



Management Strategies for Effective Implementation of Internal Quality Assurance Policy of Universities in Bayelsa State

*** Ugolo, Stella P. Ph.D.¹**

Onukwu, James N. Ph.D.²

¹Department of Education, Faculty of Arts and Education, University of Africa, Toru-Orua Bayelsa State.

²Department of Arts Education, Faculty of Education, Federal University Otuoke

Abstract

The study investigated management strategies for effective internal quality assurance policy of universities in Bayelsa State. A descriptive survey research design. The population of the study were all the 321 staff that deals with quality assurance (Deans, HODs and Staff of QA Dept) from the four universities located in Bayelsa State. (Federal University Otuoke; Niger Delta University, Amasoma; University of Africa, Toro-Oluwa; and the Bayelsa Medical University, Yenagoa). A simple random sampling techniques was used to select 160 of them for the study by ensuring that at least 40 respondents were selected from each university. Two research questions and one hypothesis were raised to guide the study. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled “Management Strategies for Effective Internal Quality Assurance Policy of Universities in Bayelsa State Questionnaire (MSEIQAPQUE)” was designed, validated, pilot-tested (N=20, r=.88). A google online form was designed and used for collection of data, sent to the various WhatsApp platforms. Descriptive statistics of mean was used to answer the research questions while t-test statistics was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed low level implementation of internal quality assurance policies. However, the study suggests classroom base assessment, university-industry engagement, collaboration with foreign universities and inter-university assessment as new management strategies to enhance implementation of internal quality assurance of universities in Bayelsa State. The study also shows that there is no significant difference in the quality assurance strategies of old and new universities. It was therefore recommended among others, the urgent need to introduce classroom-based assessment to improve internal quality assurance of the universities.

Keywords: Quality Assurance, Universities and Management Strategies

Introduction

University system is mainly designed to produce advanced human potentials for societal growth. Its operations through teaching research and community services must be regulated if the purpose for its establishment is to be attained. This process of regulation could either be self or externally, referred to as quality assurance process (Ogbeche, 2021). Therefore, ensuring that the graduates from the university system meets specific standard in terms of employment, research and ultimately skills that will bridge the gap that exist within societies should be the priority of management (Haruni & Sipora, 2014). Research findings suggests that internal quality assurance is simply the process of enhancing quality standard of a university for the attainment of aspirations in excellence through its products and services obviously seen in the exploits of its graduates (Otekunrin & Fagboro, 2021; Adedipe, 2007; Tom & Nancy, 1985; Sallis, 1993). Just as Haruni and Sipora (2014) asserted that some graduates should be blamed for lacking appropriate competency? We also need to ask if the university quality



assurance practitioners rethink and act according to the growing demands for improved quality assurance practices within the system? (Otekunrin & Fagboro, 2021; Haruni & Sipora, 2014).

The process of responding to this critical question could be the adoption of internal review process by management of universities through the enforcement of robust internal evaluation process for all its activities. For instance, management could insist that activities at the departmental level, at examinations and assessments should be in stages where critical stakeholders create opportunities for a second review before ascertaining the level of attainment for already set standard. Consequently, these activities could then be subjected to external review process. In many Nigerian universities for instance, there exist internal and external moderation of final year examination question papers for undergraduate programmes (Ogbeche, 2021; Ibara, 2015). The process and requirement for the award of degrees include the assessment of thesis written by students through internal stages before they are subjected to external review process as well (Ogbeche, 2021). This is usually done by experts appointed as external examiners to perform such critical roles as a quality assurance process (Ogbeche, 2021; Okoro, 2015; Ibara, 2015).

The intellectual content of a programme should be consistently reviewed to ensure its continuous relevance and adaptation of graduates who are certified in the programme to possess relevant skills as may be required by industries and organizations (Okebukola, 2012). The university system therefore, have to develop a strategy of ensuring this quality measure is followed. Meanwhile, the level at which this function is performed in the school system is a concern to stakeholders. There should be periodic review of contents, instructional procedures, delivery strategies and the assessment procedures of programmes in the university system (Anioke, 2011; Ibara, 2015).

Similarly, the need to institute standard monitoring committee as a measure of pursuing internal quality assurance policy cannot be over-emphasized particularly in the university system of today. The assurance policies could be well initiated and documented but without proper monitoring team to consistently evaluate its implementation, the policy aims might not be achieved (Otekunrin and Fagboro, 2021). Hence the monitoring team could be at different levels and segment in the university to judiciously follow-up and ensure effective implementation (Okebukola, 2012).

Conceptually, the exposition of undergraduate even before graduation to external competitive assessment could be a very significant way of enhancing quality assurance in the university system. While training learners in intellectual contents, cognitive and affective practices including theoretical postulations, it has also become imperative to expose them to other assessment criteria. When students are faced with keen contest among their peers from other perspectives, background and even different distance schools, it will be a means of ascertaining the quality level of programmes and possibly, taking a decision for review.

Also, the engagement of industries as partners to the university system could be a good attempt of improving the quality of activities. Since the universities are primarily concern with research and production of high-level human potentials, the industries can become partners in training and acquisition of skills through industrial training, research, conferences where postulations can be linked to real practice or experiences from the industrial actors (Otekunrin & Fagboro, 2021). There should be a practice where industrial actors stipulate expectations in terms of skills and competencies for their operations and competitive advantages to guide university scholars in the production of human minds. This will make it directional and then improve continuously, the quality of graduates that will services the industries.



Meanwhile, it has become extremely important that teachers at higher institutions particularly in Nigeria are assessed through other means (Adedipe, 2007). One of those proposed means of alternative or complimentary assessment is the classroom-based assessment. It could either be done by higher authorities, externally appointed scholars or institutions. In recent time scholars are advocating for students' classroom-based assessment on lecturers (Okoro, 2015, Achibong, 2013). There should be a shift from the old traditional assessment and reward for lecturers in higher institutions to new methodology of involving students. Universities should have a way of engaging and subjecting its operations and quality assurance process to other universities to assess and evaluate as well. Achibong (2013) had earlier noted that student's participation in the quality assurance process through classroom-based assessment has great gains such as providing valuable feedback on instruction effectiveness for the university decisions. This can also strengthen the general process of teaching, research and community services. According to Ibara (2015), institutional paradigm shift towards a quality culture is imperative for sustainable university education in Nigeria. Okoro (2015) discovered that the quality of textbooks, research, publications, quality curriculum, quality infrastructure and quality of teaching facilities are some of the strategies for improving quality assurance in the production of teachers. In the United Kingdom for instance, a standing committee on quality assurance was created in 2016 to ensure the quality standard of university education is enhanced (UK, Higher Education, 2016). The Committee therefore provided sector-led oversight of higher education quality assessment arrangements that continue to be shared across the UK (Quality Assurance Committee, 2016). Similarly, Ekpoh and Asuquo (2020) reported that the quality assurance implementation strategy in Nigeria Universities was moderate. They concluded with an urgent need to improve the quality procedures.

According to Adedipe (2007), the mainstreaming of quality assurance strategies in the university system requires the National Universities Commission (NUC) to share responsibilities in the following areas: minimum academic standard; accreditation; carrying capacity and admission quota; visitation panel; research and development; publication and assessment and then structural/infrastructural utilization. Correspondingly, Bashir et al., (2009) and Bank et al., (2014) noted that quality assurance process is usually determined through accreditation, audit assessment of actual teaching, practitioners' development, academic policy situation, students' evaluation processes and the ability of the university to adjust to changes like technology, industrial, environmental and societal changes (Bashir et al., 2009 and Bank et al., 2014). Meanwhile, Usman and Madudili (2021) identified related points affecting quality assurance to include shortage of funds, insecurity, policy inconsistency, and lack of regular training of staff particularly in the university system.

This study is hinged on the process theory of quality assurance by Cheng (1994). According to this theory, the university system will meet up the standard already set if its internal functioning is smooth and healthy. University education, is quite an intellectual transformational process which converts students to problem solvers and people who possesses required skills (Ibara, 2015). Therefore, a smooth internal institutional process to enable staff perform the teaching task, research and community services effectively and students to gain fruitful learning experiences easily would be appreciated towards attaining the already set standard (Hackman, et al., 1995). The relevance of this theory to this study is that vital internal activities or practices in the university system should be taken as important indicators for quality assurance. Leadership, communication channels, participation, co-ordination, adaptability, planning, decision-making, social interactions, social climate, teaching methods,



classroom management, learning strategies, and learning experiences are often used as indicators of education quality (Otekunrin & Fagboro, 2021). They must be emphasis in periodic review of curriculum, external assessment of programmes, classroom base assessment, inter-university assessment procedure, etc. Generally, the quality of university education is the ability to solve societal problems and produce individuals with the required skills to enhance the environment and people therein.

Otekunrin and Fagboro (2021) assessed the extent of compliance of the forensic accounting profession in Nigeria with the Quality Assurance Accreditation Standards (QAAS), and the status of the profession in Nigeria and discovered that the contribution and efforts of Nigerian universities to the advancement of forensic accounting is not significant due to inadequately trained university lecturers and lack of facilities. Here the question of quality standard has surfaced. It has therefore become important that attention is given to the quality assurance policy implementation level in universities and an attempt made towards effective management strategies for policy assurance implementation. Hence the researchers concern in Bayelsa State universities.

The performance and competency level of graduates from many universities system today seems to be declining. There exists high level unemployment among them, many lack the required skills and intellectual ability to perform in today's industrial world. The process of attaining already set standard of university education appears to be too difficult following the observable deficiency of skills among many graduates today. Just as some of the graduates are blamed for lacking appropriate competencies, the researchers are also asking if the university quality assurance practitioners rethink and act according to the growing demands of industries for improved practices. Or is it also possible that new universities could have different quality assurance strategies to bridge the competency gap in line with the expectation of industrial actors than the older ones (Ogbeche, 2021; Haruni & Sipora, 2014). It is therefore the interest of this study to investigate and suggest management strategies for effective implementation of quality assurance policies of universities in Bayelsa State.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the extent of implementation of internal quality assurance policy of universities in Bayelsa State.
2. To examine whether the management strategies employed by university Authorities ensure effective implementation of internal quality assurance policy in Bayelsa State Universities

Research Questions

3. What is the extent of implementation of internal quality assurance policy of universities in Bayelsa State?
4. To what extent do the management strategies employed by university Authorities ensure effective implementation of internal quality assurance policy in Bayelsa State Universities?

Hypothesis

There is significant difference in the implementation of internal quality assurance policy of old and new universities in Bayelsa State.

Methodology

The study is a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study were all the 321 staff of quality assurance department from the four universities located in Bayelsa State. (Federal University Otuoke; Niger Delta University, Amasoma; Africa University, Toro-Oluwa; and the Bayelsa Medical University, Yenagoa). A simple random sampling techniques



was used to select 160 of them for the study by ensuring that at least 40 respondents were selected from each university. Two research questions and one hypothesis were raised to guide the study. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled “Management Strategies for Effective Internal Quality Assurance Policy of Universities in Bayelsa State Questionnaire (MSEIQAPQUE)” was designed, validated, pilot-tested using Cronbach Alpha reliability test ($N=20$, $r=.88$). The questionnaire has just one section that dealt with quality assurance practices in the universities on a 4-point Likert type rating scale coded as very high (VH), high (H), low (L) and very low (VL). A mean of 2.50 and above was considered high. The staff in quality assurance department of universities located in Bayelsa State was requested to assess the quality assurance practices in their universities through their WhatsApp platforms. Two experts in the Faculty of Education, Federal University Otuoke carried out face and content validity of the questionnaires. A google online form was designed and used for collection of data, sent to the various WhatsApp platforms belonging to quality assurance staff from the universities. Descriptive statistics of mean was used to answer the research questions while t-test statistics was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the extent of implementation of internal quality assurance strategies of universities in Bayelsa State?

Table 1: Mean Analysis of Implementation Level of Quality Assurance Policy of Universities in Bayelsa State.

Description	N	Mean(\bar{X})	Remarks
Periodic Review of Curriculum	160	2.38	Low
External Review of Students performance	160	2.58	High
External Competition	160	2.11	Low
Assurance Monitoring Committee	160	2.58	High
Mean Total		2.44	Low

Critical/Theoretical Mean =2.50, N=160

According to the data in Table 1, the level of implementation of internal quality assurance policy of universities in Bayelsa State is low with a mean score of (2.44). The item analysis shows that external review of students' performance and assurance monitoring team is high with a mean score of (2.58) respectively. Periodic review of curriculum and external competition recorded a low-level implementation with a mean score of (2.38) and (2.11) respectively.

Research Question 2

To what extent do the management strategies employed university Authorities ensure effective implementation of internal quality assurance policy in Bayelsa State Universities?



Table 2: Mean Analysis of Management Strategies to Ensure Effective Internal Quality Assurance policy of Universities in Bayelsa State.

Description	N	Mean(\bar{X})	Remarks
Classroom Base Assessment	160	2.92	High
University-Industry Engagement	160	2.52	High
Inter-University Assessment	160	2.50	High
Collaboration with Foreign Universities	160	2.78	High
Mean Total		2.69	High

Critical/Theoretical Mean = 2.50, N=160

According to the data in Table 2, the management strategies for effective implementation of quality assurance policy is high with a mean score of (2.69). The item analysis indicated that classroom base assessment recorded the highest level with a mean score of (2.92), followed by collaboration with foreign universities with a mean score of (2.78). Also, university-industry engagement recorded a high mean score of (2.52) as well as inter-university assessment with a mean score of (2.50).

Hypothesis

There is significant difference in the implementation of internal quality assurance policy of old and new universities in Bayelsa State.

Table 3: t-test analysis of the difference in implementation of internal quality assurance policy of Old and New Universities in Bayelsa State

Variables	N	(\bar{X})	SD	df	t-Cal	Sig (2 tailed)	Decision P<0.05
Old (FUO; NDU)	80	2.91	0.50	98	0.38	0.000	Rejected
New (UAT, BMU)	80	2.93	0.46				

The data in Table 3, shows that the t-cal. value of 0.38 is greater than the P-value (0.000) thus, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected that there is no significant difference in the implementation of internal quality assurance policy of old and new universities in Bayelsa State.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed low level implementation of internal quality assurance policy of universities in Bayelsa State. However, the item analysis indicated high level implementation in external assessment of students' performance and assurance monitoring committee. The result has therefore called for urgent steps to improve and pursue the already set standard in university education in Nigeria. Though the high-level result recorded in external assessment of students' performance and monitoring team could be attributed to the practice of external defense of thesis and moderation of question papers particularly at final year in many universities in the state. The low-level implementation result recorded by periodic review and external competition is quite related to the constraints facing the Nigeria university system. The findings therefore collaborate the assertion of Ogbeche, 2021 and Ibara, 2015 that the quality of university education is not falling, rather it is the criteria and the process of meeting the already set standard that seems confronted. However, the study also confirmed this assertion that the Nigeria university system usually appoint experts as external examiners to perform role like thesis fence, moderation and evaluation of degree programmes as part of quality assurance process (Ogbeche, 2021).



The result of research question two suggest in strong terms that effective management strategy for implementation of internal quality assurance in the university is through classroom-based assessment, effective university-industry engagement, collaborations with foreign universities and inter-university assessment. This is also a strong indication that those in charge of quality assurance are advocating for new methods of enhancing the quality of universities in the state. The findings of this study therefore agreed with the assertion of Otekunrin and Fagboro (2021) that university-industries can become partners towards strengthening the practice and process of each other. The findings further collaborated and confirmed the reports of Okebukola (2012) and Adedipe (2007) that it has become extremely important that teachers at higher institutions particularly in Nigeria are assessed through other means like classroom assessment. This study also confirmed the findings of Achibong (2013) that student's participation in the quality assurance process through classroom-based assessment has great gains such as providing valuable feedback on instruction effectiveness for the university decisions.

The hypothesis however revealed that there is no significant difference in the quality assurance strategies of universities located in the state. The implication is that both the old and the newly established universities have and practice similar quality assurance procedure. This also called for urgent attention of critical stakeholder of the universities to review standard attainment procedures. The study therefore affirmed the report of Haruni and Sipora (2014) that the university quality assurance practitioners need to rethink and act according to the growing demands of industries for improved practices.

Conclusion

The university system needs to consistently review its policies and procedures of pursuing already set standard for university education so as to bridge the competency gap that exist among its products and fulfill the societal expectations. The study hereby concludes that classroom base assessment, strong inter-university engagements and collaborations with foreign institutions as well as the low-level approaches to quality assurance should be reconsidered for improved performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The universities should develop strategic approach towards ensuring high quality assurance processes.
2. The universities should as a matter of urgency introduce classroom-based assessment to improve quality of teaching and learning in the universities.
3. There should be serious effort made to engage industrial actors at the first stage of designing the university education curriculum
4. University should also strengthen and increase their collaborations with foreign university as a good strategy of pursuing quality assurance objectives.

References

- Adedipe N. O. (2007). *University quality assurance, funding strategy and task allocation*. A paper presented at the workshop on tertiary education financing, University of Lagos, April 23 – 24.



- Anioke, B. O. (2011). Towards the changing role of the contemporary office: challenges of quality assurance in skills development in colleges of education. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education*, 1(2), 23-29
- Archibong, I.A. (2013). Strengthening internal quality assurance for improved education delivery in Nigerian public universities. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(1), 172-177.
- Bank, C.V.D. & Popoola, B. (2014). A Theoretical framework of total quality assurance in a university of technology. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 3(4), 401-408
- Bashir, A. B., Kawsar, A. & Shahansha, M. (2009). Theoretical framework for quality assurance in higher education of Bangladesh. *Journal of Business, Society and Science*, 1(1), 27-51.
- Cheng, Y. C. (1994). School education quality: Insights from different perspectives. *Hong Kong Education Research Association*, Hong Kong, 299-317
- Ekpoh, U.I. & Asuquo, M.E. (2020). The Pursuit of Quality Assurance in Nigerian Universities: Issues and Challenges. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 11(1), 32-41
- Hackman, J. R., & Wageman, R. (1995). Total quality management: Empirical, conceptual, and practical issues. *Administrative Science Quarterly* (June), 309-342.
- Haruni J. M. & Sipora H. K. (2014). Quality assurance practices in higher education institutions: Lesson from Africa. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(6), 144-156
- Ibara, E.C. (2015). Developing quality assurance culture for sustainable university education in Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(29), 142-147
- Ogbeche, M.M. (2021). Internal and external quality assurance practices as predictors of institutional effectiveness of public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. *British Journal of Education*, 9(6), 41-54
- Okebukola, P. (2012). *Quality assurance in higher education: The African story of achievements and outstanding needs*. Paper presented at Council of Higher Education in Africa (CHEA).
- Okoro, J. (2015). Strategies for enhancing quality assurance in business teacher education programme in Nigerian universities, *Journal of Business Education*, 6(12), 202-208.
- Otekunrin, A. O. ., & Fagboro, D. G. . (2021). Quality assurance accreditation standards and the forensic accounting profession in Nigeria. *Asian Economic and Financial Review*, 11(7), 534–544. <https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.aefr.2021.117.534.544>
- Sallis, E. (1993): *Total Quality Management in Education*. Kogan page.
- Tom and Nancy (1985). *A Passion for Excellence*. Fontana I Collins.
- United Kingdom Higher Education (2016). *Quality Assurance Committee Report*. Retrieved from www.qualityassurance.uk.org.
- Usman, Y.D. & Madudili, G. C. (2021). Quality assurance in Nigeria's education system: prospect and challenges, *Journal of Education and Learning Innovation*, 1(1), 76-83. doi.org/10.35877/454RI.eduline422