



STRATEGIC PLANNING AND INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION AS DETERMINANTS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Quality assurance plays a crucial role within the university education system. It is determined by upholding elevated standards in teaching, research, and the overall educational experience. This study investigated the interplay between strategic planning, instructional supervision, and quality assurance in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. Two hypotheses framed the study. The correlational research design was adopted. Census approach was adopted in selecting the entire population of 169 departmental heads and deans of faculties from two public universities in Cross River State. An instrument titled Strategic Planning, Instructional Supervision and Quality Assurance in University Scale (SPISQAUS) was used for data collection. It was validated by three experts in the department of Educational Management, Measurement and Evaluation, University of Calabar. The reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha and it ranges from .80 - .89 respectively. The null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) and multiple regression analyses of statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 26 for data analysis. It was discovered that there was a statistically significant relationship between strategic planning, instructional supervision, and quality assurance in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study recommended among others, the university administrators must establish a robust instructional supervision system, which includes ongoing professional development for staff, effective classroom observation measures, and a culture that promotes constructive feedback.

KEYWORDS: Strategic Planning, Instructional Supervision, Quality, Assurance, Public Universities.

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian education system is crucial for the development of the nation, impacting its technological, political, and socio-economic growth.

It consists of three stages: primary, secondary, and tertiary. The university falls under the tertiary stage and aims to address the country's manpower needs. Maintaining high standards is essential for quality assurance in education.

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Quality assurance plays a vital role in the university education system, directly influencing the progress of the nation. To achieve this, the Federal Republic of Nigeria established uniform educational standards in 2013, supported by various measures implemented by the federal government.

The word "quality" here refers to performing a task with excellence. In higher education, quality assurance involves meeting standards in resource usage and management, ensuring that the output meets expectations. Okebukola (2004) defined quality assurance as avoiding errors for students in colleges or tertiary institutions, equipping them with knowledge and skills to meet societal needs. Similarly, Cheng and Tain (1997) as cited in Ushie, Undie, and Wonah (2020) defined quality assurance as a set of elements in the education system that satisfies both internal and external expectations. Achieving quality requires motivating teachers and students for educational improvements. The goal of quality assurance is to prevent defects, errors, and problems and ensure client satisfaction. It includes processes, standards, guidelines, and activities to maintain quality throughout development or production. According to Ehindero (2004) as cited in Etim, Akuegwu, and Uchendu (2019), the objectives of quality assurance in schools include ensuring uniformity in education standards, employing qualified teachers, managing class sizes and facilities, and optimizing financial resources. Similarly, Adedipo (2007) stated that tertiary institutions use quality assurance practices such as curriculum implementation, admission policies, and infrastructure maintenance to achieve educational goals.

In a university system, evaluating quality assurance often involves assessing factors such as accreditation status, faculty expertise, research achievements, student satisfaction surveys, graduation rates, employment success of graduates, curriculum standards, infrastructure quality, and continuous program reviews.

These measures collectively demonstrate the university's commitment to upholding educational standards, fostering a conducive learning environment, and ensuring the excellence and appropriateness of its academic programs. Babalola (2004) emphasizes the importance of implementing quality practices in tertiary institutions to enhance efficiency, enrollment, competitiveness, and effectiveness.

However, reports by some researchers and personal observations have shown that there is significant decline in the quality assurance practices in public universities in Cross River State. For instance, within the universities in Cross River State, Mbon, Omorobi, Owan and Ekpenyong (2019) reported that physical facilities are not adequate to ensure the smooth running of post-graduate programmes. Also, poor state of lecture venues with inadequate facilities, lighting, ventilation, instructional materials, learning resources, are common (Omorobi, Mbon, Owan & Ekpenyong, 2020). More disheartening is the fact that even the available facilities are in a deplorable state, and lacked proper maintenance. Owan and Offu (2020) reported that it is common to see graduate students learn under tree shades, open spaces, and public places, and lecturers' offices. This has led to disappointing students' performance and poor educational products (graduates), which is one of the major causes of increasing the unemployment index in Nigeria (Obona, Andeshi & Udang, (2023).

According to a report, Nigeria has over 306-degree awarding institutions and enrolls 2 million students annually. However, this has led to a saturated job market, with approximately 600,000 graduates entering each year (The Vanguard, 17th December, 2019; Joint Admission and Matriculation Board, 2020). The high rate of unemployment in Nigeria has negatively affected the country's human development indicators, including quality of life, literacy, health care, and life expectancy (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2020). Additionally, universities in Nigeria are facing challenges in managing their staff, including low salaries, delayed promotions, and inadequate support for research.

This reflects a lack of commitment to quality assurance and effective supervision of instruction. These problems may be attributed to the university management's insufficient dedication and commitment to strategic planning and supervision.

Strategic Planning

In school system, strategic planning involves directing resources and assigning responsibilities to achieve targets and facilitate smooth teaching and learning activities. Umar, Muhammad and Hassan (2020) defined strategic planning as the process of formulating and implementing strategies that contribute to achieving the goals of an organization. Strategic planning is receiving more and more prominence as a management strategy because of its ability to help educational institutions expand and become more successful (Owan & Offu, 2020). Administrators should embrace this strategy to meet the needs of teachers, boost morale, and achieve educational goals.

In their study, Mutoria, Bolo and Oeba (2010) investigated the influence of strategic planning and planning outcomes; planning outcomes and firm performance. Commercial banks in Kenya were studied using both primary and secondary data. In this study, a census of 44 commercial banks in Nairobi Kenya was done. The majority (80 per cent) of the respondents were managers in charge of planning and 20 per cent were either heads of human resource departments or business and marketing department. Various data analysis procedures were applied including descriptive analysis, Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient; F-statistics were used in order to accomplish the objectives of the study. The result of the study indicated that there was a positive and significant relationship between strategic planning and firm performance. Abdulkareem (2011) opined that the degree of execution of the strategic plan in Nigerian universities was poor compared to other countries. As a result, it was suggested that university management and faculty should be more committed to the implementation of an institutional strategic plan to attain internal efficacy. Consequent upon this and to improve the quality of university administration, the university management needs more orientation and training on strategic thinking. Also, there is need for strategic planning unit be created in universities to facilitate the entire process.

In another study, Chukwumah (2015) investigated the extent to which development of quality strategic plans for Anambra State secondary schools' improvement had been done by schools. The research design used was a descriptive survey. Respondents comprised 217 principals. All the principals were used for the study. Data collected using the questionnaire were analyzed using frequency, percentages, mean and standard deviation. Chi-square was used to test the null hypotheses. The study findings indicated that a greater proportion of schools developed their strategic plan document to a high extent. Also, Okwako, Machuki and Ng'ong'a (2020) carried out a research to determine the influence of strategic planning on performance. Using cross-sectional descriptive survey design and structured (closed-ended) questionnaires the researchers collected primary data from 27 public secondary schools in Rarieda district. The data was analyzed using both inferential and descriptive statistics to determine the strength of linear relationship. The study found out that strategic planning is positively correlated to performance.

Instructional supervision

One of the main missions of the university system is to provide quality teaching and learning for students. Instructional supervision is a key administrative function of school administrators. According to Ifedili (2015), instructional supervision involves studying and improving the conditions that affect student learning and growth, as well as enhancing the lecturer's ability to deliver effective teaching. Eya and Chukwu (2012) describe it as a process for improving lecturer performance and ensuring that they fulfill their assigned duties. Instructional supervision plays a crucial role in the education system and deserves attention.

Instructional supervision is a process that promotes teacher professional growth, improves the curriculum, and enhances teaching techniques. It involves interactive and democratic relationships between teachers and supervisors (Okendu, 2012). Modern instructional supervision, as described by Nakpodia (2011), focuses on creating a conducive teaching-learning environment for teachers and learners. It involves identifying teachers' strengths and weaknesses, supporting areas of weakness, and fostering positive relationships. Effective supervision helps teachers develop their teaching skills, while

inadequate supervision can negatively impact student performance and hinder educational objectives. It allows the teachers and students to respond effectively to the curriculum and promote the achievement of educational objectives. Instructional supervision is key in the overall improvement of teaching and learning practices. In a study, Rikichi, Bulus and Kwasau (2022) examined the impact of Supervision and Inspection as quality assurance strategies on the administration of primary education Curriculum in North-West geo-political zone, Nigeria. Cross-Sectional design was adopted with a population of 195,091. Out of them, 383 respondents were proportionally sampled for the study. The instrument used for the study was titled impact of supervision and inspection as quality assurance strategies on the implementation of primary school education Curriculum (QSIQASIPSEC). Descriptive statistics and chi-square were used to analyse the data. It was concluded that supervision and inspection has significant impact on teachers instructional delivery.

In another study, Agor, Oko, and Okoronkwo (2023) investigated Supervision of Instruction as Quality Assurance Mechanism in Public Secondary Schools in Ebonyi State. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive Survey Research Design was adopted for the study. The population of this study was 245 respondents consisting of 226 secondary school principals and 19 supervisors in Ebonyi State. The whole population was used for the study. Structured questionnaire developed by the researcher was used which was validated by three experts, two experts from the Department of Educational Foundations and one expert from Measurement and Evaluation option of Science Education Department, both in Faculty of Education, Ebonyi State University Abakaliki. The overall reliability coefficient of the instrument yielded 0.72. Mean and standard deviation statistics were used to analyse and answer the research questions while t-test statistic was used to test the two null hypotheses formulated for the study. The findings revealed that supervision of instruction as quality assurance mechanism to a high extent ensures provision of quality teachers in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State and that supervision of instruction as quality assurance mechanism to a high extent ensure teachers' ethical practices in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

The cited studies have utilized diverse methodologies that align with the specific objectives of each study. Furthermore, the reviewed studies have yielded different conclusions. However, while many previous studies have been conducted, some of them originated from other states and countries. No research has been found to be conducted in public universities in Cross River State, particularly focusing on the same variables as this study. These gaps in the literature were addressed by the present research.

This study may be valuable for university administrators, department heads, deans, policymakers, and educational researchers. It provides insights for improving academic quality, decision-making, and resource allocation. It can help administrators to enhance teaching, faculty development, and curriculum design. Deans can implement quality assurance measures and promote strategic planning and instructional supervision. Policymakers can refine educational policies. It provides researchers with valuable data for future research on educational leadership. Quality assurance is concerned with ensuring integrity of outcomes. The school management is entrusted with the responsibility for quality assurance, which it expresses through relationships with other stakeholders in the education system. The study evaluates the relationship between strategic planning, instructional supervision, and quality assurance in public universities in Cross River State.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Quality assurance in the university system is determined by maintaining high standards in teaching, research, and overall educational experiences. Other factors include infrastructure maintenance, adherence to admission policies, development and implementation of policies and assessments, faculty competence, student outcomes, and institutional resources. Many instances of dilapidated infrastructures, lack of conducive classrooms and office blocks, non-adherence to student capacity, and poor placement in courses of study indicate ineffective quality practices. These issues greatly impact the quality of students produced yearly at these educational institutions. This development has impacted the quality of university graduates and the overall system output.

The danger is that graduates from these academic institutions are often unemployed or unemployable. Others may be underemployed, leaving them ill-equipped to compete in the workforce. This is a major cause of the youth-related problems in our nation. Parents and other stakeholders in education have expressed concerns about the quality of graduates from these tertiary institutions.

Efforts have been made to address this issue, such as establishing quality assurance and staff development units in universities, as well as government funding through the annual budget and organizations like the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) or the Education Trust Fund (ETF). However, these problems have persisted. This has led researchers to question whether poor strategic planning and instructional supervision are to blame for the lack of quality assurance in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. Against this backdrop, the researchers examined the relationship between strategic planning, instructional supervision, and quality assurance in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The main question driving this study is: what is the relationship between strategic planning, instructional supervision, and quality assurance in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Specifically the study investigated the extent to which:

- i. Strategic planning relates to quality assurance in public universities in Cross River State.
- ii. Instructional supervision relates to quality assurance in public universities in Cross River State.
- iii. The composite prediction of strategic planning and instructional supervision on quality assurance in public universities in Cross River State.

STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESES

The study was guided by the following null hypotheses:

- i. There is no significant relationship between strategic planning and quality assurance in public universities in Cross River State.
- ii. Instructional supervision does not have any significant relationship with quality assurance in public universities in Cross River State.

- iii. Strategic planning and instructional supervision have no significant composite relationship with quality assurance in public universities in Cross River State.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used a correlational research design to explore the relationship between the variables. According to Owan (2018), this design is commonly used to examine how changes in variables correspond with variations in factors. It aims to establish connections through the correlation coefficient. This design was suitable for the study as it looked into strategic planning, instructional supervision, and their relationship with quality assurance in public universities.

Population of the Study

The research included a total of 169 departmental heads and deans of faculties from two public universities in Cross River State. They included 141 Heads of Departments (HODs) and 28 Deans. Census sampling approach adopted where all the subjects (169) were constituted into the sample. In situations when the population to be researched is small or controllable in such a way that all of the components within it can be investigated in their entirety, the census method is employed (Arop, Owan & Ekpang, 2018).

The Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a questionnaire prepared by the researchers, following a review of the literature, entitled: "Strategic Planning, Instructional Supervision and Quality Assurance in University Scale (SPISQAUS). The SPISQAUS was structured into two sections. Responses to Section A were used to determine the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Answers to Section B provided information on strategic planning, instructional supervision and quality assurance in universities. All of the items in section B were placed on a modified Likert-type scale with four possible responses. The validity of the instrument was determined by three experts. Two from Test Measurement and Evaluation, and one from Educational Management, University of Calabar. The experts evaluated the instrument for face validity. Each of the academics separately provided their observations. All irrelevant items were either modified or completely discarded. The researchers were giving suggestions that guided the final preparation of the draft copy of the instrument.

With the use of the Cronbach alpha reliability method, internal consistency of the instrument was determined. For strategic planning, instructional supervision, and quality assurance, the reliability coefficient results were .80, .86, and .89, respectively.

Data Collection and Analysis

To collect data for the study, the researchers visited the universities with copies of the questionnaire. They first obtained permission and consent to administer the questionnaire from the school management and respondents. With the aid of 3 research assistants who were educated on the objectives of the study, copies of the instrument were successfully administered on the respondents. A clear explanation was provided in the questionnaire to provide a guide to the respondents. They were given ample time to respond to the items without interference. After two days, the researchers returned to retrieve the questionnaire copies from the respondents. In preparing the data collected for statistical analysis, a coding schedule was designed. All Items in Section B of the questionnaire were coded for each variable based on the responses pattern. The scoring was: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 marks, agree (A) = 3 marks, Disagree (D) = 2 marks and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 mark for all positively worded questions. The researchers also reversed the points awarded for all negatively worded

items. Next, data collected were subjected to statistical analysis. They hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance, using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) and multiple regression analyses of statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 26 for data analysis. The results were presented in their respective tables.

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between strategic planning and quality assurance in public universities in Cross River State. Strategic planning is the independent variable in this hypothesis, and quality assurance is the dependent variable. The data for this hypothesis are continuous and were gathered on an interval scale of measurement. This conforms to the conditions for using Pearson product-moment correlation to analyse the connection between the variables of interest. At the .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was tested, and the findings are reported in Table 1. Table 1 indicate that a strong positive connection exists between strategic planning and quality assurance. As a consequence, the null hypothesis was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis was confirmed, which states that strategic planning has a strong significant relationship with quality assurance in public universities in Cross River State.

TABLE 1: Summary of correlation between Strategic Planning and quality assurance (N=169)

Variables	\bar{X}	S.D	R	Sig.
Strategic Planning	19.69	3.29		
Quality Assurance	19.27	3.15	.71*	.000

*Significant at $p < .05$ $df=167$

Hypothesis 2

Instructional supervision does not have any significant relationship with quality assurance in public universities in Cross River State. Instructional supervision is the independent variable in this hypothesis, while quality assurance is the dependent variable. The data for this hypothesis are continuous and were gathered on an interval scale of measurement. Correlation

analysis was performed to test the null hypothesis at the .05 alpha level of significance. The result is presented in table 2. Table 2 shows that there is a statistically significant link between instructional supervision and quality assurance. There was a statistically meaningful basis to reject the null hypothesis and maintain the alternative hypothesis going by the available data. Hence, there is a statistically strong significant relationship between instructional supervision and quality assurance in public universities in Cross River State.

TABLE 2: Summary of correlation between instructional supervision and quality assurance (N=169)

Variables	\bar{X}	S.D	R	Sig.
Instructional supervision	19.15	4.41		
Quality Assurance	19.27	3.15	.84*	.000

*Significant at $p < .05$ $df=167$

Hypothesis 3

Strategic planning and instructional supervision have no significant composite relationship to quality assurance in public universities in Cross River State. Two predictor variables and one response variable are presented in this hypothesis which were all measured continuously. The statistical tool employed for data analysis is multiple linear regression analysis. Table 3 presents a summary of the findings from the statistical analysis. The result in Table 3 indicate that the two predictor variables (strategic planning and instructional supervision) have joint positive multiple correlations ($R = .856$) with quality assurance. The two predictors account for 85.6% of the total variation in quality assurance in public universities. Because of this, additional independent variables not included in the model may be responsible for the remaining 14.4% of the unexplained variation in the dependent variable. As can be seen in Table 3, the p-value of .00 falls below the .05 criterion of significance at 2 and 166 degrees of freedom. Strategic planning and

instructional supervision, therefore, have a substantial joint relationship with quality assurance in public universities ($F = 227.094$, $p < .05$) based on the evidence gathered and presented. This means that the Adjusted R2 value of .729 was not a coincidence, which was previously reported.

To find out the relative contribution of strategic planning and instructional supervision variables, a test of regression was performed. The result is presented in table 3. A closer look at the relative statistics in Table 3 showed that strategic planning and instructional supervision are significant predictors of quality assurance in public universities. However, among these predictors, instructional supervision was the strongest ($\beta = .694$) followed by strategic planning ($\beta = .206$). The result also suggests that a 1% increase in strategic planning and instructional supervision, will lead to a 20.6% and 6.94% change in quality assurance in public universities, all other things being equal.

TABLE 3: Joint Contribution of strategic planning and instructional supervision to quality assurance in public universities in Cross River State (N=169)

Model	SS	Df	MS	F ratio	Sig.
regression	1224.090	2	612.045	227.094	.000
Residual	447.390	166	2.695		
Total	1671.479	168			

*Significant $p < .05$; $R = .856$; $R^2 = .732$; Adj. $R^2 = .729$

- a. Criterion: Teachers' Quality assurance in public universities in Cross River State
- b. Predictors: Strategic planning, Instructional supervision,

TABLE 4: Test of regression weight of strategic planning and instructional supervision variables

Variables	b	SE	β	T	Sig.	Rank
Constant	5.886	.768		7.662	.000	
Strategic Planning	.197	.056	.206	3.521	.001	2 nd
Instructional Supervision	.496	.042	.694	11.881	.000	1 st

DISCUSSION

Strategic planning was shown to have a significant impact on quality assurance in this research. This discovery does not come as a surprise because strategic plans are meant to meet up with an institution's demands, enhance its performances and strengthen such institution's quality. Therefore, all required effort must be put in place and appropriate steps taken to enhance quality assurance practices in the university. These strategic plans should cover areas like budget preparation, funding, student admission, taking records of dilapidated school facilities and arrangement for their replacement, among others. This finding is in tandem with the result of Mutoria, Bolo & Oeba (2010) who indicated that there was a positive and significant relationship between strategic planning and firm performance. This finding is also consistent with the result of Okwako, Machuki and Ng'ong'a (2020) who found out that strategic planning is positively correlated to performance.

Instructional supervision was shown to demonstrate a significant relationship with quality assurance in universities. The position of this finding is quite glaring due to the important role supervision plays in every school system and programme. In fact, one of the core missions of the university system is to provide the students with adequate teaching and learning. Instructional supervision is a vital administrative function which enhances the attainment of the school instructional goals.

The finding is in agreement with the submissions of Eya and Chukwu (2012) who viewed school instructional supervision as a process for lecturer's improvement purposes which include among other things ensuring that lecturers perform their assigned functions. Instructional supervision improves the curriculum and enhances teaching techniques through interactive relationships between teachers and supervisors (Okendu, 2012). The finding of this study aligned with that of Agor, Oko, and Okoronkwo (2023) who revealed that supervision of instruction as quality assurance mechanism to a high extent ensures teachers' ethical practices in public secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

CONCLUSIONS

This study was designed to investigate the relationship between strategic planning, instructional supervision and quality assurance in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study concluded that there is a positive significant and composite contribution of strategic planning and instructional supervision to quality assurance in public universities. The implications of this finding is that the extent of staff job performance and goal attainment is largely dependent on the extent to which administrators (Deans and HOD's) manage strategic plans and instructional supervision in their domains. This finding equally contributes to the existing literature in related areas with a piece of new knowledge from the perspective of a developing country.

RECOMMENDATION

- i. The university administrators must establish a robust instructional supervision system, which includes ongoing professional development for staff, effective classroom observation measures, and a culture that promotes constructive feedback.
- ii. Additionally, regular assessments of instructional methods, course content, and feedback mechanisms should be conducted to maintain the university's educational standards.
- iii. The university should prioritize implementing a strategic planning framework that improves its adaptability, and focus on operational enhancement. The plan should be flexible for regular reviews and adjustments based on changing circumstances.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

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