

QUALITY ASSURANCE EFFORTS AND PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The current educational problems of public interest based on poor level of students' academic performance especially in public examinations, at schools and various higher institutions call for concern. The study is on the relationship between quality assurance efforts and students' academic performance in Cross River State public Secondary Schools, Nigeria. 'Efforts' in this instance, refer to quality assurance measures put in place to ensure standard in the education system, these include; teachers' quality, instructional supervision, provision of facilities/infrastructures, adequate class size, teachers' welfare, community involvement, and conducive learning environment. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study include all the 5,130 teachers in the 262 public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. The researcher randomly sampled 47 and 78 teachers from Bekwara and Ogoja LGAs respectively making a total of 125 respondents. The instrument used for data collection was 15-item Quality Assurance Effort Questionnaire (QAEQ) scored on 4-point rating scale. To ensure face and content validity of the instrument, drafted copies of the instrument were given to two experts in Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was determined through split-half pilot test giving a value of 0.78. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to analyze the data to answer the research questions. The study revealed that there is moderate, positive and significant relationship among teachers' quality, school environment and facilities and students' academic performance. It was recommended that teachers with good qualifications should be recruited into the secondary school system, government should make a concerted effort to provide facilities and equipment in schools, a conducive teaching and learning environment, and quality instructional materials in Secondary Schools should be ensured.

Keyword: *Quality Assurance, Academic Performance, environment, facilities and teachers' qualities.*

Introduction

Students' academic performance has always been a topic of interest to all stakeholders. Educators and researchers have long been interested in identifying and understanding the variables that contribute to academic excellence. Adeyemo (2012), opined that this is not unconnected with the fact that academic success has a great influence on a student's self-esteem, motivation, and perseverance in further pursuit of their educational programme.

According to Usman (2015), the enormity and critical nature of educational challenges in Nigeria is evident in the increasing poor performance of students in national examinations such as WAEC and NECO. For instance, Usman, citing Akinola (2010) observed that, out of 1,351,557 candidates who sat for May/June, as far back as 2010 WAEC in Nigeria, only 337,071 candidates representing 24.94 percent obtained credits in English Language, Mathematics and three other subjects. The apparent low performances do not satisfy the yearnings and aspiration of Nigerians as rightly observed by Ogunsaju (2004) who asserted that the academic standard in all Nigerian educational institutions has fallen considerably below societal expectations. This could be the rationale for several stakeholders' decision

to explore certain quality assurance efforts with a view to addressing the seemingly poor academic performance. Several factors such as: Teachers' quality, school facilities, instructional supervision/inspection, teachers' welfare, adequate class size, community involvement, conducive teaching and learning environment had been identified as contributing to poor students' academic performance.

Aremu in Efe and Aderson (2016), defined poor performance as a performance that is adjudged by the examiner and some significant others as fallen below expected standard. The interpretation of this expected or desired standard is better appreciated from the perpetual cognitive ability of the evaluator of the performance. Also Abdu1lahi in Efe and Aderson (2016) described poor academic performance as any performance that falls below a desired standard.

By quality assurance, Hong Kong Baptist University, (2019) submitted that it is a collective process by which the school as an academic institution ensures that the quality of educational process is maintained to the standards it has set itself. Thus, quality assurance efforts comprise administrative and procedural activities put in place in a quality system so that students' academic performance could be improved upon.

It should also be noted that tackling students' poor academic performance cannot be done in isolation of good educational facilities. In other words, the relevance of educational facilities including human and material resources towards the achievement of education goals cannot be over emphasized. School facilities are made up of the school land all the physical structure on it. It refers to the school building, the play grounds, the equipment and other material resources provided in the school for effective teaching and learning operations (Onuorah, 2004).

The subject of school facilities had received great attention from the public as well as educators in recent times. According to Building Educational Success Together (BEST, 2005), it was reported that the responsibility of every administrator is to ensure that every child had access to quality education through school facilities that provide an educational setting, well suited for teaching and learning. School facilities played a significant role in directing the task of teaching and that of shaping students learning process in and out of school.

The low academic performance of students in Nigeria could be attributed to low quality of teachers (Oluremi 2013). Hattie (2003) agreed that the teacher has positive influence on students' learning and performance. Balter, Dana and William (2008) also believed that students' achievement is determined by high quality teachers. A study by Adeogun (2001) also found that the quality of any education system depends on the quality of teachers. In other words, teachers' qualifications need to be examined when discussing students' performance. Some studies found that teachers' experience and educational qualifications significantly influenced students' academic achievement (Asikhia, 2010; Yala & Wanjohi, 2011; Olaleye, 2011). When conducting research on factors contributing to under achievement of Zambian female students in O' Level Physics examinations, Maguswi (2011) reported that lack of qualified teachers of physics had a significant contribution. Moreover, a study done by Adaramola and Obomanu (2011) in Nigeria found out that lack of qualified teachers led to consistent poor performance of students in Science, Mathematics, and Technology subjects. All these point to the importance of qualified teachers in determining students' academic performance.

Owolabi (2012) examined the effect of teachers' qualification on performance of senior secondary school students in physics. The study found out that students taught by teachers with higher qualifications performed better than those taught by teachers with low qualifications. The low academic performance of students in Nigeria could be attributed to low quality of teachers Oluremi (2013). Balter and William (2008) also believed that students' achievement is determined by high quality teachers. A study by Adeogun (2001) also found that the quality of any education system depends on the quality of teachers. In other words, teachers' qualifications need to be examined when discussing students' performance. Some studies found that teachers' experience and educational qualifications significantly influenced students' academic achievement (Asikhia, 2010; Yala & Olaleye, 2011, Wanjohi, 2011). Moreover, a study done by Adaramola and Obomanu (2011) in Nigeria found that lack of qualified teachers led to consistent poor performance of students in Science, Mathematics, and Technology subjects. Owolabi (2012) examined the effect of teachers' qualifications on performance of senior secondary school students in Physics. The study revealed out that students taught by teacher with higher qualifications performed better than those taught by teacher with low qualifications. Also, Abe (2014) in a study on effect of teacher qualifications on students' performance in Mathematics in secondary schools; reported that a significant difference existed between students taught by profession teachers and non-trained teacher

The issue of quality in education goes beyond the curriculum or subject content but includes learning environment and school factors. The overall effects of learning environment on academic performance of secondary school students in external examinations can be positive or negative. This means that the school environment determines how much learning and teaching will be possible. School environment, also known as school climate, refers to the look and feel of a school. How students feel at school can influence how successful they are. A school's environment is often affected by its values, rules, safety, policies and discipline. Children at Risk (2019) observed that school environment is important because it sets the tone for students' learning. A positive, supportive environment can help students feel safe and make better grades. The supportive environment include: Relationships between students and teachers, School staff and front office behavior, School safety and levels of security, Bullying prevention practices on the school campus, General look and feel of the school and General Code of conduct and students' behavior.

The environment of a child's school can impact on his or her ability to learn and find success. It is on this premise that the researcher wants to assess the quality assurance efforts and public secondary school students' academic performance.

Statement of the Problem

Education is a vehicle for national development and therefore, every effort has to be put in place to ensure proper teaching and learning activities in the school. However, students' academic performance has always been a concern and topic of interest for teachers and the society at large. The increase in the poor academic performance of students both in internal and external examinations is alarming due to teachers' quality, learning environment and inadequate provision of facilities, which are the underlining efforts in the quality assurance that ensures standard. These quality assurance efforts seem to be missing or under utilised in the implementation programmes in Cross River State secondary education system. Therefore, a measure has to be taken to checkmate and improve the teaching and learning in schools for better academic performance of the students. Quality assurance is a measure which when effectively carried out will ensure improved standard in the school system.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between quality assurance efforts and students' academic performance in Public Secondary Schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain the relationship between teachers' quality and students' academic performance.
2. Investigate the relationship between conducive school environment and students' academic performance.
3. Determine the relationship between provision of adequate school facilities and students' academic performance.

Research Questions

What is the relationship between teachers' quality and students' academic performance?

Does any relationship exist between school environment and students' academic performance?

How does the provision of school facilities/equipment relate to students' academic performance?

Methodology

The design adopted for the study is the survey. The population for the study is all the 5,130 teachers in the 262 secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. Cross River State has 18 Local Government Areas and three Education Zones which are Calabar Central Education Zone, Calabar North Education Zone, and Calabar South Education Zone. Calabar Central Education Zone which is also referred to as Ikom Zone has six Local Government areas with 96 secondary schools, Calabar North Education Zone which is also referred to as Ogoja Zone has five Local Government Areas with 84 schools while Calabar South Education Zones also referred to as Biase Zone has seven Local Government Areas with 82 schools (Cross River State Ministry of Education, 2017).

Sample and Sampling Technique

The simple random sampling technique was used to select Bekwara and Ogoja, local government areas. Bekwara and Ogoja have 7 (234 teachers) and 16 (387 teachers) secondary schools respectively. The researcher randomly selected 47 and 78 teachers from Bekwara and Ogoja Local Government Areas respectively making a total 125 respondents. Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection was 15 items self-designed questionnaire titled "Quality Assurance Efforts Questionnaire (QAEQ)". The items of the questionnaire were scored on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agree -4 (SA); Agree -3 (A); Disagree -2 (D) and Strongly Disagree -1 (SD). On the other hand, the students' academic performance was measured using students result in the SSCE examination conducted by WAEC.

Validity of Instrument

To ensure face and content validity of the instrument, draft copies of the instrument were given to two experts in Measurement and Evaluation. Their suggestions and modifications were used to produce the final copy.

Reliability of Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was determined through split-half pilot test. The instrument was administered to 30 teachers in Obudu Local Government area once and the data obtained was subjected to Cronbach Alpha Reliability Testing to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. This provided the opportunity to identify the strength of each item in the instrument. Thus, the reliability coefficient of 0.78 proved the instrument was reliable.

Method of Data Analysis

Mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the data to answer the research questions.

Presentation and Analysis of Result

Research Question 1

What is the effect of teacher's quality on students' academic performance?

Table 1. Responses of the respondents on the effect of teacher's quality on students' academic performance.

FACTORS	SD	Mean	Remark
I do not experience work load due insufficient Teachers.	0.76	3.00	Agreed
The Principal brings in experienced teachers	0.80	3.55	Agreed
I have a teaching qualification that makes me qualified for the job.	0.67	3.02	Agreed
The teachers in my school are standard according to their years of teaching experience.	0.76	2.90	Agreed
I am always ready to acquire more education and training	0.59	4.21	Agreed

Information on Table 1 reveals that most of the respondents agreed that teacher's quality affects students' academic performance in secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. This implies that teachers' quality significantly relates to students' academic performance. The item with highest mean value is number 5 with a standard deviation value of 0.59 while the item number with the lowest value mean is 4.

Research Question 2

How does school environment affect students' academic performance?

Table 2. Responses of the respondents on the effect of school environment on students' academic performance.

FACTORS	SD	Mean	Remark
The district officers always ensure that the schools are located in a noise free environment.	0.72	3.02	Agreed
The principal ensures hazard free environment with security gadgets.	0.81	2.87	Agreed
8. The school district officer enforces healthy security and safety environment.	0.69	3.00	Agreed
The principal guides teachers and students towards taking security precautions.	0.77	3.56	Agreed
10. The district officer provides measures against natural disaster.	0.61	3.80	Agreed

Table 2 shows that most of the respondents agreed with all the items as factors affecting students' academic performance in secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. This implies that school environment relates to students' academic performance. The item 10 has the highest mean value while item 7 has the lowest mean value.

Research Question 3

How does school facilities/equipment affect students' academic performance?

Table 3. Responses of the respondents on the effect of school facilities/equipment on students' academic performance.

Variable	SD	Mean	Remark
11. The school provides materials for teachers.	0.71	3.21	Agreed
12. Teachers do not have the needed facilities to do practical.	0.68	2.78	Agreed
13. I skip some topics because of lack infrastructure.	0.81	2.12	Disagreed
14. I visit community members to use their toilet during school hours.	0.65	3.90	Agreed
15. There is no library in the school where teachers can get materials.	0.70	3.01	Agreed

Table 3 reveals that most of the respondents agreed that school facilities/equipment with exception of item number 13 affect students' academic performance in secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. This implies that school facilities/equipment relate to students' academic performance. Item number 14 has the highest mean value while item number 13 has the lowest mean value with standard deviation of 0.81.

Finding

1. It was found that teachers' quality affect students' academic performance in secondary schools in Cross River State.
2. The study revealed that school facilities/equipment affect students' academic performance in secondary schools in Cross River State.
3. The study further revealed that School environment affect students' academic performance in secondary schools in Cross River State.

Discussion of Findings

From the findings of the study it was evident there is moderate, positive and significant relationship between teachers' quality and students' academic performance in secondary schools in Cross River State. Though there are other factors that contribute to the academic performance of the student but the teacher plays a vital role. Oluremi (2013), Hattie (2003) agreed that the teacher has positive effects on students' learning and performance. Balter and William (2008) also believed that students' achievement is determined by high quality teachers. A study by Adeogun (2001) also found that the quality of any education system depends on the quality of teachers. In other words, teachers' qualifications need to be examined when discussing students' performance. Review of related literature indicates that the most important school-based determining factor of students' achievement is the teacher quality (Harris & Sass, 2008; Owolabi, 2012). Maguswi (2011) reported that lack of qualified teachers of Physics had a significant contribution. Moreover, a study done by Adaramola and Obomanu (2011) in Nigeria found out that lack of qualified teachers led to consistent poor performance of students in such subjects as, Science, Mathematics, and Technology. All these point to the importance of qualified teachers in determining students' academic performance.

Owolabi (2012) examined the effect of teacher's qualification on performance of senior secondary school students in Physics. The study found out that students taught by teachers with higher qualifications performed better than those taught by teachers with low qualifications. Also, Abe (2014) in a study on effect of teacher qualifications on students' performance in Mathematics in secondary schools; reported that a significant difference existed between students taught by professional teachers and non-trained ones.

There is strong, positive and significant relationship between school facilities and equipment and students' academic performance in secondary schools in Cross River State. The study of Chukwuemeka (2013) revealed that there was significant relationship between the provision of educational facilities and the academic achievement of the students. Also, findings from Ogundele (2007) revealed that high positive significant relationship existed between school facilities availability, utilization, improvisation and students' academic performance of secondary schools in Kwara State, Nigeria. Another study conducted by Duran-Narucki (2008) concluded that poor facilities lead to poor student attendance, which can result in lower student achievement in examinations. Bosch (2003) also supported the view that poor school facility can give the negative effect on students' achievement.

The study further revealed that there is moderate, positive and significant relationship between school environment and students' academic performance in secondary schools in Cross River State. The issue of quality in education goes beyond the curriculum or subject content but includes learning environment and school factors. It is the view of Obayan (2003) that school learning environment, exerts some dominant influence on the learner. The learning environment which is all encompassing in the teaching and learning process, remains an important area that should be studied and well managed to enhance students' academic performance. The fact that learning environment can impact on students' academic achievement has been established by studies (Williams, Persaud & Turner (2008), efforts are intensified by researchers to expound the scope.

The overall effects of learning environment on academic performance of secondary school students in external examinations can be positive or negative. While some researchers show that there was no relationship between the variables, other researches show that there was a relationship between learning environment and the performance of students. This means that the school environment determines how much learning and teaching will be possible.

Conclusion

The outcome of this study revealed that quality assurance efforts significantly influence students' academic performance, and partly do not influence/relate with students' academic performance in Cross River State public and private secondary schools. Essentially, teachers' academic qualifications, school environment, provision of school facilities and equipment have positive significant relationship with students' academic performance.

It was therefore evident that students' academic performance in Cross River State public and private secondary schools was largely influenced by some dominant variables of quality assurance efforts. Hence, the extent of their manifestation determined the level of students' academic performance. Those

which did not manifest any significant influence/ relationship, though in minority, had nothing to do with students' academic performance.

Recommendations

In view of the findings made on this study, the following recommendations are made:

Teachers with good qualifications should be recruited into the secondary school system. The qualifications role on teachers' teaching effectiveness cannot be over-emphasized. Bringing more qualified teachers will no doubt enhance the quality of teachers' input and as well facilitate better students' academic performance.

Government should make a concerted effort to provide facilities and equipment in schools to cater for the needs of teachers and students. Teachers and students should ensure that the available equipment is properly utilized to achieve the intended result. In addition, the equipment provided should be properly maintained to ensure their longevity and continued usefulness.

Therefore, there is need to properly address this problem of teachers by providing a conducive working environment, quality instructional materials and attractive salary package for teachers rather than join the none progressives who claim that teachers' reward is in heaven.

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