

**ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES IN THE
MAINTENANCE OF INFRASTRUCTURE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
EBONYI STATE, NIGERIA.**

BY

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Abstract

The study is an assessment of quality assurance practices in the maintenance of infrastructure in secondary schools in Ebonyi state, Nigeria. The study arose because of poor quality products of secondary schools in Ebonyi state which negate the fundamental objectives of secondary education. One research question and one hypothesis were posed and formulated respectively to guide the study. The design for the study was descriptive survey. The population for the study comprised all the 273 principals in public secondary schools in Ebonyi state and 71 quality assurance evaluators. The sample for the study was 344 respondents representing 100% of the population for the study. The instrument for data collection was the researcher developed "Assessment of Quality Assurance Practices Questionnaire (AQAPQ)". It was validated by three experts; two in Educational Management and one in Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability indices of the instrument were determined using Cronbach alpha. The data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test statistics. While mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question using a mean score of 2.50 as benchmark for items, t-test statistics was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study showed that the principals

of secondary schools have significant roles to play to ensure that quality assurance practices are adhered to in the maintenance of school infrastructure. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended that the state government should support principals to maintain infrastructure in the school to avoid decay and insufficiency of facilities.

Keywords: Assessment, Quality Assurance, Practices.

Introduction

Education is a potent instrument for national development. It is the tool with which values, knowledge and skills are acquired, and the proper application of these acquisitions in the process of nation building paves way for both individual and national development. Education, no doubt, is indeed an investment, and investment in human capital plays a crucial role in productivity and institutional development (Dauda, 2010 & Obasanjo, 2012). Education has been universally accepted and recognized as a major indicator of a community's social well-being, standard of living and social justice. It is one of the most important factors in Nigeria's quest to become one of the largest economies and the strongest weapon against poverty (World Bank, 2006).

Educational system in Nigeria is divided into three main levels namely primary, secondary and tertiary headed by the head teacher, the principal and the provost/rector/vice-chancellor respectively. However, the focus of this study is on secondary education. Secondary education refers to the second stage of education that learners take on in the learning process. It is the

education given to students after primary education (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2013). The broad aims of secondary education according to FRN (2013:14) are to prepare the individuals for:

- a. Useful living within the society; and
- b. Higher education.

In specific terms, secondary education shall:

- ❖ Provide all primary school leavers with an opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of sex, social status, religious and ethnic background;
- ❖ Offer diversified curriculum to cater for the difference in talents, opportunities and future roles;
- ❖ Provide trained manpower in the applied science, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades;
- ❖ Develop and project Nigeria languages, art and culture, in the context of world's cultural heritage;
- ❖ Inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence;
- ❖ Foster national unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity;

- ❖ Raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the dignity of labour, appreciate these values specified under our broad national aims, and live as good citizens and
- ❖ Provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agriculture, industrial, commercial and economic development.

The above broad and specific goals of secondary education seem elusive as majority of secondary school leavers are neither prepared for useful leaving within the society nor for higher education. Many after secondary education cannot fit into commerce, industry or agriculture. There is need, therefore, to assess quality assurance practices in our secondary schools.

Quality assurance has been variously defined by different scholars. Okebukola (2008) defined quality assurance to include the policies, systems, strategies and resources used by the institution to satisfy itself that its quality requirements and standards are being met. In the same vein, Oladosu (2012) viewed quality assurance as the process of monitoring quality and ensuring that standards are not only continuously sustained but also improved upon. This implies constant evaluation, assessment, maintenance and improvement of quality by an institution. Quality assurance is, therefore, the planned and systematic activities implemented in a quality system so as to attain the quality requirement for the product or service.

Obasi (2011) averred that Nigeria has recognized that her standard of education has deteriorated due to a number of reasons which include poor quality assurance practices. On the other hand, Akpan (2009) observed that this decay could be the outcome of poor implementation of education policy, lack of facilities, dearth of adequate manpower, lack of funding and corruption. The common outcry of the decay and dysfunction of the entire system is supported by the presence of dilapidated buildings, inadequate learning materials, overcrowded classroom among others. Researchers reveal that in recent time secondary schools in Nigeria are not living up to the expectation of delivering quality products. A lot of problems seems to be bedeviling this level of education and rendering it ineffective.

However, to avert the decay of the system, Ani (2007) suggested that quality assurance practices such as approval, assessment, admission policies, infrastructural facilities, strategic management planning, supervision of instruction, curriculum implementation and adequate learning environment which serve as mechanisms to achieve the educational objectives of secondary education, are inevitable. This study will be confined to maintenance of infrastructure.

Maintenance of Infrastructure in Secondary Schools

Infrastructure refers to the basic facilities, services and installations that are needed for the functioning of a school system. Infrastructure includes

buildings, equipment, water and power supplies and school materials. Infrastructural facilities are vital resources that facilitate all round development of man and his environment. One vital aspect that needs to be vigorously developed in the educational sector is infrastructure especially in secondary schools (Kayode, 2015). One of the issues of great controversy among educators in education today is the issue of poor state of equipment and facilities. Some scholars argue that the problem of inadequate equipment required for teaching and learning of the students greatly affect the quality of students' attainment in secondary schools (Yoloye, 2005). On the other hand, another school of the thought pointed out that the problem is on the utilization of the available infrastructure in the schools. Okoro (2007) believed that the facilities which include buildings, equipment, tools and school materials available are inadequate for effective use in schools. One of the major problems in secondary schools in Nigeria, particularly in Ebonyi state, is lack of materials and equipment. Oranu (2004) identified lack of physical facilities as the problem of education in Nigeria. On the problems existing in the schools and the system of education is lack of materials and necessary equipment in teaching science and technology subjects (Chukwumah, 2015). To achieve the objective of equipping students to live effectively in the age of science of technology, the practice of starving the schools of equipment, facilities and fund need to change (Drucker, 2005).

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) pointed out that the government is aware that only limited equipment and facilities exist for teachers at different levels. Afolabi (2010) noted that the federal government is directing its attention and resources to the development of an engineering infrastructure in most institutions that will enable Nigeria design, fabricate and mass-produce basic equipment, machine, tools and engines within the shortest possible time. He also re-echoed the remarks by the Federal Government that Nigeria must respond to the challenges of technological development in a methodological stage by stage process targeted at an ultimate sustainable national competence in an era of industrialization in Nigeria.

According to Akinola (2007), in a study of coping strategies with infrastructural deprivation through collective action among educational institutions in Nigeria, it was discovered that the failure of the government to properly address the problem of infrastructure particularly in schools has led to poor academic performance of students. The study further revealed that most school managements find themselves with poor quality students that cannot withstand the test of time and compete effectively in the labour market. Fakayode, Omotesho, Soho and Ajayi (2008) examined the place of infrastructure in schools and found out that the state of infrastructure in schools is critically poor in terms of good roads, electricity, library and laboratory and therefore suggested that a state of emergency be declared on

school infrastructure. Also, Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (2007) noted that students interviewed regarding the challenges that they face on daily basis identified deplorable building conditions rather than curriculum standard.

In another study carried out by Ehiamefor (2011) it was found that many buildings had become obsolete despite their structural soundness. However, his major conclusion was that many of these facilities have become obsolete because of their failure to adjust to or accommodate innovations in curriculum development, instructional strategies and content development. However, Ojerinde (2008) argued that maintenance of infrastructure is a complex task that is even more difficult especially taking decisions to prioritize aspects to be maintained. They identified several factors that contribute to the deplorable conditions of colleges to include inadequate government intervention, no sense of ownership by stakeholders, inadequate funding and vandalism. Furthermore, lack of maintenance, neglect, deferred maintenance and over-crowding were also identified. Multi-stakeholder framework for the proper maintenance of colleges' infrastructure was proposed to eradicate existing poor conditions so as to improve students' performance.

Ahmed (2003) stressed that there is an indication of the state government commitment to vocational and technical education in most colleges with the announcement of additional N50 million investments to the vocational and technical education sub-sector. The government in this regard

realized the problems facing most colleges in Nigeria such as obsolete, sub-standard and damaged equipment. According to Aigbe, the assistance would be given to the colleges for the purchase of materials, equipment and other facilities to produce the needed middle level technical manpower for the state. Okoro (2007) stated that the school workshops, laboratories and the total environment where vocational and technical education programme is carried out must be adequately equipped to reflect the actual working environment which students will work after training.

The school workshops should have the same equipment, tools and materials in terms of types, designs and specification with the industry where the students will work after training. Onwuka (2001) supported the theories of vocational and technical education when he pointed out that the teaching of vocational and technical education subjects requires the use of specialized laboratories, workshops, machines, tools and equipment. Unfortunately, in Ebonyi state of Nigeria, the low level of funding of educational institutions makes it impossible to adequately equip their workshops, laboratories, studios and classrooms. Therefore, the main concern of this study is to evaluate quality assurance practices in secondary schools in Ebonyi state associated with maintenance of school infrastructure.

Statement of the Problem

The goals of secondary education are to prepare students for useful living and higher education. It is the products of this level of education that feed tertiary institutions which sharpen them for social, economic and political engagements in the nation. It is against this background that assessment of quality assurance practices in secondary schools is of paramount importance if the educational objectives of secondary school are to be realized.

Education stakeholders in Ebonyi state have attributed this situation to the nature of quality assurance practices that prevail in secondary schools. Although there is a curriculum but other areas like maintenance of facilities and adequate supervision of instruction are neglected and this hinders the achievement of secondary education goals.

These quality assurance practices which include maintenance of infrastructure appear to have been relegated to the background by school administrators. It is against this background that an evaluation of the practices in secondary schools in Ebonyi state has become imperative. The problem of this study is, therefore, to determine the extent of quality assurance practices that prevail in secondary schools in Ebonyi state.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess quality assurance practices in secondary schools in Ebonyi state. specifically, the study was designed to determine the extent to which quality assurance practices are adhered to in:

1. Determining maintenance of infrastructure in secondary schools in Ebonyi state.

Research Question

The following research question was raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent are quality assurance practices applied in the maintenance of infrastructure in secondary schools in Ebonyi state?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and quality assurance evaluators with regard to the extent to which quality assurance practices are adhered to in maintenance of infrastructure in secondary schools in Ebonyi state.

Method

The study adopted a descriptive survey which was used to determine the number of principals and quality assurance evaluators for the population. It was also used to get the number of schools for the study.

The study was conducted in Ebonyi state. The population for the study comprised all the 273 principals in public secondary schools and 71 quality assurance evaluators in Ebonyi state (Secondary Education Board, Ebonyi State, 2022). The total population, therefore, is 344. The sample for the study comprised of all the 344 principals and quality assurance evaluators drawn from the 344 public secondary schools in Ebonyi state. this represents 100% of the population for the study.

The instrument for data collection is a questionnaire titled "Assessment of Quality Assurance Practices Questionnaire (AQAPQ)" developed by the researcher. The items are on response scale of very high extent (4), high extent (3), low extent (2) and very low extent (1).

The validity of the instrument was determined by three experts; two in Educational Management and one in Measurement and Evaluation all from Ebonyi state college of Education, Ikwo.

The instrument was pilot tested on twenty principals and quality assurance evaluators in Enugu state. the internal consistency of the

instrument was computed using Cronbach alpha. The reliability coefficient index of the instrument was 0.79.

The instrument was administered to the respondents by the researcher with the help of three research assistants. It was collected the following day. This was to ensure that the selected respondents go through it very well and to avoid mistakes on the part of the respondents. Out of 344 copies distributed, 327 were successfully retrieved. The questionnaire was designed to elicit necessary information from the respondents on the assessment of quality assurance practices in maintenance of infrastructure. Data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test. Mean was used to answer research questions. Any mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted and adjudged great extent while any mean score below 2.50 was not accepted and therefore adjudges low extent. Standard deviation was used to determine how principals' and quality assurance evaluators' responses varied, while t-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One

To what extent are quality assurance practices applied to the maintenance of infrastructure in secondary schools in Ebonyi state?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Principals and Quality Assurance Evaluators on the Application of Quality Assurance Practices to the Maintenance of Infrastructure in Secondary Schools in Ebonyi State.

N=327								
S/N	Items	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	X	SD	Dec.
1	Classrooms are not crowded.	13	57	93	164	1.75	0.88	LE
2	The toilet facilities in the school are decent.	11	24	69	223	1.46	0.77	LE
3	Recreational facilities are adequately maintained.	9	25	91	202	1.53	0.76	LE
4	School laboratories are adequately maintained.	7	36	111	173	1.62	0.77	LE
5	Old facilities are replaced with new ones.	14	23	87	203	1.55	0.81	LE
6	Windows are in good condition.	5	11	66	245	1.32	0.61	LE
7	Staff office facilities are well maintained.	17	35	99	176	1.67	0.87	LE
8	Laboratory materials are available.	3	18	72	234	1.36	0.63	LE
Grand Mean						1.53	0.15	LE

Table 1 above indicates that of the 8 items on the extent to which quality assurance practices are applied in the maintenance of infrastructure in secondary schools in Ebonyi state, the respondents rated all the items to a low extent as they recorded mean scores of 1.75, 1.46, 1.53, 1.62, 1.55, 1.32,

1.67 and 1.36 respectively. Their standard deviation are low signifying homogeneity in their responses for the items raised. The table also shows that the respondents recorded a grand mean score of 1.53.

Going by the interpretation of the respondent's data, the answer to research question one is that quality assurance practices are applied in the maintenance of infrastructure in secondary schools in Ebonyi state to a low extent.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and quality assurance evaluators with regard to the extent to which quality assurance practices are adhered to in the maintenance of infrastructure in secondary schools in Ebonyi state.

Table 2: t-test result of Principals and Quality Assurance Evaluators with regards to the extent to which Quality Assurance Practices are adhered to in the maintenance of infrastructure in secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

Variable	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Dec.
Principals	276	1.65	0.17				Do not
				325	0.24	1.96	Reject
Quality Assurance Evaluators	51	1.41	0.13				H0

The t-test analysis in table 2 above indicates that the calculated t-value is 0.24 while the critical t-value is 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the calculated t-value is less than the critical t-value. Thus there is no significant difference in the mean score of principals and quality assurance evaluators on the extent to which quality assurance practices are adhered to in the maintenance of infrastructure in secondary schools in Ebonyi state.

Discussion

In the research question, the study established that all the principals and quality assurance evaluators in secondary schools in Ebonyi state are of the opinion that quality assurance practices are adhered to in the maintenance of infrastructure in the secondary schools to a low extent. The t-test result with regard to the hypothesis shows that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and quality assurance evaluators on the extent to which quality assurance practices are adhered to in the maintenance of infrastructure in secondary schools in Ebonyi state. this finding is in agreement with that of Asaaju (2012), who discovered that there is decay of infrastructure in the secondary schools. He adduced that the main causes of decay according to the study are inadequate funding and lack of periodic monitoring and regular maintenance of infrastructure. This is responsible for the prevalent infrastructural decay in secondary schools. In the same vein, Izobo-Martins, Dare-Abel and Kunle (2014) discovered that all is not well with

the facilities and infrastructure in public schools in Nigeria. The finding reveals that a sizeable portion of the infrastructure in public secondary schools are in the state of disrepair and there is high need for maintaining them.

The state of infrastructure in our school is deplorable and need immediate intervention for quality and standard secondary education in the state. Kayode (2010) confirmed that in the education sector, infrastructure development especially in secondary schools is essential. Infrastructure forms the basic foundation of education and its inadequacy deters education delivery and effective products. Quality assurance practices are not adhered to in maintenance of infrastructure as the result of the study revealed and is in conformity with Okoro (2007) assertion that facilities which include buildings, equipment, tools and school materials that are available in schools are inadequate for effective use and adherence to quality assurance practices. The study discovered that obsolete facilities are not replaced with modern facilities and this retards pupils' education achievements.

Conclusion

Quality assurance practices in secondary schools especially in the area of maintenance of infrastructure is very necessary to ensure quality and standard in secondary school education. Consequently, upon this, the principal, the government through the state Ministry of Education and the community where schools are located have roles to play in ensuring that

quality assurance practices are adhered to in the maintenance of school infrastructure.

Recommendations

1. The state government should support principals to maintain infrastructure in the school to avoid decay and insufficiency of facilities.
2. The communities where schools are cited should assist principals in maintaining infrastructure so as to ensure healthy and effective teaching and learning.

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