International Journal of Innovative Research and Advanced Studies (IJIRAS)
Volume 5 Issue 11, November 2018

ISSN: 2394-4404

Need Assessment And Product Quality As Quality Assurance Practices In Colleges Of Education In Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract: ***The main thrust of this study was to evaluate need assessment and product quality as quality assurance practices in colleges of education in Cross River State, Nigeria. To achieve the purpose of this study, two hypotheses were formulated to direct the study. Literature review was carried out accordingly. Survey research design was adopted for the study. A sample size of four hundred and eighty-three (483) respondents' was randomly selected for the study. The selection was done through the simple random sampling techniques. The questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to face validity by the supervisor and experts in Measurement Evaluation, Research and Statistics who vetted the items developed. The reliability estimate of the instrument was established through the cronbach alpha reliability method. Population t-test analysis was statistical analysis technique adopted to test the hypotheses under study. Each hypothesis was tested at .05 levels of significance. The result of the analysis revealed that need assessment and product quality is significantly high in Colleges of education in Cross River State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that ministries of Education in all states of Nigeria should adopt a specific period every year in the school calendar for comprehensive estimate and evaluation of attrition rates in primary schools.***

I. INTRODUCTION

It can be argued that education is a potent instrument for national development. This follows because education is a tool through which values, knowledge and skills are acquired, in any society. Obviously, the proper application of such values, knowledge and skills are fundamental to the development of any economy.

Education, no doubt is indeed an investment, and investment in human capital development plays a crucial role in productivity and institutional development (Dauda, 2010; Obasanjo, 2012). It is a means through which students, teachers, institutional heads, administrators, policy makers or scholars and the general public gain knowledge skills and values to address the socio-political, economic and environmental challenges of the present and coming decades. It is the most potent factor in Nigeria's quest to become one of the largest economies in the world and the strongest weapon against poverty (World Bank, 2003). Like other nations, Nigerian education is categorized into three main stages. These are primary, secondary and tertiary education. The term tertiary means 'third' and therefore tertiary education refers to the third stage of education that learners take on in the learning process (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2012).

The main function of the tertiary institutions is to produce skilled manpower for the various sectors of the society. They are set up to prepare the individuals for specialized job performance in the civil services, business organizations and private enterprises, through the inculcation of the necessary knowledge, skills, and values. This is so because from a global perspective, economic and social developments are increasingly being driven by the advancement and application of knowledge. Education in general and tertiary education in particular is fundamental to the construction of a knowledge based economy and society in all nations (World Bank, 2003).

Tertiary education encompasses Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. Each of the components of tertiary education has set goals and objectives which they are expected to attain. The goals and objectives are broken down into programmes which are guided by minimum

standard. Some of the standards are admission requirement, required infrastructure, teaching, school plant administration etc. To ensure that tertiary educational institutions live up to their expectations, government has set up supervisory agencies over them such as the National University Commission (NUC) for the Universities, National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), for the Polytechnics and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) for Colleges of Education.

To ensure that the expected standards are maintained, supervisory agencies carry out periodic accreditations of programmes in these institutions. The accreditations exercise investigates the level of institutional compliance with set standards such as admission requirements for students, staff requirements and infrastructural status of the institutions. This is maintained to ensure quality of products by the institutions. Quality assurance is therefore defined as a way of preventing mistakes or defects in manufactured products and avoiding problems when delivering solutions or services to customers.

However, tertiary education is guided by quality assurance approaches such as accreditation, assessment, admission, policies, infrastructural facilities which serve as a mechanism to achieve education objectives. Quality assurance therefore, is defined as a way of preventing mistakes or defects in manufactured products and avoiding problems when delivering goods or services to customers. Babalola (2004) also defined quality assurance as a means of ensuring that the best practices are encouraged in a social system.

Quality is in this context seen as a degree of excellence, while quality assurance is seen as a system of assuring that the quality of output meets the required standard at all times. The concern for quality has been at the core of the motivating forces for reforms in education. The objectives of establishing quality assurance agency in schools are clearly stated thus:

- ✓ To serve as indispensable component of quality control strategy in education.
- ✓ To ensure and maintain high standard of education at all levels.
- ✓ To assist in monitoring and supervision of education.
- ✓ To determine the quality of the teacher input.
- ✓ To determine the number of classrooms needed based on the average class size to ensure quality of education.
- ✓ To determine the level of adequacy of the facilities available for quality control.
- ✓ To ensure prudent management of available resources (Ehindero, 2004).

Arikewuyo (2004) views quality in education to be judged by both its ability to enable the students perform well in standard examinations and the relevance of the education to the needs of the students, community, and the society at large. However, quality assurance is related to quality control, but it functions in a rather proactive manner in the sense that quality control serves as series of operational techniques and activities used to ensure that what is required are met in the institutions.

The educational quality assurance status has been a serious issue of great debate and concern to many parents, teachers, educators, government and the society at large such that whenever two individuals meet, their conversation will sooner or later slide into the literary of the deficiencies of our educational system in terms of its quality assurance effectiveness.

This quality assurance status may be traceable to the administrative practices of some school administrators who may lack the necessary abilities and the willingness to rise to their responsibilities and challenge of personal example which is the hallmark of true and quality leadership to initiate the most superlative, workable, realistic and effective result-oriented administrative strategies in areas such as maintenance of infrastructure, supervision of student teachers, curriculum implementation, student learning environment, attrition rate, need assessment and product quality with the aim of achieving the ultimate goals and objectives of the school system.

Quality assurance is a process of ensuring quality and standards in a system so that requirements and goals for products, service or activity will be fulfilled. In colleges of education, quality assurance has to do with setting of acceptable baseline standards, rules and regulations for the various processes and activities in areas such as need assessment and product quality so as to bring about the standard of students that meet societal satisfaction. It is on this note that the study intends to evaluate quality assurance practices in Colleges of Education in Cross River State, Nigeria.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

NEED ASSESSMENT IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN CROSS RIVER STATE

Hallahan (2012) maintained that interest in the need and quality of University Education has grown considerably over the last decade or two. Although the specification of need assessment and enhancement of quality assurance is often complex and problematic, strong interest in the phenomenon has been stimulated and maintained by a range of factors. Students need accurate information about educational quality to help them choose between different courses of study. Academics and university administrators need information to help them monitor and improve their courses and programmes. Institutions need information about quality to help them benchmark and market their performance.

Government at all levels and other bodies need information to assist with funding, policy development and accountability. For these and other reasons, quality assurance has become part of the fabric of many higher education systems. As the principles and practices of quality assurance become more and more embedded in higher education, methodological questions about evaluating quality become increasingly important. The methods used for quality assurance need to be examined in the light of ongoing change in the phenomena being measured, new understandings of quality assurance and need assessment from the quality assurance system itself. Performance indicators shape quality considerations in many ways and are an important focus for such analyses. There is, accordingly, an ongoing need to examine the cogency of such indicators and to ensure that they are salient, sufficient and sound. While universities routinely collect a considerable and often increasing amount of data for the purposes of quality assurance, it is, at the same time,

important to keep reviewing the indicators and other measures that are at the heart of such routines.

Kaff (2004) argued for the importance of factoring information about 'student engagement' into determinations of the quality of university education. After introducing the idea of student engagement, the importance of taking account of such information is established through a critical review of quality assurance mechanisms in Australian higher education. This review exposes limitations with quality assurance approaches that, even after 20 years of development, exclude information about student engagement. The review suggests, in particular, that there is too much emphasis on information about institutions and teaching and not enough emphasis on what students are actually doing. Working from this context, the paper turns to examine the broad value of student engagement data for quality assurance. It then outlines an approach for factoring information about student engagement into quality assurance activities.

Recent years research into 'student engagement' has drawn together insights about which activities tend to generate high quality learning. The concept of student engagement is based on the constructivist assumption that learning is influenced by how an individual participates in educationally purposeful activities. Learning is seen as 'a joint proposition' (Davis & Murrell, 1993), however, which also depends on institutions and staff providing students with the conditions, opportunities and expectations to become involved.

However, individual learners are ultimately the agents in discussions of engagement, and primary focus is placed upon understanding their activities and situations. Thus, while the idea of student engagement draws together considerations about student learning, institutional environments, learning resources and teachers; it maintains a focus on students and on their involvement with university study. In essence, therefore, student engagement is concerned with the extent to which students are engaging in a range of educational activities that research has shown as likely to lead to high quality learning. Such activities might include active learning, involvement in enriching educational experiences, seeking guidance from staff or working collaboratively with other students. An example illustrates the idea. To begin with, institutions and teachers need to provide students with the appropriate resources and opportunities to make possible and promote specific kinds of interactions. This may involve academic staff making themselves available for consultation outside class time, campus libraries having sufficient space for students to work collaboratively, curricula and assessment that compel certain standards of performance or activities and events around campus that prompt students to reflect on the ethics and practices of their learning. However, students also need to interact with these conditions and activities in ways that will lead to productive learning. Students need to expend a certain 'quality of effort' (Pace, 1979), to challenge themselves to learn, to interact with new ideas and practice and to practice the communication, organisational and reflective skills that should help them learn and will form an important part of what they take from university.

A great deal of energy in quality assurance is focused on academic staff and their teaching. This most likely stems from the instructivist assumption that university teaching staff hold much responsibility for student learning. This, in turn, is based on the assumption that high quality teaching will lead to high quality learning. As well as being a primary source of standards and expectations, teachers typically select material given to students, determine how students work and set formative and summative assessments. Along with the accountability of teaching staff to their institutions, such assumptions imply a line of control that is seen to support this approach to quality assurance. In this view, with institutions assuring the quality of pedagogy and teachers assuring the quality of student learning, educational quality is assured.

The quality of university teaching can be monitored at a national level in a range of ways. One option may be through review of teaching qualifications held by academic staff. Although increasingly emphasized as a part of academic work, there are no requirements in Australia for teaching staff at universities to have formal teaching qualifications. If this approach were to be pursued it would be necessary to address the further issue of developing a means of grading different kinds of qualifications. It would be necessary to develop infrastructure to enable and support staff to develop their qualifications and to provide incentives that would be sufficient to lure them from potentially more lucrative research opportunities. It would be necessary to develop a response to the once dominant perception in higher education that discipline knowledge is sufficient for quality teaching. These are significant and substantial issues, however, they will take considerable effort and commitment to achieve.

Research has challenged the notion that what students do inside the classroom is the only or most significant part of their educational experience (Kuh *et al.*, 2004; McInnis *et al.*, 2001; McInnis, 2002). Such research has emphasized the direct educational benefits of beyond-class experiences, the value of considering a more holistic understanding of the student experience, the value that beyond-class experiences add to formal learning activities and the importance of understanding emerging dynamics of student behaviour. This research has challenged the validity of the distinction between 'in class' and 'out-of-class'. Given an increasingly large, flexible and open higher education environment with ever diversifying types of students, understanding how students spend their time outside class is being seen as increasingly important. With only information about how students spend their time in-class, institutions are limited in their capacity to explicitly manage the student experience and to leverage out-of-class time to enhance learning. Although quality assurance procedures in Australian higher education include a number of student level measures, none consider the processes by which students engage in their study. It is argued here that this deficit limits the explanatory power of the current system, despite the strengths of some of the indicators.

A much used measure of student learning in Australian higher education is the student progress rate. This rate reflects the proportion of subjects passed of all those a student has attempted. Student progress data provides a measure of the extent to which students have passed the subjects in which they were enrolled and the extent to which they are progressing through the system. However, student progress data is limited as a measure of academic performance. Student progress is relative not only to students, but also to courses.

Student progress rates that indicate a high level of student movement through the system may also be indicative of low academic standards or demands. A further limitation of the current student progress measure is of greater concern. While students receive summative assessment via numerical marks and letter grades, student progress is only recorded as a binary measure. In this context students are measured as successful so long as they have only barely passed a subject. In turn, the current measure of student progress provides little incentive for institutions to enhance the quality of students' academic performance. Where the student progress rate is used as a measure of academic success it needs to do more than measure and encourage minimal academic standards.

Student retention is calculated as a national measure of student persistence. The retention index provides a basic and necessary measure of the quality and productivity of university education. Although the measure reflects the extent to which students have fulfilled the requirements of their course in the year preceding measurement, it is not without its limitations. In an increasingly flexible or distributed higher education environment, which aims to attract students from diverse educational, social and cultural backgrounds, it is not entirely clear how persistence should be most appropriately measured. Should it take into account the time taken to complete a course? What happens if students defer for long periods of time? How should retention indices count students who articulate into more advanced courses or transfer between courses? Should retention be adjusted for demographic and contextual variables? How can the lagging retention indicator be best interpreted in contexts and to cohorts which may have changed markedly over intervening years? These issues aside, student retention is no doubt a critical, although blunt, indicator of the extent to which students are involved in higher education.

While student demand provides a measure of student entry into higher education, graduate destinations have been a commonly used measure of student outcomes. The Graduate Destination Survey (GDS) (Graduate Careers Council of Australia, 2002) has been administered as an exit survey since 1972 to obtain data on graduate starting salaries, the proportion of graduates in full-time study and the proportion of graduates in full-time employment.

There is no doubt that graduate destinations represent one of the more important outcomes of higher education, indicating the extent to which university education has equipped students with qualifications, skills and experiences required for employment. Despite this, there are a number of problems with using graduate destinations as a measure of the quality of university education. Data on destinations is a lagging indicator which is difficult to link with current practices and programmes. More importantly, however, employment outcomes can be influenced by a range of non-educational factors, such as institutional reputation, personal networks and labour market conditions. Employment outcomes data provides a measure only of the utilitarian function of university study, which may be only contingently linked with the broader less vocationally specific educational roles of tertiary study.

PRODUCT QUALITY IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN CROSS RIVER STATE

Ogbiji, Ategwu, and Ogbiji (2016) carried out a study on the perception of Head Teachers on the quality of NCE teachers produced through National Teachers Institute (NTI) of Nigeria programme. The study was guided by three research questions and three hypotheses. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted in selecting a sample of 400 Head Teachers from two educational zones in Cross River State. Questionnaire containing twenty items was used to elicit information. The data collected was analyzed at .05 confidence level, using population t-test for hypotheses 1, 2, & 3. The findings were that NCE teachers produced through NTI programme are competent in the general studies aspect of education, competent in their area of specialization and in the professional aspect of teacher education. Some gray areas were identified in the professional education area and recommendations made on how to improve NTI programme generally and the gray areas in particular.

Introduction teachers are the bedrock of any educational programme. The success or failure of any educational programme equally depends on teachers' knowledge, understanding and commitment to its objectives.

It is for this reason that the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2008) acknowledged in her National Policy on Education that "no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers". This implies that no education system is better than the quality of its teachers. With expanded educational opportunities for Nigerians occasioned by the introduction of the Universal Primary Education in 1976 and the launching of the Basic Education in 1999, Nigerians have free access to education from primary to junior secondary level. This leverage has had concomitant unprecedented increase in school enrolment which has necessitated the expansion in the teacher training programme of the country. To this effect the Federal Republic of Nigeria has in addition to the institution-based training of teachers like the faculties of education, institutes of education and colleges of education, introduced the distance learning programme for the production of teachers known as National Teachers Institute (NTI) of Nigeria (Alani, 2005). National Teachers Institute (NTI): A Historical Purview The National Teachers Institute popularly known as NTI is a distance learning programme established by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1974 in response to the long felt need to upgrade serving teachers and to improve the quality and standard of their education. This became necessary as Okeke (2004) puts it, that as at 1974 when the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme was being conceived, 53% of the primary school teachers were untrained and 80% were deemed unqualified. Moreso, it was projected that with the launching of the UPE in 1976, there will be increase in school enrolment thereby necessitating increase in the number of teachers. There was need for increase also in the number of teacher -training institutions.

The NTI provided an opportunity for serving teachers to upgrade their teaching qualification and remain in service. It also provided school leavers and drop-outs the opportunity to become trained teachers outside the formal school setting. The NTI programme as well complemented teacher training

programme carried out by Teacher Training Colleges, Colleges of Education, Institutes of Education and Faculties of Education. Atton-Lee (2003) and Alani (2005) have observed that NTI programme operates mostly on weekends and in centres not ideal for students, and that teachers/facilitators in the programme are subjected to the use of modules not prepared by themselves.

The learning is equally restricted to the modules which often times do not challenge the initiative and creativity of students. Also, that the concentration and dedication to the programme are lacking on the part of the students most of whom are workers. Alani concludes that the quality of the NTI graduates are affected by the above negative variables. Before agreeing or disagreeing with the above observation, it is necessary to re-examine the objectives of teacher education, according to the National Policy on Education (2008) and Uche and Onyemerekeya (1998).

The importance of quality in teacher education is well recognized in Nigeria as in all education communities all over the world. Its National Policy on Education affirms that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers (Federal Government of Nigeri, 2004). In fact nothing is as important to learning as the quality of the learner's teacher. Thus, teacher education (pre- and in-service) must prepare teachers for this role. However, there is no coherent teacher education policy in Nigeria; there are uncoordinated disparate attempts by Federal and State governments to address the problems of teacher quality, demand and supply and the attempts are largely a matter of institutional provisions only (FME, 2007). Only recently, the Independent Development Partners (IDPs) have shown interest in helping Nigeria develop a Teacher Education Policy (TEP) and specifically, USAID/ENHANSE has in fact submitted a draft TEP which was presented at the Joint Consultative Committee on Education (JCCE) Reference Committee Meeting in July 2007. It is enrooted to approval by the National Council on Education (NCE) later in the year after recommendation by the JCCE Plenary Session.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design used for this study is Survey design. The population of the study comprised all staff (teaching and non-teaching) numbering 1239 in Cross River State College of Education, Akamkpa and Federal College of Education, Obudu. The purposive sampling technique was adopted for this study. The sample consisted of 483 staff (teaching and non-teaching) in Cross River State College of Education, Akamkpa and Federal College of Education, Obudu. One instrument was used for data collection. The questionnaire was titled "Need Assessment and Product Quality Questionnaire (NAPQQ)" in determining need assessment and product quality. The instrument consisted of 16 items modified four point Likert type scale ranging from: Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD) to measure need assessment and product quality. The instrument was face-validated by ensuring that the instrument contained the appropriate items that measured the variables studied; and all words or items that would confuse the raters were completely removed. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha reliability co-efficient method.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

In this section, each of the hypotheses of the study is re-stated, and the results obtained from Utilization of Online Resources by Undergraduates in Colleges of education in Cross River State is carried out to test it, are presented and interpreted. Each of the hypothesis was tested at .05 levels of significance.

HYPOTHESIS ONE

Need assessment is not significantly high.

There is only one variable in this hypothesis, which is need assessment. Test statistics: t-test of one sample mean (also known as population t-test) was employed to test this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Cal t-value	Sig.
Need Assessment	483	29.6190	2.65589	245.095*	.000

** Significant at .05 level, critical t = 1.96, df = 482.*

Table 1: Population t-test analysis of whether the level of need assessment is significantly high (N=483)

The result presented in Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the sample on the level of need assessment as focus in this study. The calculated absolute t-value of 245.095 is higher than the critical t-value of 1.96 at .05 level of significance with 482 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that assessment of the level of need assessment is significantly high.

HYPOTHESIS TWO

Product quality is not significantly high.

There is only one variable in this hypothesis, which is product quality. Test statistics: t-test of one sample mean (also known as population t-test) was employed to test this hypothesis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 10.

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Cal t-value	Sig.
Product Quality	483	33.3644	2.55393	287.110*	.000

** Significant at .05 level, critical t = 1.96, df = 482.*

Table 2: Population t-test analysis of whether the level of product quality is significantly high (N=483)

The results of analysis presented in Table 2 have shown the mean and standard deviation of the sample on the level of product quality at focus in this study. The calculated absolute t-value of 287.110 is higher than the critical t-value of 1.96 at .05 level of significance with 482 degrees of freedom. With this result, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that assessment of the level of product quality is significantly high.

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In the course of this investigation, some pertinent findings were made. They are hereby discussed in this section of the report. To ensure clarity in the discussion, the presentation is made on a finding-by-finding basis.

The test of the first hypothesis revealed that the level of need assessment is significantly high. Put differently, the Colleges of Education covered in this investigation are adequately carrying out need assessment to determine what their needs are and how they can be solved. The extent to which they do this is significantly high enough. In other words, the Colleges consider it necessary from time to time to carry out need assessment. The findings is in line with the view of Hallahan (2012) who maintained that interest in the need and quality of university education has grown considerably over the last decade or two. Although the specification of need assessment and enhancement of quality assurance is often complex and problematic, strong interest in the phenomenon has been stimulated and maintained by a range of factors. Students need accurate information about educational quality to help them choose between different courses of study. Academics and university administrators need information to help them monitor and improve their courses and programmes. Institutions need information about quality to help them benchmark and market their performance.

The test of the second hypothesis revealed that the level of product quality is significantly high. This is to say that graduates turned out by the institutions are good enough to justify that other components of the institutions are in order. This is possible because if there is proper maintenance of infrastructure, adequate supervision of students, high extent of curriculum implementation, suitable learning environment, attrition rate, need assessment, and product quality, there is therefore bound to be good quality graduates from such a system. The finding is in line with the view of Ogbiji, Ategwu, & Ogbiji, (2016) who observed that NCE teachers produced through NTI programme are competent in the general studies aspect of education, competent in their area of specialization and in the professional aspect of teacher education. Some gray areas were identified in the professional education area and recommendations made on how to improve NTI programme generally and the gray areas in particular. Introduction Teachers are the bedrock of any educational programme. The success or failure of any educational programme equally depends on teachers' knowledge, understanding and commitment to its objectives.

V. CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that; need assessment and product quality is significantly high in Colleges of education in Cross River State. Based on the findings of the study it was recommended that Ministries of Education in all states of Nigeria should adopt a specific period every year in the school calendar for comprehensive estimate and evaluation of attrition rates in primary schools.

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