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QUALITY ASSURANCE AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN ENUGU STATE NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined quality assurance and the achievement of educational objectives in public Universities in Enugu State Nigeria. The population for the study consisted of all the Principal Administrative Staff and lecturers in the University of Nigeria Nsuka and Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Agbani. A sample of 241 respondents made up of 25 Principal Administrative Staff and 216 lecturers was purposely selected for the study. The study adopted a survey research design. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. For the purpose of data collection, the researchers structured a questionnaire with 18 items. The questionnaire was validated by three experts, two from the department of Educational Management and one from Measurement and evaluation unit, all in Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology. Mean and standard deviation was used in answering the research questions while t-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that the criteria for measuring quality assurance for the achievement of university education objectives are quality university graduate, professional exposure, status 'of curriculum and syllabus, ability to deliver and flow with content, regular staff development and a lot more. Recommendations were made that there should be adequate learning facilities such as laboratory/equipment, ICT Facilities etc.

Keywords*:* Quality Assurance, University and Achievement of Objectives

Introduction

Education is the mechanism that drives the all-round development of both human and infrastructural development any society. It is the necessary weapon which every human needs to survive the complexity of the society, because it empowers every human to provide solution to the numerous social, political and economic challenges bedeviling his peaceful existence. Education develops the mind of man and the mind of man develops the society. without education, the world of man would be without any form of development. Ikpo (2017) observes that this development is a natural response to public perception that educational quality is being compromised in the effort to expand enrollment in recent years growing complaints by employers, that graduates are poorly prepared for the work place; and

increasing competition in the market place as numerous private and transactional providers enter scene. Nigerian education system today centre around the quality of education impacted to the citizenry and the relevance of that education to the life of the individual in particular as well as the nation in general. Quality is generally referring to the standard of something, product or service as measure for the achievement of a specified objective. It is the degree of excellence, or how good or bad an item or service is. It also describes a distinguishing characteristic, trait, or inherent property possessed by someone or something. Ugo (2019) posited that the Nigerian University system has grown from infancy through Adolescence to near maturity and finally to decay all within the space of a short time. Quality education is "measured by the extent to which the training received from an institution enables the recipient to think clearly, independently and analytically to solve relevant societal problems in any given environment". Preset standard institution quality is the totality of features and characteristics of a product or services that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs. Quality in higher education is often complex because of the difficulty in agreement among the various stakeholder of what constitutes quality in education. There is the general feelings that the quality of education impacted with curricula that are limited to parochial concerns may no longer be adequate in the face of prevailing global situation. The curricula content have outlived their usefulness and thus have little relevance to the needs, aspirations and values of today's Nigeria and her education system.

Quality is the most important determinant of value in a consumer service context (Boltan and Dew 1991). Eze (2022) opined that quality implies the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bother in its being able to satisfy stated needs. Quality assurance is the practice of managing the ways goods are produced or services are rendered to ensure that they are kept in a high standard. Quality assurance according to Okpano (2020) is the process of monitoring, assessing and evaluating all aspects of school life objectively and making known the outcome to all stakeholders with a view to improving standards. It is a planned and systematic activity/measures implemented in a system to ensure that quality requirements for a product or service is fulfilled. Eleje (2023) noted that quality assurance is the degree to which an item or process meet or exceeds the users' requirement. She further stated that quality assurance are those planned and systematic actions necessary to provide adequate confidence that faculty, system or component will perform satisfactorily and safety in service. It is a set of activities intended to ensure that products or services satisfy customer requirements in a systematic and reliable fashion. Quality assurance practice has a continuous process by which an institution can guarantee that standard and quality of its educating provisions are being maintained or enhance. Omeayo (2016) observed that quality assurance has increasingly and significantly become the strongest parameters for determining the

relevance and functionality of education, especially in developing countries where reform regimes in the sector have become imperative for meeting the Education for All and Sustainable Development Goal targets. Ani (2020) added that quality assurance is a systematic management and assessment procedure adopted by Higher Educational Institution and system in order to monitor performance against objectives, and to ensure achievement of quality outputs and quality improvement. Edward (2022) stated that it is more than just testing the quality of the various aspect of the university product (the students) it's service or facility. It also includes the ability to make sure it conforms to specific requirement of the university leadership and complies with university established goals of attaining world standard. Quality assurance is about consistently meeting product specification or getting things right first time, every time. Quality assurance in the university system implies the ability of the institutions to meet the expectations of the users of man power in relation to quality of skills acquired by their output (Ojengwa, 2017).

The concept quality assurance as "a set of activities or procedures that an organization undertakes to ensure that standards are specified and reached consistently for a product or services. The primary goals are to create reliable system by anticipating problems and designing procedures to avoid as many errors and fault as possible. Quality with respect to education, this implies the ability or degree with which an educational system conforms to the established standard and appropriateness, of the inputs available for the delivery of the system. Therefore, quality in education mean the relevance and appropriateness of the educational programmes to meet the needs of the community for which it is provided. Quality assurance in education is geared toward attainment of educational goals and improvement in the process of educational delivery.

In terms of quality and quantity, tremendous influence on quality assurance in the University system, Quality assurance is a key component of successful internationalization, mechanism for building institutional reputation in a competitive local and global arena and necessary foundation for consumer protection (NUC, 2016). According to Okeke (2020) Quality assurance encompasses those activities that are designed to improve the quality of input, process and output of university system. University education being the apex of the educational system has central role to play in a nation transition like ours. The essence of university education is to inculcate knowledge, skills and positive attitudes to life as well as carry out different kinds of research which can increase capacity for the nation's economy and fix the products squarely into the nation as well as the global economy (Odeh, 2017). There is, in our universities, a growing imbalance between societal demands and university capacity to respond. They are not responding quickly to the perceived needs of their environment. Universities are therefore coming under intense pressure to change their traditional character and become more innovative.

The university education is expected to be the centre for excellence, Ivory tower and a store house for knowledge and research. These features are ubiquitous across time and space. According to FGN (2013) the following goals of tertiary institutions, particularly university education are to contribute the national development through high level relevant training; develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individuals, develop the intellectual capacity of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environment, acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable the recipients to be self-reliance and useful members of the society; promote and encourage scholarship and community service; forge and cement national unity and promote national and international interaction that fosters development of every facet of the society. Until these goals are met, university education is at the cross line to doom. Hence this study, to evaluate quality assurance and the achievement of educational objectives in Enugu State Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The rapid changes in educational policies in Nigeria Universities are causing serious tension and unhealthy competition among Universities in Nigeria. These tensions include, standardization, comparability, autonomy, accountability, rising tertiary enrolment amidst declining budget, academic excellence, school facilities, school environment, research and innovation, students' examination and screening etc. these tensions require concerted action by education stakeholders through quality assurance practice. In view of realising the university education goals which focuses on vision of being best in preparation and development of adequate manpower for global competitiveness, it is evidence that for the goals to be achieved, quality assurance practice must be of most priority to the university system across the federation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine quality assurance imperative as a tool for the achievement of the objectives of University Education in Enugu State Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to find out the:

1. criteria for measuring quality assurance in the achievement of the objectives of University Education System in Enugu State Nigeria.
2. instruments for measuring quality assurance in the achievement of the objectives of University Education System in Enugu State Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What are the criteria for measuring quality assurance in the achievement of the objectives of University Education System in Enugu State Nigeria?
2. What are the instruments for measuring quality assurance in the achievement of the objectives of University Education System in Enugu State Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of administrative staff and lecturers on the criteria for measuring quality assurance in the achievement of the objectives of University Education in Enugu State Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of administrative staff and lecturers on the instrument for measuring quality assurance in the achievement of the objectives of University Education System in Enugu State Nigeria.

Method

The study adopted descriptive survey design. Population for the study consists of all the principal administrative staff and lecturers in the two major public Universities (University of Nigeria Nsuka and Enugu State University of Science and Technology) in the State. From the entire population, a sample of 241 made up of 216 lecturers and 25 principal administrative staff were purposely selected for the study. Self-structured questionnaire containing 18 items on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agree = 4 points, Agree = 3 points, Disagree = 2 points and Strongly Disagree = 1 point was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts, two from educational management department and one from measurement and evaluation department, all from Enugu State University of science and Technology. The reliability of the instrument was conducted on trial test on sample of 10 administrative staff and 15 lecturers from Godfrey Okoye University Enugu. A reliability coefficient of .88 was obtained. The administration of the instrument was carried out by the researchers and two research assistants. A total of 241 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents and they were all retrieved, showing 100% return. The data collected were equally analysed using mean with standard deviation.

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Results/Presentation

Research question 1

1. What are the criteria for measuring quality assurance in the achievement of the objectives of University Education System in Enugu State Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean rating with standard deviation of responds of administrative staff and lecturers on the criteria for measuring quality assurance in Universities are:

S/N	Items	□	SD	Decision
1.	Quality university graduates	4.16	1.41	Accept
2.	Professional exposure	3.88	1.48	Accept
3.	Status of curricular and syllabus	3.94	1.34	Accept
4.	Ability to deliver and flow with currents trend	3.33	1.31	Accept
5.	Regular staff development program	2.41	1.33	Reject
6.	Research and Publication	2.46	1.32	Reject
7.	Assign of research grant	3.91	1.31	Accept
8.	Standard examination of students	3.44	1.40	Accept
9.	Market demand of university graduates	3.46	1.45	Accept
10.	Adequate overall development	3.37	1.49	Accept
	Grand Mean	**3.30**	**1.38**	**Accept**

Table 1 above shows that two items with means lower than 2.5 were rejected as not being criteria for measuring quality assurance in the achievement of university objectives. The other eight items were not rejected as criteria for measuring quality assurance in universities, this is because their mean was above the cut-off point of 2.5 indicating no rejection.

Research Question 2

What are the instruments for measuring quality assurance in the achievement of the objectives of University Education System in Enugu State Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean rating with standard deviation of responds of administrative staff and lecturers on the instruments for measuring in Universities are:

S/N	Instrument	□	SD	Remark
1.	Training and Development of Staff	3.55	1.58	Accept
2.	Assessing Quality of Work/Research	3.27	1.30	Accept
3.	Good Governance	3.31	1.39	Accept
4.	Selective in admitting student	3.21	1.48	Accept
5.	Regular supervision	3.39	1.48	Accept
6.	Accreditation Council	3.32	1.56	Accept
7.	Quality of syllabus and curriculum	3.45	1.48	Accept

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8.	Discipline of students and staff	3.31	1.51	Accept
	Grand Mean	**5.39**	**1.46**	**Accept**

Table 2 result revealed that the entire instruments are factors that ensure quality assurance in the achievement of educational objectives in universities. In other words, if these instruments are available in the university system, such university will be adjudged as having quality assurance.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of administrative staff and lecturers on the criteria for measuring quality assurance in the achievement of the objectives of University Education in Enugu State Nigeria.

Table 3: t-test summary for significant difference between the opinion of administrative staff and lecturers on the criteria for measuring quality assurance in Universities

Variable	No	□	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Remarks
Admin Staff	25	3.31	1.39				
				239	1.337	1.90	Accepted
Lecturers	216	3.36	1.43				

Table 3 above, the test of the hypothesis shows that there is no significant difference as perceived by admin staff and lecturers on the criteria for measuring quality assurance in universities in Enugu State Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2 There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of administrative staff and lecturers on the instrument for measuring quality assurance in the achievement of the objectives of University Education System in Enugu State Nigeria.

.**Table 4:** t-test summary for significant difference between administrative staff and lecturers on the instruments for measuring quality assurance in Universities.

Variable	No	□	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Remarks
Admin Staff	25	3.30	1.38				
				239	1.722	1.90	Accept
Lecturers	216	3.39	1.46				

The test of the hypothesis in table 4 revealed that there is no significant difference as perceived both administrative staff and lecturers.

Discussion of Findings

From the findings of the study, it revealed that both administrative staff and lecturers agreed that measuring quality in university education system is a factor of many variables which among others include: Quality university graduates, professional exposure, Status of curricular and syllabus,

ability to deliver and flow with current trend. However, quality assurance contributed positively for the development of university education which helps students make way of their career paths, because the value of graduates is determined by the academic institutions where they are trained.

Also in table 2, findings revealed that there are several instruments that can be used to measure quality in university education among which are quality teachers, quality syllabus and curriculum, use of accreditation council, good governance, availability of relevant infrastructure and facilities, teachers and students discipline, students in academic institutions, being selective in admission, Training and development of staff, assessing quality of work/research, good governance and available infrastructure and facilities. This conforms with the study of Odeh (2017).

Also, table 2, revealed that both administrative staff and lecturers agreed that all the items are relevant instruments for measuring quality assurance in universities. This is because they have means between 2.5 and above which was within the cut-off point for acceptance. The findings corroborate with the view of Okeke (2020) who observed that quality assurance encompasses those activities that are designed to improve the quality of input, process and output of university system.

Conclusion

Following the findings of the study as stated above, the following conclusion was made. That University education has been a strong tower in any nation for adequate development, man power supply and this can actually be achieved through adequate financing / supply of effective learning facilities. Quality assurance practices serve as a mechanism for the promotion of quality education for quality man power. Therefore, measuring quality assurance in university education requires such performance boundaries which can be achieved through the basic criteria as highlighted in the work above.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following recommendation were made

1. To ensure quality assurance in university education system, government must develop sustainable university operational policies that stand the taste of time and in meeting global standard.
2. There should be adequate learning facilities such as laboratory equipment, spacious classrooms, ICT facilities, qualified lecturers etc.
3. There should be adequate research grant for the lecturers to improve in their intellectual strength for impacting knowledge on the students.
4. Universities should set high standard for admitting students in their universities as a tool for driving the achievement of quality of educational outcome in the university system.

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