Administrative Support Services and Quality Assurance in Public Secondary Schools in Cross River State, Nigeria

Mary Mark Ogbeche*[1], John Atewhoble Undie[1], Kelechi Victoria Emeribe[1]

[1]Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Educational Foundation Studies, University of Calabar-Nigeria

Corresponding author: Mary Mark Ogbeche
Email: maryogbeche1985@gmail.com
Phone Number: +2348052134609

ABSTRACT

This study examined administrative support services and quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. Two research questions were raised to direct the study, and two hypotheses formulated to guide it. The correlational research design was adopted for this study. The population of this study comprised all the 281 public secondary schools in Cross River State. The census approach was used as the sampling procedure. One instrument tagged "Administrative Support Services and Quality Assurance Questionnaire (ASSQAQ)" was used for data collection. The instrument was trial-tested using the Cronbach Alpha method. The reliability coefficients ranged from .82 to .91. These figures indicated that the instrument was reliable to be used for the study. Simple Regression, Multiple Regression, mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis. The results of the analysis revealed that staff support service and school healthcare support service, individually and jointly relate significantly to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State. Based on this result, it was concluded that administrative support services have significant relationship with quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State and government should ensure all public secondary schools in the State have functional and well-equipped sickbays, so as to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the schools.

Keywords: Administrative support services, Health care support services, Quality assurance, Public schools, Staff support services.

1. Background of the Study

For a nation to rise to attain global competitiveness in the League of Nations, it must ensure that high quality is attained and sustained in her educational system because no meaningful development can take place without it (OECD, 2012). The extent to which the above expectation of the government is achieved depends largely on the quality of the education provided to the citizenry (Nwite & Alumode, 2011). It is on this premise that the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014) in her National Policy on Education stipulates that education in Nigeria is an instrument "par excellence" for effecting national development.

Meanwhile, quality in education connotes excellent performance, highly committed employees, good examination results, well planned lessons, innovative teaching methods, good attendance and punctuality, accurate collection and analysis of data, annual targets, accepting advice, working together, community participation, listening to each other, among other indicators (Odigwe, 2019). Quality assurance in education is the efficient management, monitoring, evaluation and reviews of the resource inputs and transformation process (teaching and learning) to produce quality outputs (graduates) that meet set standards and expectations of the society (Ayeni, 2012; Onuma & Okpalanze, 2017; Osakwe, 2016). This implies that quality assurance in any school system is directed towards ensuring effective teaching and learning in order to maximize students' learning in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of educational objectives in schools.

Quality assurance 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 for itself. Orji (2019) notes that quality assurance efforts comprise administrative and procedural activities put in place in a quality system so that students' academic performance could be improved upon. Ofojebe and Ezugoh (2010) further explain that quality assurance in education entails the quality of teaching personnel, quality of available instructional and teaching materials, equipment and facilities, school environment and students, including quality of education delivery. Quality assurance in secondary schools focuses on such areas as instructional leadership, learning contents and experiences, learning environments, students' achievement measures, monitoring students' attendance, discipline, school climate, personnel, and school/community partnership programmes (Odigwe, 2019).

The issue of poor or low quality of education in schools generally is on the increase in Nigeria. This is reflected in the level of poor academic performance and consequently unemployment, dwindling economy, moral decadence, redundant workers, ill-prepared secondary school graduates and excessive dependence on developed western countries (Babalola, 2007). Some of these problems in Cross River State are more prevalent as many secondary school students are underperforming. Teachers also display a high sense of negative attitudes to work which is manifested in their nonchalant attitudes to writing notes of lessons, refusal to teach students as and when due, and other such unacceptable behaviour such as truancy and malingering, among others. In some secondary schools in the State, teachers cannot use instructional materials effectively. Some lack proficiency in the utilization of modern instructional strategies, while some do not have the technical ability to use e-learning applications in delivering instruction to students. All these undermine the quality of education delivered in secondary schools in the State (Ayodele, 2007; Orji, 2019).

Going by the observed rate of failure in internal and external examinations among secondary school students in Cross River State and the inability of secondary schools to assure quality service delivery in the State, it is not surprising that this situation could be attributed to poor administrative support services of the school administrators. For instance, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (2019), thirty six thousand four hundred and one (36,401) candidates sat for the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) in 2018. However, only nineteen thousand five

hundred and seventy three (19,573), which represents 53.77%, could obtain five credits and above, including Mathematics and English Language. This suggests that it may be very difficult to assure quality in Cross River State public secondary schools in the absence of effective administrative support services. At the secondary school level, administrative support services may be seen as the tasks performed on a day-to-day basis with human and material resources to sustain quality educational service delivery. They keep the school organization running smoothly and efficiently. Kassim (2012) submits that administrative support services help to improve educational programmes by enhancing the competence of teachers, providing a condusive environment for learning, and making learning experiences more qualitative for students. Some of the support services that could be effectively administered by school managers to assure quality secondary education delivery include: staff supports service, school healthcare support service, digital support service, counselling support service, infrastructural support service and supervisory support services (Ezugoh *et al*., 2019; Osamwonyi, 2016). From the forgoing, it seems quite glaring that administrative support services can have implications on the quality of education delivered in a school system. It is based on these persisting issues and failed measures that the researcher was prompted to wonder whether issues of poor quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State have any link with administrative supports services rendered in the schools.

Statement of the Problem
Quality assurance in secondary schools is very crucial, not only for the success of secondary education, but also for the development of Nigerian society. However, a critical observation by the researcher in Cross River State public secondary schools shows that some schools lack conducive learning environment for instructional delivery, there is low quality of instructional process for teaching and learning, some teachers are of low quality standard due to their inability to use modern instructional resources and their commitment to work, as well as poor learning outcome among students. Many teachers seem to teach below expectation; some do not prepare their lesson contents and subject matters with clear objectives to arouse students' interest towards learning. A good number of teachers lack classroom management skills and disciplinary measures for effective teaching and learning. There are insufficient pedagogical, scientific, methodological and technological innovations in the secondary education programme.

It is equally observed that the school environments are not sustainable for effective instructional processes. Some of the schools are ill-equipped with poorly ventilated office spaces, insufficient learning and recreational facilities. There are also dysfunctional libraries, dilapidated laboratories, and obsolete workshop facilities. The researcher noted that majority of teachers tend to grade their students without actually conducting Continuous Assessment Tests (CAT) to measure their academic progress. It is observed also that many students cannot read, write, spell or pronounce words correctly. They cannot cope with academic work, hence they do their assignment at will, come to school when they like, and cannot do well in internal and external examinations. This leads to cult activities, stealing, and high rate of indiscipline among the school leavers. One may however wonder if the rate of failure in internal and external examinations and the inability of the schools to achieve quality assurance may be attributed to poor administrative support services of the school managers. However, both Federal and State government have made several attempts by reviewing the secondary school curriculum, providing learning resources as well as organizing seminars and workshops to enhance the training of school personnel on school management models but the problem still persists. This has attracted the researchers' attention, to address the question: To what extent do administrative support services contribute to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria?

Research Objectives
The study investigated administrative support services and quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to find out whether:
1.   Staff support services relate to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State
2.   Health support services relate to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State.

Research Questions
The following research questions guided the study:
1.   What is the extent of staff support services in public secondary schools in Cross River State?
2.   What is the extent of Health support services in public secondary schools in Cross River State?

Research Hypotheses
The following research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:
1.   There is no significant relationship between staff support services and quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State.
2.   Health support services do not relate to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State significantly

2.   Methodology
The research design adopted for this study was the correlational design. This design was considered appropriate for this study because this research was designed to explore the nature of the statistical association between administrative support services and quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State. The population of this study comprised all the two hundred and eighty one (281) public secondary schools in the three Education Zones in Cross River State. The researcher adopted census approach, where all the elements in the population of the study were observed. All the two hundred and eighty one (281) public secondary schools in the three Education Zones in Cross River State were used for the study. One research instrument namely "Administrative Support Services and Quality Assurance questionnaire (ASSQAQ)" was designed for this study. The instrument validated by two specialists in Measurement and Evaluation and two specialists in Educational Management, all in the Faculty of Education, University of Calabar, Nigeria. The instrument was restructured to meet the face and qualitative content validity requirements. To determine the reliability of the instrument, the validated copy of the instrument was trial tested by producing and administering thirty (30) copies of it to a comparable group of respondents (teachers) in 3 public secondary schools in Uyo Education Zone of Akwa Ibom State using Cronbach Alpha co-efficient of .82 to 0.91 to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. Simple Linear Regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

3.   Results
Research Question 1
What is the extent of staff support services in public secondary schools in Cross River State?

Table 1: **Mean and Standard Deviation of the responses on the extent of staff support services in public secondary schools in Cross River State**

S/N	Staff support services	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1	There is regular provision of professional development programmes for teachers in my school	2.34	.402	False
2	Our teachers are not always encouraged to attend conferences	2.54	.456	True
3	Teachers are encouraged to avail themselves of in-service training opportunities	2.22	1.212	False
4	My school hardly provide orientation for new staff	2.50	.491	True
5	There is regular provision of incentives for staff in my school	2.01	.522	False
6	My school does not provide on-the-job training for teachers	2.56	.594	True
	Average mean & std. dev.	2.36	.612	Low extent

Criterion mean= 2.50

Source: (Field data, 2022)

The analysis in Table 1 shows that all items except items 2, 4 and 6, have mean scores below the criterion mean of 2.50. The analysis also shows that the standard deviation of the responses range from .402 to 1.212, which means that there is high level of agreement among the respondents on the direction of their responses. Specifically, while some staff agreed that they have been receiving supports, others disagreed with the fact that there are adequate support services for staff in their schools. However, the result revealed that the average mean of the responses is 2.36, and is less than the criterion mean of 2.50. This means that the extent to which staff support service is rendered to staff in public secondary schools in Cross River is low. This implies that the extent of staff support service in public secondary schools in Cross River State is low, implying that staff have not been adequate support for improved performance in the schools.

Research Question 2
What is the extent of school healthcare support services in public secondary schools in Cross River State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the responses on the extent of school healthcare support services in public secondary schools in Cross River State

S/N	School healthcare support services	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
7	Our school healthcare facilities are managed by professional staff	2.41	.343	False
8	There has not been adequate provision for National Health Insurance Scheme in my school	2.51	.372	True
9	There are regular physical health assessment routines in my school	2.45	.461	False
10	My school sickbay is not equipped with modern facilities	2.57	.349	True
11	Emergency healthcare are adequately provided in my school	2.36	.427	False
12	I use my money to but medicine for students who fall sick in the classroom.	2.50	.458	True
	Average mean & std. dev.	2.47	.401	Low extent

Criterion mean= 2.50

Source: (Field data, 2022)

Table 2 shows that all items except items 8, 10 and 12, have mean scores below the criterion mean of 2.50. The analysis also shows that the standard deviation of the responses range from .343 to .461, which means that there is high level of agreement among the respondents on the direction of their responses. Specifically, while some teachers agreed that there are school healthcare support services in their schools, others disagreed with the fact that there are adequate healthcare support services for staff and students in their schools. However, the result revealed that the average mean of the responses is 2.47, and is less than the criterion mean of 2.50. This means that the extent to which school healthcare support service is rendered to staff and students in public secondary schools in Cross River is low, implying that there is inadequate healthcare services in public secondary schools in the State.

Hypothesis one

There is no significant relationship between staff support services to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State.

Table 3: Summary of simple regression analysis for the relationship between staff support services and quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
.566	.320	.318	7.010		

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F-ratio	Sig.
Regression	6457.897	1	6457.897	131.432	.000
Residual	13708.680	279	49.135		
Total	20166.577	280			

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	46.868	2.569		18.243	.000
Staff support services	1.467	.128	.566	11.464	.000

a. Criterion: Quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State.
b. Predictors: (Constant), staff support services

Source: (Field data, 2022)

The two variables in this hypothesis were staff support services and quality assurance. Both staff support service and quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State were measured continuously. The result in Table 3 shows that the analysis of variance in the regression output produced an F-ratio of 131.432 (p< .05), which is statistically significant at .05 probability level with critical F-ratio of 3.89 and 1:279 degrees of freedom.

This means that the data for staff support services fit the model better than if staff support service was not added to the model, which means that staff support services contributed significantly to the observed variance in quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State. The result in Table 3 also shows a regression coefficient (R) of .566 and a coefficient of determination (R^2) of .320. This implies that staff support services relate significantly with quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State and that 32.0% of the variation in quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State is accounted for, by the variation in staff support services. Thus 68.0 % of the variance in quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State is attributed to the effect of other variables considered in this study.

Similarly, the result of the regression weights of the predictor variable (staff support services) in Table 3 shows positive unstandardized and standardized Beta coefficients (B and Beta) of 1.467 and .566 respectfully. This means staff support services varies directly with quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State and that a unit improvement in staff support services would

lead to a more than one unit improvement in quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State. Accordingly, the result in Table 3 also shows a t-value of 11.464 (p< .05). This implies that staff support service contributed significantly to the variation in quality assurance standard in public secondary schools in Cross River State. With this result therefore, hypothesis one is rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between staff support services and quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State.

Hypothesis 2
School healthcare support services do not significantly relate to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State.

Table 4: Summary of simple regression analysis for the relationship between school healthcare support services and quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.528	.278	.276	7.222

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F-ratio	Sig.
Regression	5613.917	1	5613.917	107.629	.000
Residual	14552.659	279	52.160		
Total	20166.577	280			

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	53.114	2.241		23.702	.000
school healthcare support services	1.235	.119	.528	10.374	.000

a. Criterion: Quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State.
b. Predictors: (Constant), school healthcare support services

Source: (Field data, 2022)

The two variables in this hypothesis were school healthcare support services and quality assurance. Both school healthcare support services and quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State were measured continuously. The result in Table 4 shows that the analysis of variance in the regression output produced an F-ratio of 107.629 (p< .05), which is statistically significant at .05 probability level with critical F-ratio of 3.89 and 1:279 degrees of freedom.
This means that the data for school healthcare support service fit the model better than if school healthcare support services was not added to the model. This result shows that school healthcare support service contributed significantly to the observed variance in quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State. The result in Table 4 also shows a regression coefficient (R) of .528 and a coefficient of determination (R2) of .278. This implies that school healthcare support services relate significantly with in quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River

State and that 27.8% of the variation in quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State is accounted for, by the variation in school healthcare support service. Thus 72.2 % of the variance in quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State is attributed to the effect of other variables considered in this study.

Similarly, the result of the regression weights of the predictor variable (school healthcare support services) in Table 4 shows positive unstandardized and standardized Beta coefficients (B and Beta) of 1.235 and .528 respectfully. This means school healthcare support service varies directly with quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State and that a unit improvement in school healthcare support service would lead to a more than one unit improvement in quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State. Accordingly, the result in Table 4 also shows a t-value of 10.374 ($p < .05$). This implies that school healthcare support services contributed significantly to the variation in quality assurance standard in public secondary schools in Cross River State. With this result therefore, hypothesis two is rejected. This means that school healthcare support services significantly relate to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State.

4.   Discussion
Staff support services and quality assurance in the school system

The analysis of the first hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between staff support services and quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State, revealed that staff support service has a significant relationship with quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State. This implies that the extent to which adequate staff support services is provided in public secondary schools in Cross River State determines the extent to which quality assurance is achieved in the schools. This result suggests that the extent to which quality assurance standard is maintained in public secondary schools in Cross River State is directly related to the level at which staff are given necessary support to acquire advanced professional learning intended to help teachers, and other educators to improve their expertise, knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness in their career.

This result agrees with Udofia and Ikpe (2012) who submitted that teachers who updates their skills through attending conferences, workshops, seminars, and in-house training sessions is likely to be dedicated to his teaching jobs and perform them effectively. In the same vein, Osamwonyi (2016) added that staff support services is likened to capacity building opportunities and involves all form of staff development programmes designed to provide teachers with additional learning experiences needed to enhance their self- developments and to improve their contributions towards the goals of education and the school system as a whole.

However, this result may be occasioned by the fact principals in public secondary schools in Cross River State are committed to the delivery of quality education to students. This result may be that teachers have inclination for development. This is because teachers no matter the level of support given to staff in any school system, if teachers are not determined to improve their professional tact, the quality of teaching and learning may not improve. This implies that the observed level of quality assurance in secondary schools in Cross River State may also relate to the level of commitment of principals and government of quality education and the extent to which teachers desire professional growth.

School healthcare support services and quality assurance in the school system

The analysis of the second hypothesis which stated that school healthcare support services do not significantly relate to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State, revealed that school healthcare support services significantly related to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State. This implies that the extent to which adequate school healthcare support services are provided in public secondary schools in Cross River State has direct congruence with the extent to which quality assurance standard is achieved in the schools. This result suggests that the extent to which quality assurance standard is maintained in public secondary schools in Cross River State is directly associated with the level at which adequate healthcare services are provided for staff and students in the schools.

Similarly, this result is in tandem with the assertions of Frances *et al*. (2016) who argued that teachers' health status and happiness, as well as their safety are the necessary ingredients of their effective job performance in schools. Also, Adeyemo *et al.* (2016) argued that Majority of the students lost focus of their studies and abuse drugs as a result of poor implementation of health remedial services in the tertiary institutions.

5.   Conclusion

Based on the result of the study, it was concluded that administrative support services significantly related to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Cross River State, and that the provision of effective staff support services and school healthcare support services is needed by government and secondary school administrators to maintain quality assurance and boost the quality of teaching and learning in the schools.

Conflict of interest

Authors have declared that no competing interest exist.

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