
Innovative Quality Assurance Strategies and Instructional Delivery in Universities in Rivers State

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Abstract

The study examined innovative quality assurance strategies and instructional delivery in universities in Rivers State. The study was guided by two research objectives from which two research questions and hypotheses were drawn. The correlational design was used for this study. The population for the study was 6,252 academic staff of the three public universities in Rivers State. The sample size of this study was 407 academic staff of the three universities under study. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 6.5% of the population of each school to arrive at the sample size. The instrument used for data collection in this study was a self-designed questionnaire tagged “Innovative Quality Assurance Strategies and Instructional Delivery Questionnaire”. A test of internal consistency was conducted using Cronbach Alpha method to establish the reliability of the instruments. A cumulative reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained which showed the instrument was reliable. The research questions were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics while the hypotheses were tested by transforming the coefficient of correlation (r) to t . The findings of the study revealed among others that there is a high and positive relationship between professional development and external examination as quality assurance strategies and instructional delivery in universities in Rivers State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that Management of universities should work with the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TET Fund) to organize periodic faculty based trainings for academic staff on modern teaching strategies and current innovations in their respective fields.

Introduction

Quality assurance strategies are tools which target effective management of the school system and effective actualization of instructional delivery processes. These tools encompass measurement and standardization of academic programme, evaluation of lecturers’ work capacities and

responsibilities, administrative supervisory personnel, dissemination of information and production of knowledge policies and practices (Koko & Edo, 2014). The beneficial nature of quality assurance can be noticed in some institutions like University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education where strategies are set out to monitor activities. For instance, Rivers State University has recently set out time frame for administering of tests, examination, submission of minutes of meetings, targeting performance and achievement of the pre-determined goals and objectives in instructional delivery. Similarly, the responsibility for quality assurance is up to the management of the institutions to develop control measures to monitor teaching and learning mechanisms. This implies that the management is due to watch over permanently their instructional delivery policies in relation to internal and external participation to give effect to the quality assurance. This is predicated on the fact that there is always a close relationship between the internal and external quality assurance based on their complementary and integrated functional roles especially in the utilization of external examiners and other supervisory bodies for accreditation (Uriri, 2019).

Instructional delivery is causally tightly bound activities. This is because it is a process by which behaviour in the broader sense originated or changes through practice or training. It is further concerned with the acquisition of habits, knowledge and attitude (Johnson, 2017). In educational system, instructional delivery involves new ways of discovering new measures and it is based on individual's attempts to overcome obstacles or to adjust to new situations. Uriri (2019) also viewed instructional delivery as a process that facilitates learning or special application of knowledge, skills and attitudes designed to provide unique service to meet the educational needs of an individual and for the society. Thus, for the realization of the aims and objectives of instructional delivery services, the issue of quality assurance has to be properly addressed by the management and relevant stakeholders. Teachers' instructional delivery is measured in terms of effective classroom management, use of effective instructional strategies and resources, reinforcing learning goals throughout the lesson, engaging and maintaining students in active learning (Arikewuyo, 2014).

Quality assurance is a paradigm shift from monitoring and evaluation processes to quality control. Various institutions have seen it as practice of reaching academic policies and demands. In this case, it is made to cover systematic evaluation, feedback and evaluation. The value and characteristics of quality has made it very fundamental for management and relevant stakeholders to have a common understanding how to draw strategies that will produce the best practices. On this note, Kaegon (2013) suggested that seeking continuous improvement in all relevant educational activities, focusing intensely on customers' requirements both external and internal, creating a system to measure and eliminate wastages in the system, insisting on the significance of team works and effective communication system, empowering all colleagues, academic administrative staff through perpetual and constant training and providing quality infrastructural, leaning facilities for the staff and students, professional development of academic staff and external examination will produce or assist in reaching the predetermined goals and objectives. For Durosaro and Akinsolu (2017) quality assurance is a policy that is relevant from the inception of planning or policies. Hence, it strives to prevent faults from occurring in the first instance. This situation has made it necessary to involve academic, administrative support staff, students and facilities and resources available for the achievement of the set standard. The nature and prevalent situations in the universities has made

educationists advocate for quality assurance with the responsibilities of relevant stakeholders. This means it involves the responsibilities of everyone in the system, top management who set the policies and priorities, continuous activities through institutional accreditation strategies (Arikewuyo, 2014).

As perceived by Arinze (2013) quality assurance is nurtured and embraced, it creates opportunities for efficiency and competitiveness, increasing mobility or cross boarder of knowledge production, activating private interest in education, expansion in enrolment, meeting up marketing demand and quest for relevant quality education. Adegbesan (2011) identified mentoring, proper funding and provision of professional development programmes as techniques by which quality can be assured in education. To him, mentoring is a method of pairing experienced and quality teachers with the ones making a debut in teaching in view to making the new teachers share in experiences and competence of mentoring for quality service delivery in their future venture in teaching. In establishing quality in education, Adegbesan (2011) stressed that the provision of development programmes such as in-service training, off-service and pre-service training is also one of the techniques for assuring quality in educational system. This is because no quality teacher can remain like that for a long time without renewal or upgrading of his knowledge and skills in line with the new emerging realities and challenges from this profession.

The swift changes in knowledge, concepts, technology, and philosophies as a result of the rapid changes in the world have brought about some fundamental changes in instructional delivery. Education is no longer restricted to considering human needs and the requirements of the present, but it seeks to address and reflect on developing human skills and capacities, and the necessities of the future (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2010). The present era where the world is considered a global village has seen a great progress of knowledge leading to new and technological ways of teaching and learning. Kankam (2013) supports the above analogy by indicating that mind-set in learning and those new approaches to learning necessitate new approaches to instructional delivery which challenge the lecturers' role as a facilitator of learning. This therefore calls for lecturers to ensure that they undertake continuous and sustained professional development to help improve on educational standards. Similarly, it is further stressed that for lecturers to satisfy the expectations of the increasing number of students; lecturers need to employ the use of up-to-date teaching methodologies with dedication and enthusiasm.

Professional development has become a compulsory feature for adequate performance, competence and success. It is a stock of skills and knowledge necessary for effective and efficient management of instructional and curriculum activities. In other words, it is often associated with some set of skills useful for quality job delivery. In any training, skills are updated for comparative advantage especially with the present global academic changes and challenges. Thus, professional development programme is obviously indispensable not only in the development of the organization but also in facilitating the productive capacity of the workers. This is because targets are based on creating organizational balance and conditions that will cause personnel to strive for better performance.

An external examiner is normally a senior academic from another university whose role is to assist in monitoring the quality of the education being provided to the students. This helps to ensure

that the awards one receives at universities are comparable to similar awards at other universities in Nigeria or worldwide. Sometimes, a team of external Examiners will be appointed for a programme of study, with each member assigned to specific modules. In some cases, there may also be an external examiner with a professional background if the programme has professional requirements (University of Birmingham Guide, 2018). External examiners are appointed to provide each degree-awarding body with impartial and independent advice, as well as informative comment on the degree-awarding body's standards and on student achievement in relation to those standards. The specific responsibility of each external examiner is dependent on the role allocated by the degree awarding body on appointment, and may be at different levels depending on the nature of the provision and the way in which a degree-awarding body's decision-making processes about assessment are structured. The basic objective of relating with the external examining is the desire for fit for purpose (University of Survey, 2019). It is on this note that external examining is seen as a process by which the fairness of assessment and the academic standards in higher education are monitored. This monitoring normally involves an academic from another institution approving assessment tasks and examinations and checking a sample of student work for the courses which they examine. (Blokhama & Margaret, 2015).

External examination is an essential part of the way in which universities demonstrates that the standards of its awards and the quality of its taught programmes are secured. The external examining system ensures that awards at the same level and in similar subjects are comparable with those in different higher education providers in the Nigeria, though their content and structures may vary. Each university is responsible for the standards it sets for its awards and the quality of the programmes of study it provides leading to those awards, wherever and however provided. Universities are expected to be able to demonstrate that they have undertaken rigorous quality assurance that ensures that the standards of achievement of graduating students meet national and, increasingly, international expectations. Also, that the quality of the learning opportunities provided give students a fair and reasonable opportunity to complete their programme of study successfully (University of Birmingham Guide, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

One major goal of tertiary education is to train high level manpower to man different sectors of a nation. These include education, health, legal, banking, agriculture, petroleum etc. This implies that the level of growth of these sectors depend on the quality of graduates being produced by tertiary institutions where they are trained.

Unfortunately, employers of labour in Rivers State and Nigeria at large have on various fora expressed concern over the employability of graduates from tertiary institutions in the nation. They expend huge amount of resources to train graduates to enable them fit into the world of work. This questions the quality of instructions and instructors available in tertiary institutions. This assertion is further corroborated by the continuous concerns raised by both educators and others about the deteriorating standard of education in Nigeria. These include faulty recruitment of academic staff, sexual gratification for grades, poor teaching technique, absenteeism etc. Consequently, most parents who have the means send their children and wards to tertiary institutions in other countries for study. This necessitated a study of this nature which sought to establish clearly the relationship

between innovative quality assurance strategies and instructional delivery in universities in Rivers State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between innovative quality assurance strategies and instructional delivery in universities in Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

1. Establish the relationship between professional development training for lecturers as a quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in universities in Rivers State.
2. Establish the relationship between external examination as a quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in universities in Rivers State.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between professional development training for lecturers as a quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in universities in Rivers State?
2. What is the relationship between external examination as a quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in universities in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between professional development training for lecturers as a quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in universities in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship between external examination as a quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in universities in Rivers State.

Methods

The research design adopted for the study is correlational design. This study was conducted in Rivers State. The population of this study was 6,252 academic staff of the three public universities in Rivers State. This comprised 3,321 academic staff from the University of Port Harcourt, 2153 from Rivers State University and 778 from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The sample size for this study was 407 academic staff comprising 216 academic staff from University of Port Harcourt, 140 from Rivers State University and 51 from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. Simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting 6.5% of the population of each school as the sample. The instrument for data collection in this study was a questionnaire designed by the researcher. The questionnaires were tagged "Innovative Quality Assurance Strategies and Instructional Delivery Questionnaire (QASIDQ). The questionnaire consist of two parts (I and II) Part I had two sections. Section A collected demographic data of respondents while section B contained statement items on Quality Assurance Strategies (Professional Development and External Examination). Professional development had items such as organizing of ICT in Education training

for lecturers, sponsorship of conferences, seminars and workshops, relevant professional trainings etc. External examination had items such as external examination of students' script, research work, lecturers' research etc. However, Part II of the instrument contained statement items structured to elicit data on Instructional Delivery. It had items such as ability to adopt ICT in teaching, carrying out quality research, regular and prompt attendance of classes, use of innovative classroom management techniques, periodic assessment of learning etc. Responses to the questionnaire items were structured on a four point rating scale, weighted as Strongly Agree, (SA=4 Points), Agree (A=3 Points), Disagree (D= 2 Points), Strongly Disagree (SD-1 point). The face and content validity of the instrument was determined by the researcher's supervisor and two other experts: one in Educational Management and another in Measurement and Evaluation in the Faculty of Education, Rivers State University. Their comments, corrections and suggestions were taken into consideration in preparing the final survey instrument for the study. A test of internal consistency was carried out using Cronbach Alpha method to establish the reliability of the instrument. The instrument was administered to 24 lecturers in Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State which is outside the study area. The responses of the respondents were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha statistics. 407 Copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents with the help of three trained research assistants who were postgraduate students in Rivers State University. The researcher personally spent time with the respondents to clarify questions on any issue related to the filling of the questionnaire. Out of the 407 copies of questionnaire administered to the academic staff 390 copies were retrieved and were valid for use in the study. This represents 95.8% retrieval rate. The data collected for the study were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) formula. Research questions were answered based on the value and direction of the correlation coefficient, (positive and high, positive but low, or negative and high or negative but low or moderate). Hypotheses were tested for significance of relationship at 0.05 level of significance. This was further tested by transforming the coefficient of correlation (r) to t in order to establish the significance or otherwise of the r – value.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between professional development training for lecturers as quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in universities in Rivers State?

Table 1: Relationship between Professional Development Training as Quality Assurance Strategy and Instructional Delivery in Universities in Rivers State.

Variable	N	$\sum X$	$\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	r _{cal}	r _{crit}	Remarks
Professional Development (X)	390	760.11	2618.12			2573.12	0.86	0.195	High positive
Instructional Delivery (Y)	390	1108.04	3228.06						

** . Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The analyses from Table 1.1 reveals a correlation value of $r = 0.86$. This value is high and positive, thus indicating that there is high and positive relationship between professional development as a quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in universities in Rivers State. The relationship here being positive indicates a proportional increase of both quality assurance strategy (professional development) and instructional delivery.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between external examination as a quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in universities in Rivers State?

Table 1.2: Relationship between External Examination as Quality Assurance Strategy and Instructional Delivery in Universities in Rivers State.

Variable	N	$\sum X \sum Y$	$\sum X^2 \sum Y^2$	$\sum X \sum Y$	Rcal	Rcrit	Remarks
External Examination (X)	390	847.14	2670.01				
				2531.28	0.87	0.195	High positive
Instructional Delivery (Y)	390	1108.04	3228.06				

** . Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The analyses from Table 1.2 reveals a correlation value of $r = 0.87$. This value is high and positive, thus indicating that there is high and positive relationship between external examination as a quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in universities in Rivers State. The relationship here being positive indicates a proportional increase of both quality assurance strategy (external examination) and instructional delivery.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between professional development training as quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in universities in Rivers State.

Table 1.3: Pearson Correlation Summary Analysis between Professional Development Training as Quality Assurance Strategy and Instructional Delivery in Universities in Rivers State.

Variable	N	$\sum X \sum Y$	$\sum X^2 \sum Y^2$	$\sum X \sum Y$	Df	A	r _{cal}	r _{crit}	t _{cal}	t _{crit}	RMKS
Professional Development (X)	390	760.11	2618.12								
				2573.12	388	0.05	0.86	0.195	28.02	1.96	Sig. Reject H ₀
Instructional Delivery (Y)	390	1108.04	3228.06								

Source: *Researcher's Field Result, 2021*

Table 1.3 shows Pearson correlation summary between professional development training as a quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in Rivers State universities. Result from Table 1.3 revealed that the sum and sum of squares for professional development training as a strategy of quality assurance used in Rivers State universities are 760.11 and 2618.12 while that of instructional delivery are 1108.04 and 3228.06 respectively. The sum of product of scores on the two variables (Professional Development Training and Instructional Delivery) is 2573.12. The correlation coefficient is 0.86 which is greater than the critical value of r (0.195) at 388 degrees of freedom under 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between professional development training as a quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in universities in Rivers State is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between professional development training as a quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in Universities in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between external examination as quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in universities in Rivers State.

Table 1.4: Pearson Correlation Summary Analysis between External Examination as Quality Assurance Strategy and Instructional Delivery in Universities in Rivers State.

Variable	N	$\sum X \sum Y$	$\sum X^2 \sum Y^2$	$\sum X \sum Y$	df	A	r_{cal}	r_{crit}	t_{cal}	t_{crit}	RMKS
External Examination (X)	390	847.14	2670.01								
				2531.28	388	0.05	0.87	0.195	26.05	1.96	Sig. Reject H_0
Instructional Delivery (Y)	390	1108.04	3228.06								

Source: *Researcher's Field Result, 2021*

Table 1.4 shows Pearson correlation summary between external examination as a quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in Rivers State universities. Result from Table 1.4 revealed that the sum and sum of squares for external examination as a strategy of quality assurance used in Rivers State universities are 847.14 and 2670.01 while that of instructional delivery are 1108.04 and 3228.06 respectively. The sum of product of scores on the two variables (External Examination and Instructional Delivery) is 2531.28. The correlation coefficient is 0.87 which is greater than the critical value of r (0.195) at 388 degrees of freedom under 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between external examination as a quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in universities in Rivers State is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between external examination as a quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in Universities in Rivers State.

Discussion

The findings of the study for research question one revealed that there was a high and positive relationship between professional development training as a quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in universities in Rivers State. This implies that provision of professional training for academic staff equip them with innovative teaching techniques and materials that would enhance their teaching and students' learning. The corresponding hypothesis one also revealed that there was a positive relationship between professional development training as a quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in Universities in Rivers State. Table 1.3 showed that a correlation coefficient of 0.86 was obtained which is greater than the critical value of r (0.195) at 374 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between professional development training as a quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in universities in Rivers State was rejected. This finding is in line with the assertions of Enuke (2013) that revealed that professional development of lecturers is building block that increases the development of the universities in term of quality of output by the institutions. This implies that training is vital and critical to develop and attain the expected outcomes. This finding is further supported by the findings of Nabunya, Tusiime and Kyaligonza (2019) which showed a positive significant relationship between professional development practices and TSD (Teaching Service Delivery) of academic staff in Kampala International University and Kyambogo Universities. Study findings in this regard showed that academic staff who received both on and off job professional development practices were better positioned to service as expected in the field of teaching. Through mentoring study leaves, coaching, monitoring and other professional development practices academic staff would adequately prepare, teach, examine learners guide and counsel them.

The findings of the study for research question two revealed that there was a high and positive relationship between external examination as a quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in universities in Rivers State. The corresponding hypothesis two also revealed that there was a significant relationship between external examination as a quality assurance strategy and instructional delivery in Universities in Rivers State. The correlation coefficient is 0.87 which is greater than the critical value of r (0.195) at 374 degrees of freedom under 0.05 level of significance. This finding is in line with the findings of Agbete (2012) which revealed that external assessment has an influence on teaching and learning of teachers and students alike. They reported that external assessment enhances teacher's performance in the classroom as they often realize that poor performance of students during such external assessment is attributed to shortfalls in teaching.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that there is a positive relationship between the type of quality assurance strategies adopted by institutions and instructional delivery by academic staff of universities. This is evident in universities in Rivers State. Quality assurance strategies such as professional development and external examination enhances lecturers' understanding of their subject matter, equips them with the right instructional methods to be used, right places to assess information for teaching and also ensures consistency in attendance of classes among others.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Management of universities should work with the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TET Fund) to organize periodic faculty based trainings for academic staff on modern teaching strategies and current innovations in their respective fields. They should also ensure grants for attending conferences are accessible to lecturers.
2. Heads of Departments and university management should discourage their idea of inviting external examiners who will close their eyes to certain shortfalls in their staff performance. They should see external examination as a quality assurance measure and bring the best person for the job.

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