



Assessing the Functionality of Mechanisms for Quality Assurance Implementation in Tertiary Institutions in Southern Nigeria

Ebuara, V. O.

*Department Of Educational Administration And Planning
University of Calabar, Calabar
E-mail: ebuaravictor@yahoo.com*

ABSTRACT

This paper examined the mechanisms for quality assurance in Southern Nigeria tertiary institutions. It assessed the application of the mechanisms to educational institutions and observed that the functions of these mechanisms which are both internal and external have not yield the desired results over the years. The paper further highlight the problems of quality assurance and the roles NUC, institutions Audit and Research assessment mechanisms towards quality assurance in the educational system; and found that the level of quality is still very low with respect to performance. The major problems identified as being responsible for the existing poor quality and function in Nigerian tertiary institutions include; inadequate human and material resources, inadequate funding, poor curriculum design, week internal governance, loss of autonomy an academic freedom, politics, absolute dependence on government, inconsistent policies and mismanagement. In order to find solutions to these problems and to put tertiary institutions in the right position towards delivery quality assurance, the paper conclude that the mechanisms of quality assurance requires urgent systemic and institutional reformation. The paper recommended that due to change in our educational system, adequate fund, human and material resources, autonomy, academic freedom and a well designed curriculum should be put in place so as to enhance qualitative education in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

As government in most part of Nigeria have considered their agenda for higher education over the last few years, issues of quality assurance and quality enhancement of education have been a major focus of attention. No

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clear and simple definition is provided for the term quality assurance. The criteria and processes for evaluating this concept vary according to objectives and disciplines, and assessments apply to condition that can often not be qualified. In tertiary institution, quality changes with the development of discipline, educational activities and environments, while different interested parties place varying emphasis on different aspects of it. In Nigeria, tertiary modern approach to quality management de-emphasizes quality control and places high premium on quality assurance. Quality assurance is a modern proactive and participatory approach with ability to enhanced the functionality of the internal efficiency of a system. This makes it a preferred option that seeks to control production process after completion and according to Cole (1996) encourages wastage. In this paper, three factors have a central place in our discussion: Quality as viewed by the student, quality in terms of the fulfillment of recognized academic objectives and quality in the broad social relevance of the courses offered.

Literature Review

The concept of quality assurance until hitherto, was a concept that had relevance only in the industry with special focus on the training of employees to prevent problems, strengthening organizational systems and continually improving performance (EISB 2005), when applied to higher educational system, quality assurance ensures the quality of academic (teaching-learning process and curriculum) and structural (building and physical facilities) provisions of courses and allow for an objective review of their quality (Macroww and Witrowski, 2005).

Quality assurance in education according to UNESCO (2002), is a teaching and academic programmers, research and scholarships, staffing, students, building facilities, equipment and services to the community including academic environment. Functional and qualitative higher education is one of the uppermost concern in education discourse all over the world today. This according to Nis quite inevitable realizing the importance of qualitative education provision in the work of globalization and of technological education in the 21st century. In higher education quality assurance is also conceived as a judicious implementation of the objectives of higher education and realization of the set goals in the areas of effectiveness and efficiency of administration, teaching, learning and research. In university education for instance, quality of graduate could be measured by how well graduates are being prepared and produced to serve society in various human endeavour. Relevance of mechanism for assurance of quality could also be judged from ascertaining how good and efficient the teachers are, how adequate and accessible the facilities and materials needed for effective teaching and learning are, and how prepared the graduates are in meeting the challenges in the field of work.

In assessing mechanisms for quality assurance, Umoil (1995) maintained that that statues of Nigerian higher education introduced

mechanisms for quality assurance into the system as a management control machinery to revitalized the performance of the education sector that is now more responsive to the needs of the emerging market economy. Using the university as the pivot of our discussion on tertiary institutions, Barishade (2002) enumerated the commonest mechanisms for quality assurance as including Internal Institution Mechanisms; the internal institution mechanisms are the processes of evaluation, assessment, maintenance and promotion of quality in the university.

This mechanism starts from the point of admission requirements which are stated as a basis for admission. The flaw observed in this mechanism is that most higher institutions are deviating from their admission policies as a result of the political influence affecting the management of their institutions. Umoh (2006) has further stressed the functional components of quality assurance structurally illustrated below in Adeyemi, 2006.

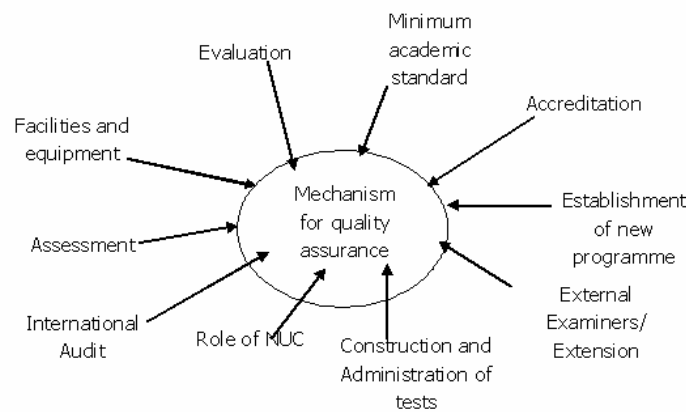


Figure 1: Core mechanisms for quality assurance in Nigerian tertiary institution.

Source: Adeyemi, 2006

Proposals for establishment of new programmes and regular monitoring as well as periodic reviews of these programmes are carried out to ensure effective curriculum implementation. Mechanism of assuring quality in the areas of construction of tests, scoring and administration of tests, collating and processing of the results and reporting of results have been defectives or non qualitative in most Nigerian higher institutions. There is no fairness and consistency in qualitative assessment. On this note, Nwana (2004) observed that many higher education Lecturers are yet to acquire master the techniques

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of setting good test items for the measurement of the over all ability of the students.

Furthermore, external examiners as internal institutional mechanism who are independent academic experts from other institutions or relevant area of professional practice are appointed by each university to provide impartial advice on institution performance in relation to particular programme report on standard of performance for the award of degree and certificates respectively.

b) The National Universities Commission as external regulatory quality assurance mechanism (NUC) provides not only the secretariat under which regular accreditation is carried out by constituted team comprising of academics and members of the professional councils and associations, but also setting of minimum academic standards for all programmes taught in Nigeria Universities, which serves as a reference document for verification of programmes and accreditation of such programmes.

National University Commission (NUC) that was originally intended to function as a modest university grants commission advising channeling back grants from government of the system, recently, it has become a large and unwieldy mechanism/organization involved in all spheres of university endeavours.

The NUC determines the factors that can have impact on student academic achievement. These factors include: teaching, manpower, quality of institutional delivery; entry requirement; facilities/equipment, course contents and mode of assessment. However, owing to the roles performed by the NUC, it is expected that the quality of university and other higher institutions across the country would have been improved in terms of having building that are conducive to learning, adequate lecture rooms that are well-equipped, adequate and well equipped libraries and furniture. It is also expected that higher education would be well founded and adequately staff with qualified lecturers. On this note, Obemeata (1995) observed that if all those factors, which was indications of quality mechanism are provided in higher education systems, it is expected that quality as well as attainment of the objective of higher education will be highly achieved.

After a careful analysis of education in Africa, Obanya (1992) concludes that all over the continent including Nigeria, higher education is not yielding the desired dividends. According to him, the individual beneficiary of education has not had desirable impact on society. This is so because quality of life in the society is often affected by the level and quality of social skills acquired in higher educations. Recognizing these short comings, the National Universities Commission (NUC) seems unlikely to provide national leadership in a vision for the future of the system, or to play a useful role in anticipating and analyzing important issues of higher education policy.

c) Institutional Audit is another important mechanism for quality assurance in our institutions of higher learning involving a visitation to be caused upon an institution such a directive derives from the powers conferred on the visitor to the universities (president in the case of federal universities,

Governors of state universities and the proprietor for private universities) visitors inspecting the institutions, its building, equipment and records help to assess the extent to which an institutions, quality assurance mechanisms are in practice operating in a way which ensures acceptable quality and standards in teaching and learning. It is pertinent to observe that in the past, visitations have been turned into a theatre of intrigue and punishment of sorts. Future visitations must be directional in order to fulfill its primary quality assurance role in our tertiary institutions.

Research Assessment Exercise is one of the key mechanisms for quality assurance in tertiary institutions. This exercise in some institution outside Nigeria is one of the external quality assurance processes. The purpose of this is to distribute public funds for research competitively based on the quality of research. Although this has not been significantly entrenched as a mechanism for quality assurance in the Nigerian tertiary institution, it is expected to evolve with the recent establishment of the National Universities Central Research Fund Scheme (CRFS) in the education system.

From this points of view, Lucas (2000) and Ajala (2004) explained that curriculum design for quality assurance in Nigerian higher education as elsewhere, should be qualitatively determined. Fafunwa (2003) shared the same opinion with Ajala (2004) by identifying mechanisms for quality assurance in Nigeria higher education as a effective way of making provision for education that will fight poverty and under development. Nigeria in the 21st century and beyond should move further into the league of the big powers, various stakeholders in higher education should co-operate in that direction by building structures and institutions that would encourage private initiative. Such mechanism for quality assurance should place more emphasis on development of science, technical and technology education to enable individual be self-developed instead of relying on government for employment. However, the analysis often given by the World Bank (2002) on the numbers of scientists and engineers engaged in research and development programme still revealed that much have not really been achieved in the areas of technological development.

Statement of the problem

The scenario in the Nigeria tertiary institutions today indicate that there is crisis in the educational system when viewed against different research reports, documentations and commentaries from scholars such as (Ogundeko Report 1990; Babalola 2001; Adedipe 2005; and Umoh 2006). The impact of the crisis as reported by Ajayi (2004) and documented by Umoh (2006) indicated that employers and professional bodies have complained about considerable fall in educational standard over the past decade and that degrees and higher certificates are no longer a guarantee of communication skills and technical competence, as a result, our graduates are viewed as half baked. This is a course for concern when compared with the observation by Borishade (2002) that Nigeria tertiary institution exhibited conscious effort at

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ensuring an environment that is conducive for teaching, learning and research in the 60's and greater part of the 70's.

These problems emanates from lack of interest on the part of our educational policy makers in developing meaningful and reliable, mechanisms for improving the quality of Nigeria tertiary institutions. Furthermore, problems facing the Nigerian tertiary institutions are the problems of under funding; government priority to education is now very low and declining fast. Other problems of ensuring quality include, lack of adequate planning, expansion of students enrolment (Oduleye, 1985) over the years.

The provision of scientific and research materials have been drastically neglected, quality of teaching has fallen considerably, libraries are stocked with out-dated books and journals, and the morale of staff has reduced to its lowest ebb. Provision of facilities has been grossly inadequate while student's enrolment continues to rise astronomically.

Ijaiya (2004) perceived the following factors experienced by tertiary institutions as negative mechanisms that have affected quality assurance significantly.

- i) Population explosion at all levels
- ii) Inadequate funding
- iii) Deteriorating physical facilities
- iv) Recurrent students and staff unrest that has led to truncated academic calendar.
- v) Cultists activities
- vi) Low level of staff development
- vii) Obsolete equipment
- viii) Lack of autonomy and academic freedom for tertiary institutions
- ix) Political interference
- x) Inconsistent policies

All these negative mechanisms have conspired against quality assurance functions in Nigeria higher education system.

METHODOLOGY

The design of this study was an assessment survey research design. Gay (1996) explained that assessment survey research design is concerned with the evaluation of attitudes or opinions towards individuals and organizations. Also Nworgu (1991) noted that research design is concerned with making decisions relating to the value and worth of education, materials, methods and programme based on empirical data. Therefore, since they study is aimed at finding out practices and conditions that is prevailing as well as opinions of respondents, this design is said to be appropriate. The study was carried out in all Federal Government Tertiary Institutions (universities,

polytechnics and colleges of education and management staff of ministry of education. The population of the study consist of 15,000 people proportionate stratified random sampling technique was employed to draw out a sample size of 35 government staff of the Ministry of Education and 1280 academic staff of sampled Federal Tertiary Institutions. The stratification was based on education zones and states. On the whole, a sample size of 35 government staff and 1280 academic staff of federal tertiary institutions were used as sample size for the study.

The instrument for data collection was an opinion response questionnaire tagged Assessing the Functionality of Mechanisms for Quality Assurance Questionnaire (AFMQAQ) designed by the researcher. The instrument has three sections A,B,C. Section 'A' contained information on personal data of the respondents. Section 'B' contained items on managerial skills needed by university lectures and government for implementation of quality assurance. Section 'C' has items on the usage of managerial skills by administrators of universities. The response opinions to the items were: very good, good, fair and poor. Items with mean below 2.50 was regarded as fair. The instrument was face validated by expert in the Department of Educational Administration and Planning, University of Calabar. Based on the comments made by the experts some items were restructured accordingly.

The reliability of the instrument was established using 30 respondents. Cronbach Alpha was used to compute the reliability where a reliability coefficient of 0.78 and 0.75 were obtained for section B and C. The research questions generated were answered using mean and standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question

1. What administrative skills do tertiary institution managers and government needs to carry out effective implementation of mechanism for quality assurance.
2. How do tertiary institution administrators and government use their managerial skills to implement quality assurance mechanism.

Research Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between manager and government on their mean rating on managerial skills needed for implementation of quality assurance mechanism.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between tertiary institution administrators and government in their mean rating on how administrators of tertiary institutions use managerial skills in quality assurance implementation.

RESULTS

The result of the study are presented in Tables 1-4 below according to the research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question 1

What administrative skills do tertiary institutions managers and government need to carry out effective implementation of mechanism for quality assurance?

Table 1: Mean rating of institution managers and government on administrative skills needed for effective implementation of mechanism for quality assurance.

S/n	Items	Lecturer = 1280 Government = 35					Decision
		Lect X ₁	Govt X ₂	X	SD ₁	SD ₂	
1.	Budget sufficient time for supervising teaching and learning in class.	2.97	3.46	3.23	0.91	0.50	G
2.	Delegate responsibility to subordinate staff.	1.19	1.74	1.82	0.83	0.01	F
3.	Conduct regular staff meetings with lecturers	2.52	3.03	2.78	1.03	0.78	G
4.	Collect data on areas of lecturers needs	2.28	3.43	3.43	0.94	0.65	G
5.	Create warm an friendly academic environment in school	2.56	2.94	2.90	0.95	0.99	G
6.	Encourage lecturer to participate in conferences and workshops	2.85	3.77	3.31	1.02	0.42	G
7.	Encourage minimum academic standard	3.00	3.44	3.23	0.85	0.65	G
8.	Develop continuous assessment procedure	3.29	3.11	3.20	0.61	0.72	G
9.	Introduce current teaching methods	2.86	3.20	3.03	0.87	0.90	G
10.	Establishment of new programmes into curriculum	2.10	2.21	2.15	0.96	1.05	F
11.	Provide lecturer with the necessary materials for effective teaching	2.89	2.97	2.93	0.97	1.04	G
12.	Reduce job stress among lecturers	3.39	3.49	3.44	0.79	0.50	G
13.	Help lecturers solve their personal problems	2.83	3.57	3.20	0.95	0.53	G
14.	Help resolve conflict that may arise among lecturers	2.87	3.023	3.08	0.96	0.55	G
15.	Monitoring teaching and learning process in class	3.14	3.07	3.36	0.92	0.65	G
16.	Motivation of lecturer through reward incentive	3.20	3.30	3.30	0.80	0.73	G
17.	Listen to feed back on lecturing regarding solutions to academic problems	3.90	2.85	2.85	0.93	0.86	G
18.	Update lecturers knowledge through in-service training	3.23	3.60	3.60	0.87	0.48	G
19.	Carry out frequent evaluation of lecturers	3.37	3.40	3.37	0.65	0.73	G
20.	Set achievable goals for the institution	3.10	3.51	3.31	0.80	0.70	G
	Cluster Mean		2.94				

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Table 1 show that both tertiary institution and government consider certain managerial skills important as quality assurance, mechanism to be implemented.

Like budgeting sufficient time for supervising teaching and learning in class, conduct regular staff meetings with lecturers, collect data on areas of lecturers needs, create warm friendly academic environment in school, encourage lecturers to participate in conference, workshops and seminar, ensure minimum academic standard, develop continuous assessment procedure, introduce current teaching methods, establishment of new programmes in the curriculum, provide lecturers with necessary materials for testing, reduce job stress among lecturers, help lecturer solve personal problem, help resolve conflict among lecturers, monitoring teaching and learning in class, motivation of lecturers through reward incentives, listening to feedback on lecturers, update lecturers knowledge through in-service training, carry out frequent evaluation of learners, set achievement goals for the institution. All those items have individual mean above 2.50.

Research Question 2

How do tertiary institutional administrators and government use their managerial skills to implement quality assurance mechanism. Table 2 above shows that both the institutional administrators and government considered certain skills as being well applied by lecturers to ensure implementation of assurance mechanisms. These are observable in the areas of collecting data on areas of lecturers needs, creating warm friendly academic environment, delegate responsibilities to subordinate for improved performance. Taking appropriate decision regard of the performance of lecturers. Each of the items has a mean score equal to and above the table mean of 2.50. However, both the administrators and government considered the following managerial skills as fairly applied by learners in budgeting time sufficient to supervised teaching and learning in class, ensure minimum academic standards, conduct regular staff meeting with lecturers encouraging lecturer to participate in conference, workshops and seminars, develop continuous assessment procedures, introduce current teaching methods, establish new programmes, reduce job stress, help lecturers resolve personal problems, help lecturer resolve conflict, motivate lecturers through incentives has individual mean below 2.50.

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Table 2: Mean rating of the institutional administrators and government on the usage of managerial skills needed to implement quality assurance mechanisms.

S/n	Items	Lecturer = 1280 Government = 35					Decision
		Lect X_1	Govt X_2	X	SD ₁	SD ₂	
1.	Budget sufficient time for supervising teaching and learning in class.	2.41	2.09	2.10	0.96	0.9	FA
2.	Delegate responsibility to subordinate staff.	1.50	1.40	1.45	1.56	0.65	FA
3.	Conduct regular staff meetings with lecturers	1.87	1.86	0.87	0.89	0.79	FA
4.	Collect data on areas of lecturers needs	3.02	3.06	3.04	0.88	0.84	G
5.	Create warm and friendly academic environment in school	2.44	2.66	2.55	1.13	1.03	G
6.	Encourage lecturer to participate in conferences and workshops	1.41	1.80	1.61	0.65	0.83	FA
7.	Enable minimum academic standard	2.84	2.80	0.89	0.85	0.90	G
8.	Develop continuous assessment procedure	1.96	2.00	0.98	0.61	0.97	FA
9.	Introduce current teaching methods	2.23	2.11	1.08	0.87	0.93	FA
10.	Establishment of new programmes in curriculum	1.86	1.83	0.96	0.96	0.86	FA
11.	Provide lecturer with the necessary materials for effective teaching	2.91	2.83	2.87	0.85	0.92	G
12.	Reduce job stress among lecturers	2.80	1.88	1.99	1.02	0.83	FA
13.	Help lecturers solve their personal problems	2.16	1.97	2.07	1.07	1.04	FA
14.	Help resolve conflict that may arise among lecturers	2.22	2.17	2.20	0.98	0.89	FA
15.	Monitoring teaching and learning process in class	2.66	1.83	1.25	1.07	1.03	FA
16.	Motivation of lecturer through reward incentive	1.80	2.20	2.64	0.80	0.96	G
17.	Listen to feed back on lecturing regarding solutions to academic problems	1.99	2.20	2.69	0.80	0.96	G

Hypotheses

Table 3: T-test analysis of no significant difference between tertiary institutions managers and government on the mean rating on managerial skills needed for implementation of quality assurance mechanism.

Variable	N	X	XD	df	t-crit	t-cal	Result
Institution managers	1280	37.03	17.4	13.13	1.96	0.56	Not significant Ho ₁ is accepted
Government	35	64.15	13.13				

Table 3 above shows that there is no significant difference between the mean rating of tertiary institution managers and the government on the management skills needed by tertiary institution managers to implement quality assurance mechanism. This is indicated by the calculated t-value of

0.56 which is found to be less than t-table of 1.96. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the mean rating of institutional managers and government on the managerial skills needed for effective implementation of mechanism for quality assurance is upheld.

Table 4: t-test analysis of no significant difference in the mean scores of tertiary institution administration and government on the usage of managerial skills in implementing quality assurance mechanism.

Variable	N	X	XD	df	t-crit	t-cal	Result
Institution administration	1280	37.03	17.4	13.13	0.49	1.96	Not significant
Government	35	64.15	13.13				Ho ₁ is accepted

Table 4 above shows that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of institutional, administrators and government on application of managerial skills in implementing mechanisms for quality assurance. This is shown by the calculated t-value of 0.49 which is found to be less than the critical value of 1.6. Therefore, the null hypothesis which state that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of institutional administration and government on the application of managerial skills in implementing the mechanisms for quality assurance in their schools.

DISCUSSION

Table 1 and 2 above shows that tertiary institution administrators and government in Cross River and Benue State considered 18 of the 20 managerial skills listed as needed by tertiary institution administrators for effective implementation of mechanism for quality assurance. The administrators and government by the nature of their training, position and experience are expected to know these management of the mechanisms for quality assurance in educational institutions. School administrators have these skills as their primary tools for ensuring quality performance in their schools. By schooling, they therefore understand better those that are actually needed to be applied by them.

This findings is in agreement with the findings of Akubue (1979) Ezeanyika (1998) and Kopecky (1986) when they wrote that institutional administrators needed some managerial techniques, zeal and competencies in ensuring quality and standard in education system. The findings also showed that both the school managers and governments as stakeholders regarded resolving conflicts in their institutions, providing teachers with necessary teaching materials and updating lecturers knowledge as more useful for

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sustenance of quality education and hence will receive special attention during in-service training programme. Table four showed that both the administrators of tertiary institution and government rated administrators application of managerial skills as only fairly applied. This finding is in line with the work of Murangi (1995) Chinwuba (1989) and Ezeifeoma (1991) that showed that most school administrators appear to lack effective skill of implementing of the mechanisms for quality assurance and should be reoriented to intensify their effort on the need to recognized the importance of quality and standard in education system through effective utilization of the mechanisms for quality and control.

Educational Implications of the Finding

Prospect for quality assurance implementation in Nigeria tertiary institutions depends on the development of career-related programmes and the use of uniform curriculum of studies the same course or programmes offered by the tertiary institutions. Through this approach, graduates of all the institutions will acquire the same knowledge and skills in nation building. The implication is that the national universities commission (NUC) the National Board for Technical for Education (NBTE) and the national council for colleges of education (NCCE) through their accreditation visits to tertiary institutions of learning would intensified their efforts in emphasizing uniform instructional objectives and minimum academic standards to ensure that no matter which institution a student graduates from there would be a possibility to provide the required services to employers or to pursue a higher degree with ease.

With ensure quality assurance in education, there would be the need for objective management approach to be applied in running tertiary institutions by providing workers with the right equipment, payment of approved wages as agreed upon, providing suitable learning facilities and environment for student and staff, ensuring safety of students, avoiding discrimination and victimization of workers (Umoli, 1995). Students unionisms and trade union roles which are also instrument for quality control and assurance would be given urgent attention in handling students and workers grievances and checking of the excesses of lecturers and management for improved quality performance.

Further implications is that, the functioning of mechanisms for quality assurance results in programme-linkage and institutional affiliation in which academic standard is maintain and also give exposure to the institution. Once programmes are linked, it is believed that such programmes have met international standard through regular checking and assessment of staffing strength, courses and facilities.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion the paper observed that the desire for better quality education should be generally a shared feeling in Nigeria as in many other countries. This study further indicates that administrators of tertiary educational institution encounter some difficulties in organizing academic programmes towards achievement of education goals. These difficulties are encountered due to lack of managerial skills or application of the mechanisms for quality assurance. The study reveal among others that most of the managerial skill, especially delegating of responsibilities, and introducing new academics programme into school curriculum. The school administrators and government agreed that the usage of managerial skills were fairly or poorly applied in the two states. From the ongoing it is inferred that mechanisms for quality assurance as a concept that enhance internal efficiency is not fully integrated into the Nigeria tertiary institutions. This is premises on the observed inadequacies that external mechanisms for quality assurance. This has translated to the production of half-baked graduates who are unable to meet the expectations of the labour market. It is also observed that the tertiary institutions regulatory framework has been incapacitated by the hydra-headed problems such as lack of motivation, inadequate funding, political interference and inconsistent policies. The paper however were the various governments as a matter of urgency to come up with a realistic strategy for sustainable development of higher education system. There is therefore need for a systematic and institutional transformation of Nigeria tertiary institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Bases on the finding of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government, through the ministries of education in both Cross River and Benue States school organized conference, workshops and seminar for teaching institution administrators should enlighten them on the relevance of managerial skills required for sustenance of quality education.
2. Institution administrators should devote time to using managerial skills to ensure quality and standard in the education system.
3. Each quality assurance mechanism of tertiary institutions needs to be carefully analyzed to be in line with the progress of specific institution.
4. Enough fund should be provided for institutions to enable them execute academic programme and offer quality services with ease.
5. This would be possible through government effort of frequently, embarking on honest and difficulty monitoring of funds allocation to these institutions to ensure proper usage and accountability.

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