian education sector. Abuja: Federal Ministry of Education.
- [8] Okebukola, P. (2006). Principles and policies guiding reforms in Nigerian Universities. IHEA/RESA, *council for development pp 25-36*.
- [9] Akpa, G.O. (2007). The question of partnership in education challenges. In E.D. Ozorji, B.G. Dala, Y. Mugu and A.Y. Mustapha (Ed) *Nigeria education system, which was forward*. Jos: Deka Publications.
- [10] Akpan, E.U. (2007). Educational reform and the improvement strategies. E.D. Ozorji., B.G. Dala, Y. Mugu and A.Y. Mustapha. *Education system which way forward*. Jos. Deka Publications.
- [11] Kolo, I. (2007). Reforms in the Nigerian education system, which way forward. In E.D. Ozorji, B.G. Dala, Y. Mugu and A.Y. Mustapha (Ed) *Nigeria education system, which was forward*. Jos: Deka Publications. Pp 13-51.
- [12] Obanya, P. (2002). *Revitalizing education in Africa*. Ibadan: Strilling Horderr Publishers Ltd.
- [13] Mbagwu, L. I. (2007). *Academic staff perception of management effectiveness of university education in Nigeria*. An M. Ed thesis submitted to the Department

of Foundation, Arts and Social Science Education, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja.

- [14] Alao, K. (2005). Emerging perspectives on educational advancement in postmodernism. *Commissioned paper present at the conference of International Association for Education*. Nicon-Hilton Hotel, Abuja, Nigeria, xxxx 4-9.
- [15] Okebukola, P. (2006). Principles and policies guiding reforms in Nigerian Universities. IHEA/RESA, *council for development pp 25-36*.
- [16] Federal Republic of Nigeria (2009). Roadmap for the Nigerian education sector. Abuja: Federal Ministry of Education.
- [17] Oyewole, O. (2010). The African quality rating mechanisms: The process, prospects and risks. Keynote address presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa, Bamako, Mali, October 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup>.

## Author Profile



**Prof. Silas E. Omebe** holds Doctorate Degree in Guidance and Counseling from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. He has a bias in counseling psychology and has been teaching counseling and psychology to undergraduate and graduate students for over ten years. Prof. Silas E. Omebe was a senior Lecturer at the Enugu State University of Science and Technology before joining Ebonyi State University in 1999. He was the former Dean Faculty of Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. Currently, he is the Provost Ebonyi State College of Education, Ikwo – Nigeria. He has authored so many books in Guidance and Counseling and Education Psychology.



**Dr. Nwankwo Isaac Nwoba** holds a doctorate degree in Educational management and policy in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. He has been teaching Educational management and policy to under graduates and graduates for over five years. He has authored and co-authored many books in Research and in Educational Management and policy Dr. Nwankwo Isaac is currently a lecture in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka and adjunct lecturer in Ebonyi College of Education Ikwo. He is an international figure in Research and Statistics.



**Dr (Mrs) Chinyere A. Omebe** holds a Doctorate Degree in Measurement and Evaluation from Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. She has been teaching Research Method and Statistics and Measurement and Evaluation to undergraduates and graduate students for over nine years. She has authored many books in both Research Method and Statistics and Measurement and Evaluation. Dr (Mrs) Chinyere A. Omebe is currently a senior Lecturer in the Department of Science Education Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. Her area of specialization is Science Education and Measurement and Evaluation.