Management of Public Primary Schools for Quality Assurance in Cross River State, Nigeria

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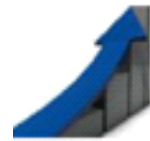University of Calabar, Calabar- Nigeria

Abstract
The purpose of the study is to determine the influence of management of public primary schools on quality assurance in Cross River State, Nigeria. Ex-post-facto design was adopted for this study. Two research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Population of the study was 15,781 teachers in 1,105 public primary schools in Cross River, Nigeria. Yamane (1967) formula and simple random technique were used to generously draw a sample of 400 respondents from the population. The validated instrument for the study was Management of Public Primary Schools and Quality Assurance Questionnaire (MPPSQAQ). The internal consistency of the instrument was determined through a trial test which yielded a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of .84 to .88 for the sub-scales. The data obtained from the field were analyzed using a One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at .05 level of significance. Results of the study indicated that quality assurance is significantly influence by availability of infrastructure (P=.000, F=20.538) and funding (P=.001, F=19.486). Based on this, it was recommended among others that adequate funds be made available by both the Federal, State and Local Governments for the procurement of educational facilities and services with a view to enhancing quality assurance in public primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Keywords: Management, Public Primary Schools, Quality Assurance

Introduction

The world has realized that the economic success of the nations is directly determined by the quality of their educational systems and the most effective factor of production is human capital expressed in knowledge, skills, creative abilities and moral qualities of individuals in society. Primary education being the structural edifice upon which other educational systems rest upon need to assure a standard quality of service to sustain in the environment it operates on.

Longanecker and Blanco (2003) view quality in terms of who and how students are taught rather than by what students learn. In order to provide quality of pupils in public primary schools, quality assurance is necessary. Quality is defined as fitness for purpose while quality assurance is defined as those systems, procedures, processes and actions intended to lead to the achievement, maintenance, monitoring and enhancement of quality (Woodhouse, 1998 in

Akareem & Hossain, 2016) such as effective teaching and learning. Standa (2008) opines that quality assurance is a continuous process by which an institution can guarantee that standards and quality of its educational provisions are being maintained or enhanced. For Brennan and Shah (2000), quality assurance is increasingly used to denote the practices in which academic standards such as the level of academic achievement attained by primary school pupils are maintained and improved.

Ehindero (2004) declares that quality assurance focused on the: learners' entry behaviours, characteristics and attributes including some demographic factors that can impede or facilitate their learning; the teachers' entry qualification, values pedagogic stalls, professional preparedness, subject background, philosophical orientation; the teaching / learning processes including the structure of the curriculum and learning environment; the outcomes, which are defined for different levels in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes including appropriate and relevant instruments to assess these objectives.

However, Fadokun (2005) sums the definition of quality assurance in education as a programme, an institution or a whole education system. In such case, quality assurance is all these attitudes, objectives, actions and procedures that through their existence and use, and together with quality control activities, ensure that appropriate academic standards are being maintained and enhanced in and by each programme.

The need for quality assurance in Nigerian public primary schools cannot be overstressed in order to guarantee quality of teaching and learning. Adegbesan (2011) outlines the following as the major needs of quality assurance in our education system in Nigeria: to serve as indispensable component of quality control strategy in education; to ensure and maintain high standard of education at all levels; to assist in monitoring and supervision of education; to determine the quality of the teacher input; to determine the number of classrooms needed based on the average class size to ensure quality control of education; to determine the level of adequacy of the facilities available for quality control; and to ensure how the financial resources available could be prudently and judiciously utilized.

Ajayi and Akinduture (2007) in Oduma (2013) perceive that quality assurance in Nigerian primary education system lacks the capacity to meet the expectations of the pupils in relation to the quality of skills required to be learnt, which could be partly due to its mismanagement in terms of lack of educational facilities and funding. For Akpotu (2014), educational facilities are buildings, parking lots, fields, furniture, toilets, chalk board, ink, agents and re-agents which enhances students' efficiency in the teaching and learning process. National Education Evaluation Centre, Ministry of Education (2008) maintains that the non-realization of quality assurance in public primary schools is due to deplorable state of classrooms. Most public primary school facilities in Cross River State are in terrible need of upgrading, as the construction of most of them dates back to the 1950s; not only have the facilities aged noticeably, but pupil's demographics and educational mandates have changed as well.

Agbonlahor (2016) stresses that the availability of spacious classrooms to deliver quality and practical oriented teaching and learning involves huge investment in capital. Inadequate
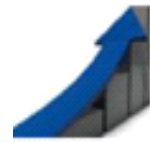
funding is indicted in the poor classrooms support needed to drive quality delivery of of teaching and learning. Both hard and soft infrastructure is needed as support for the system. This constraint subsequently aggravates quality assurance in public primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. The lack of spacious classrooms and equipment failure results to inefficient delivery of the programme. Ahmed (2003) points out that in most of the nations' primary schools, teaching and learning takes place under a most unconducive environment; lacking basic materials, thus, hinders the fulfillment of educational objectives and programmes such as quality assurance.

Wambua, Murungi and Mutwiri (2018) investigate on physical facilities and strategies used by teachers to improve pupils' performance in social studies in Makueni County, Kenya. The study aimed at determining the availability and use of physical facilities on pupils' performance in social studies in lower primary schools in Kibwezi zone, Makueni County, Kenya and further determines the strategies used by teachers to improve pupils' performance in social studies in the same study area. The study employed descriptive survey design. The independent variable was classroom learning environment while dependent variable was pupils' academic performance in social studies. The study targeted all pupils and teachers in lower primary schools in Kibwezi zone. Purposive sampling was used to select location of the study while stratified random sampling and simple random techniques were used to select categories of schools and lower primary school teachers to be involved in the study. The sample comprised of all lower primary school pupils in the sampled schools. Data was collected using questionnaires and observation schedules. Content validity was used to ensure validity of the instruments. Test-retest method was used to evaluate reliability of the instruments. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics. Results showed that lower primary school classroom environment in Kibwezi zone were not conducive for pupils to learn Social studies effectively. Availability and use of classrooms in social studies was below average and pupils scrambled to use the little available resources. Pupils' performance in social studies was below average. It was recommended that parents be sensitized to participate in fora which could help primary schools get funded for teaching/learning materials and facilities. It was also recommended that Government should increase the Free Primary education funds to facilitate building and buying of school materials and facilities.

Akpotu (2014) further opines that a classroom be assigned to at most 35 pupils, as this remains the ultimate goal in accordance with the National Policy on Education but in practice, we have adopted the policy of over 70 pupils per classroom. Hence, this will negatively affect quality assurance. In the same way, Opiyo (2014) reveals that greater number of public primary schools had problems of shortage of furniture, lack of science laboratories, inadequate IT facilities, inadequate buildings; shortage of classrooms, inadequate of light, drinking water and toilet facilities, thus serious need for school improvement in terms of missing physical facilities to meet the actual needs and inadequate facilities. The state of infrastructural decay such as classrooms in many primary schools is a manifestation of poor implementation of management programmes with attendant effect on quality assurance.

In the same vein, Nguavese, Bawa, Omaku and Fagbemi (2017) state that Knowledge cannot be created in the absence of proper funding of primary institutions. The process of raising, allocating, controlling and prudently managing funds for the purpose of enhancing quality assurance in primary institutions has been a challenge in Nigeria. Jongbloed (2007) also discloses that funding mechanism are to transform the primary education system into a more differentiated and market-driven system, where students and institutions have more freedom and more responsibility in making decisions which enhance a more flexible primary education system and enhancement of efficiency and quality.

Tilak (2005) reveals that there is a decline in public expenditure on primary education as many countries have deliberately bring to bear serious cuts in public budgets for primary education. Thus, the extent of the decline in public expenditure on primary education per student as a percent proportion of gross domestic product per capita during the last decade is very significant in terms of quality assurance. But Pollitt and Bouckaert (2000) disagreed that nowadays, states spend more attention, time and money on performance measurements and evaluation in the public sector than ever before.

Herbst (2007) explores how to fund higher education institutions in order to ensure or even raise the quality of higher education and research. He addresses newer practices of resources-allocation which tie funding to indicators of performance, as part of broader debates about reform in public management. Performance funding has made its in-roads in attempts to grant university systems managerial autonomy, which was to be granted in exchange for funding modes which are tied to the measurement of performance indicators. Unfortunately, he found that performance-based funding measures cannot meet the various expectations: they do not raise the quality of teaching or learning; they do not raise research performance; they take back a great deal of managerial autonomy which is commonly judged to be essential for the well-being of higher education institutions, in particular research universities; and they act as automata in place of proper governance and management. Obe (2009) regrets that without adequate funding, attainment of high standards of education at any level would not be realized. Collaborating, Adetula, Adesina, Owolabi and Ojeka (2017) opine that quality can only be assured if sufficient funds are invested in primary education which is the backbone of any economy.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to determine the influence of management of public primary schools on quality assurance in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study aimed at determining:

1. The influence of availability of infrastructure on quality assurance in public primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. The influence of funding on quality assurance in public primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.
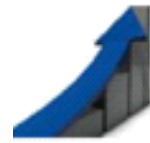
Research Questions

1. How does availability of infrastructure influence quality assurance in public primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria?
2. How does funding influence quality assurance in public primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria?
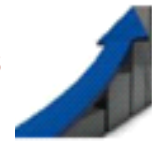
Null Hypotheses

1. There is no significant influence of availability of infrastructure on quality assurance in public primary in Cross River State, Nigeria.
2. **There is no significant influence of funding on quality assurance in public primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.**

Methodology

Ex-post-facto design was adopted for this study. This is a systematic investigation where the researchers do not have direct control over the independent variables because their manifestations have long occurred (Isangedighi, Joshua, Asim and Ekuri, 2004). In this study, the ex-post-facto design was apt because the manipulation of variables such as availability of infrastructure and funding were not possible. They have already interacted to produce the level of quality assurance that the researchers only measured.

The area of study was Cross River State located between Latitude 5^045^1 and 5^075^1 North of the Equator and between Longitude 8^030^1 and 8^150^1 East of Greenwich Meridian (Wikipedia, 2019). Population of the study was 15,781 teachers in 1,105 public primary schools in Cross River, Nigeria (State Universal Basic Education Board, Calabar, 2020). Yamane (1967) formula and simple random technique were used to generously draw a sample of 400 respondents from the population. The instrument for the study was Management of Public Primary Schools and Quality Assurance Questionnaire (MPPSQAQ) developed in line with a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with weight 4, 3, 2, and 1 for all positively worded items and weight 1, 2, 3, and 4 for all negatively worded items respectively. The instrument was divided into three sections: the first section contained five items which provided information on the respondents' bio data while section two had sixteen items that provided facts on management of primary schools with eight items each for availability of infrastructure and funding. The third section contained eight items that measured quality assurance in public primary schools. In totality, 29 items of the questionnaire were used for data collection.

The instrument was duly faced validated by two experts in Educational Test and Measurement of the University of Calabar, Calabar. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined through a pilot test which yielded a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of .84 to .88 for the sub-scales. The data obtained from the field were analyzed using a One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at .05 level of significance. ANOVA was best preferred because

of the classification of the independent sub-variables. For example, availability of infrastructure was categorized into classrooms, offices, equipment and laboratories.

Results

The results for the test of hypotheses are presented hypothesis-by-hypothesis as follows:

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of availability of infrastructure on quality assurance in public primary in Cross River State, Nigeria.

To test this hypothesis, One-way ANOVA was applied with availability of infrastructure as independent variable or factor and quality assurance as dependent variable. The f-ratio was used to test the overall influence and Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) test to compare pairs of means as post hoc test. The ANOVA results are presented on Table 1.
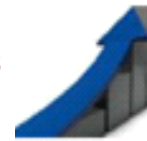
Table 1: One-way ANOVA of influence of availability of infrastructure on quality assurance in public primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Availability of infrastructure	N	Mean	Std dev.	Bench mark	Number Available	Remarks	
Classrooms	150	7.494	1.122	35/1	55/1	Inadequate	
Offices	70	7.561	1.030	3/1	1/1	Inadequate	
Equipment	100	7.737	1.217	7/1	5/1	Inadequate	
Laboratories	80	7.102	1.507	2/1	0/1	Not avail.	
Total	400	7.474	1.219				
Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F – value			P – value
B/w. groups	89.955	3	29.985	20.538*			.000
Within groups	578.208	396	1.460				
Total	668.163	399					

Significant at .05 level, $P < .05$

From Table 1, the mean of equipment was the highest ($\overline{X}$=7.737), followed by offices ($\overline{X}$=7.561) while the least was laboratories ($\overline{X}$=7.102). The analysis further revealed that the infrastructural bench mark as specified by the Cross River State Ministry of Education, Calabar were 35 pupils per class, 3 offices (Head teacher, Deputy Head teacher and General) per school, 7 equipment per school (Chalk, chalkboards, computers, furniture, toilets, electrical appliances and sporting facilities) and 2 laboratories per school (science and home economics) but in practice, 55 pupils are assigned to a class, 1 General office per school, 5 equipment per school (Chalk, chalkboards, furniture, toilets and sporting facilities) and no laboratory per school, indicating gross inadequacy. However, where some of these infrastructures are available, they are poorly managed. The P-value (.000) associated with the computed F-value (20.538) is less than .05. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. This suggests that availability of infrastructure significantly influence quality assurance in public primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.

To locate the pair of means responsible for the observed significant results, Fisher's LSD test was carried out and the results are shown on Table 2.

Table 2: LSD pairwise comparison of influence of availability of infrastructure on quality assurance in public primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria

Availability of infrastructure	Classrooms	Offices	Equipment	Laboratories
Classrooms	7.811**	.172*	.253*	.253
Offices	.001	7.801	.165*	.245
Equipment	.000	.030	7.372	.213*
Laboratories	.000	.011	.010	7.720

Significant at .05 level, P < .05
**Value along main diagonal are group means above it are mean differences (MD) and below it are corresponding P – values*

The results on Table 2 showed that availability of classrooms was significantly different from offices (MD= .172, P= .001 > .05) and equipment (MD = .253, P= .000 > .05). Offices was also significantly different from equipment (MD = .165, P= .030 > .05), while equipment was significantly different from laboratories (MD = .213, P= .010 > .05), and all the other paired companions were not significant.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant influence of funding on quality assurance in public primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.

To test this hypothesis, One-way ANOVA was applied with funding as independent variable or factor and quality assurance as dependent variable. The f-ratio was used to test the overall influence and Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) test to compare pairs of means as post hoc test. The ANOVA results are presented on Table 3.

Table 3: One-way ANOVA of influence of funding on quality assurance in public primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria

Funding	N	Mean	SD	Amount expected(%)	Amount obtained(%)	Remarks
School levy	190	7.947	1.131	60	20	Inadequate
Donations	40	7.003	1.620	5	01	Inadequate
Interven. fund	80	7.037	1.105	15	02	Inadequate
PTA levy	90	7.113	1.277	20	11	Inadequate
Total	400	7.000	1.283			

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F – value	P – value
Betw groups	88.097	3	29.366	19.486*	.001
Within groups	596.842	396	1.507		
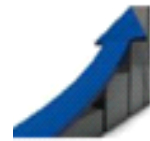
Total	684.939	399

Significant at .05 level, P < .05

From Table 3, the mean of school levy was the highest ($\overline{X}$=7.947), followed by PTA levy ($\overline{X}$=7.113) while the least was donations ($\overline{X}$=7.003). The results also showed that expected funding benchmark for public primary schools in Cross River State in terms of school levy, donations, intervention funds, and PTA were 60%, 5%, 15% and 20% respectively but only 20%, 01%, 02% and 11% respectively were obtained indicating inadequacy in funding of public primary schools in Cross River State. The P-value (.001) associated with the computed F-value (19.486) is less than .05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is significant influence of funding on quality assurance in public primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. To locate the pair of means responsible for the observed significant results, Fisher's LSD test was carried out and the results are shown on Table 4.

Table 4: LSD pairwise comparison of influence of funding on quality assurance in public primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria

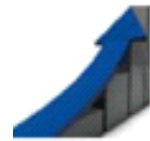| Funding	School levy	Donation	Interven. Fund	PTA levy
School levy	7.428**	.281*	.225*	.191
Donation	.000	7.231	.193*	.237*
Interven. Fund	.004	.020	7.414	.243*
PTA levy	.013	.000	.001	7.521

Significant at .05 level, P < .05
***Value along main diagonal are group means above it are mean differences (MD) and below it are corresponding P – values*

The results on Table 4 showed that school levy was significantly different from Donation (MD= .281, P= .000 > .05) and Intervention Fund (MD = .255, P= .004 > .05). Donation was likewise significantly different from Intervention Fund (MD = .193, P= .020 > .05) and PTA levy (MD = .237, P= .000 > .05). Intervention Fund was also significantly different from PTA (MD = .243, P= .001 > .05), and all the other paired companions were not significant.

Discussion of Findings

The results of hypothesis one indicated that there is significant influence of availability of infrastructure on quality assurance in public primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria as the P-value (.000) associated with the computed F-value (20.538) is less than .05. This study is in line with National Education Evaluation Centre, Ministry of Education (2008) which stressed that the non-realization of quality assurance in public primary schools is due to deplorable state of classrooms. Most public primary school facilities in Cross River State are in terrible need of upgrading, as the construction of most of them dates back to the 1950s.

Opiyo (2014) reveals that greater number of public primary schools had problems of shortage of furniture, lack of science laboratories, inadequate IT facilities, inadequate buildings; shortage of classrooms, inadequate of light, drinking water and toilet facilities, thus serious need for school improvement in terms of missing physical facilities to meet the actual needs and inadequate facilities. The state of infrastructural decay such as classrooms in many primary schools is a manifestation of poor implementation of management programmes with attendant effect on quality assurance.

This finding is in agreement with the investigation of Wambua, Murungi and Mutwiri (2018) on physical facilities and strategies used by teachers to improve pupils' performance in social studies in Makueni County, Kenya, which results showed that lower primary school classroom environment in Kibwezi zone were not conducive for pupils to learn Social studies effectively. Availability and use of classrooms in social studies was below average and pupils scrambled to use the little available resources. Pupils' performance in social studies was below average. Ahmed (2003) points out that in most of the nations' primary schools, teaching and learning takes place under a most unconducive environment; lacking basic materials and thus hinders the fulfillment of educational objectives and programmes such as quality assurance.

The results of hypothesis two specified that there is significant influence of funding on quality assurance in public primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria as the P-value (.001) associated with the computed F-value (19.486) is less than .05. this study aligns with Nguavese, Bawa, Omaku and Fagbemi (2017) who stated that Knowledge cannot be created in the absence of proper funding of primary institutions. The process of raising, allocating, controlling and prudently managing funds for the purpose of enhancing quality assurance in primary institutions has been a challenge in Nigeria. Obe (2009) regrets that without adequate funding, attainment of high standards of education at any level will not be realized. Adetula, Adesina, Owolabi and Ojeka (2017) opine that quality can only be assured if sufficient funds are invested in primary education which is the backbone of any economy.

Tilak (2005) collaborates that there is a decline in public expenditure on primary education as many countries have deliberately bring to bear serious cuts in public budgets for primary education. Thus, the extent of the decline in public expenditure on primary education per student as a proportion of gross domestic product per capita during the last decade is very significant in terms of quality assurance.
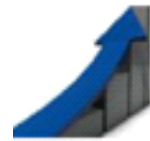
Conclusion

It is evident from the study that quality assurance in public primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria can be improved if the there is adequate management in terms of availability of infrastructure and funding by both the Federal, State and Local Governments.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion of the study, it was recommended that:

1. Adequate infrastructure be made available and supervised by the three tiers of government in public primary schools in order to prevent its moribundity.

2. Adequate funds be made available by both the Federal, State and Local Governments for procurement of educational facilities and services with a view to enhancing quality assurance in public primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria.

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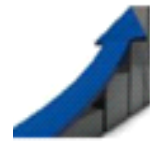
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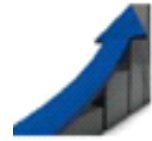
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