

Internal School Quality Assurance Practices and Undergraduate Students' Attitude Towards Academic Activities: A Case of Public Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined internal school quality assurance practices and undergraduate students' attitude towards academic activities in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study was guided by three null hypotheses and the design adopted was ex-post facto research design. The population of the study was made up of all the regular undergraduate students in their third year of study in the two public universities (University of Calabar and Cross River University of Technology) in Cross River State, Nigeria. The researchers used convenience sampling technique in selecting a sample of 2,500 students from the population which cut across the two public universities in the study area. Internal Quality Assurance Practices and Undergraduate Students' Attitude Towards Academic Activities Questionnaire (IQAPUSATAAQ) with Cronbach reliability reliabilities of .81, .86, .83, and .80 was the instrument used for data collection. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was the statistical tool used in testing the hypotheses at .05 level of significant. The results of the study revealed significant relationship between school quality assurance approaches (maintenance of facilities, curriculum implementation, examinations administration) and students' attitude towards academic activities. It was recommended among others that available teaching and learning facilities at the disposal of the management of universities should be maintained and made functional for the benefit of the students.

Keywords: school, internal quality assurance, practices, undergraduate students, attitude, academic activities

1. Introduction

Attitude per se is individual's propensity to act in certain ways. It is also the way an individual behaves towards somebody as well as something. Thus individual behaviour towards something may be positively or negatively skewed. Positive attitude is manifested when individual's action is geared towards achievement of stated goals. On the other hand, negative attitude is apparent when individual conduct deviates from the required practices, standard rules and regulations. Students' attitude is the manifestation of internal and external influences. Internal influence is an individual student's choice to behave in a certain way. While, external influence comes from interaction with environment (parents, siblings, neighbours, course mates, teaching and non-teaching staff).

Researchers like (Kpolovie, Joe, & Okoto (2014) viewed students' attitude to be regarded as their disposition with respect to learning, team work as well as functioning in the school system. They further stressed that students' positive attitude towards academic activities enhances sense of belonging and commitment in school. Students' attitudes according to Orunaboka (2011) are formed as a result of some kinds of learning experiences. Experience is favourable if a positive attitude is observed and vice versa. It is common knowledge that students' positive attitude towards academic activities manifest in encouraging academic performance while the reverse is manifested in academic failure.

Specifically, undergraduate students' attitude towards academic activities in this context means students' engagement in school with respect to punctuality, attendance in classes, notes taking, notes making, reading habit, group/academic discussion, doing and submission of assignment on time, report writing, seminar presentation, participating in writing of tests/continuous assessments and semesters' examinations, participation in industrial attachment, field work, practicum, teaching practice, writing and defending of final project to mention a few. The

aforementioned academic activities are done in partial fulfillment for the award of first degrees in various academic disciplines approved by National Universities Commission (NUC) and their subsequent accreditation in every five years by the same (NUC). Undergraduate University students are expected to show high level of commitment to their academic activities. However, in recent time, it has been noticed by the researchers that some undergraduate university students' attitudes towards academic activities which constitute their primary responsibilities or their academic role performance tend to be very discouraging.

To promote, encourage and sustain students' positive attitude towards academic activities, university management takes orientation programme for freshmen as top priority to get them informed of expected behaviour and attitude towards academic activities in particular. Orientation programme is designed to expose every freshman to the do and do not in the university. As a yearly routine, orientation programme is done in order to prepare freshmen for the tasks ahead and to ensure that the university system produces graduates who are trained in the mind and the hand. In addition, the researchers also identified that to complement the effort of the National Universities Commission (NUC) in maintaining quality assurance in universities, individual university puts in place quality assurance committees in their respective Departments and Faculties (Ekpoh & Asuquo, 2020). This attempt is another quality assurance practice to guide and direct individual student's attitude in the university system.

In spite of such laudable programme and efforts to promote quality assurance and subsequent enhancement of students' positive attitude towards academic activities, many students still display poor attitude towards academic activities. This is manifested in cases where some students stay away from lectures, submit term papers with similar contents, prefer abuse of social media to academic activities as well as giraffing, cheating, impersonating, copying from unauthorized materials in the examination hall, possessing Global System for Mobile-telecommunication (GSM) device in use, exchanging of booklets in the examination hall, presenting fake certificates for admission etc. These practices are aberrations as they are not in conformity with the set standards, the required practices, rules and regulations. In most cases, incidence abound where students who are guilty of unwelcome practices and unethical attitudes in the universities are allowed to face such consequences as warning, cancellation of their examinations/results, rustication/suspension and expulsion.

The zero tolerant by the university management to negative attitudes of students towards their academic activities is the reason why the University of Calabar (UNICAL) for instance, always and will never relent in publicizing list of expelled students for various examination offences, list of expelled students for presentation of fake certificates for admission as well as list of suspended/expelled students for various examination offences under disciplinary cases in the (UNICAL) Information Bulletin. Irrespective of the publication of names of students who are involved in unethical attitudes or behaviour to serve as a deterrent to others, it was observed by the researchers that many students' attitudes towards their academic activities still become worrisome. Based on this background, the researchers intended to examine internal school quality assurance practices and students' attitude towards academic activities.

Internal school quality assurance practices in this context entail effective organization and control of academic programmes or school activities and administration (provision, utilization, maintenance and replacement) of school physical facilities in accordance with minimum National Universities Commission (NUC) Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS). Internal school quality assurance practices are directed to meet the global best practices as well as achieving the goals of the university education. Internal school quality assurance practices remain crucial in the management of university to promote students' attitude towards academic activities and for the achievement of educational goal in general. Among others, the effectiveness in the university system reflects in the students' positive attitude towards academic activities.

In this work, the researchers are of the opinion that internal school quality assurance practices may have a relationship with students' attitude towards academic activities since quality assurance is directed at developing and sustaining standards and educational goals achievement in which all the students, teaching and non-teaching staff and those at the administrative positions in the school aspire to achieve. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2008) emphasized that infrastructural decayed, obsolete facilities, poor teaching quality (curriculum implementation), examination malpractice and maladministration are indicators of poor state of education in Nigeria. The same source stated that the strategies proposed for quality assurance are centered on five critical education issues which include; policy coordination, educational input (infrastructure/facilities, instructional materials, ICT etc.), process issues arising from implementation of educational programmes and services, benchmark and setting of educational standard as well as assessment, monitoring and evaluation issues. Where these education issues are not fully in place, the situations culminate in poor quality of university graduates.

Therefore, the present study addresses internal school quality assurance practices in terms of maintenance of

facilities, curriculum implementation and examinations administration. Maintenance of facilities is the keeping of school facilities in a state of readiness to be put into use at all times by both staff and students to promote teaching and learning. As the name implies, curriculum implementation has to do with interpreting and explaining the contents of a curriculum in such a way that it brings about change in behaviour of the students. Curriculum implementation as internal quality assurance practice is part of administrative responsibilities. Asuquo & Edet (2019) emphasized that over time, curriculum implementation has been regarded as part of administrative responsibility and it is the administrative duty to ensure that curriculum contents are effectively implemented by the teachers. In order to keep pace with the changing demands of the society, every teaching staff needs to ensure effective curriculum implementation. Examination administration in this context means giving of examination to students who are qualified to sit for it in order to assess the students' academic performance as well as assessing the level of teaching-learning processes in the university system. Ideally, examinations are meant to determine the intellectual ability of students on semester and session basis and before certificate is issued. Examinations are often seen as effective tool for measuring the achievement level of a graduate and making value judgement about the worth of a curriculum. The variables (maintenance of facilities, curriculum implementation and examinations administration) used in measuring internal quality assurance practices in this study seem to perform different and complementary functions.

2. Literature Review

As part and parcel of school plant administration, previous researchers stated that maintenance of facilities as among quality assurance practices is directed towards enhancing effective teaching and learning for the attainment of educational goals (Asuquo, Ekpoh, & Eton, 2018). Urick (2011) as cited in Zainuddin and Subri (2017) asserted that maintenance of facilities is crucial in keeping students and teachers comfortable as well as facilitating effective teaching and learning processes. Ohakamike-Obeka (2016) noted that poor condition of school facilities make students to generate a negative attitude with respect to academic performance. The author recommended that school buildings should be renovated to enhance students' positive attitude for better performance. Scholars have documented that effectiveness in school facility management greatly determines the quality of instruction and performance of students in the school (Mgbekem, 2004; Akpan, 2011; Asiegbu, 2014; Akomolafe & Adesua, 2016; Zurainan et al., 2021; Asuquo & Ogar-Ikwen, 2021). In another study conducted by Ford (2016), it was found that; a correlation existed between science classroom facility conditions and ninth grade students' attitudes toward science. It was established in the study that students' attitudes toward academic activities was predicted by demonstration equipment and physical facilities. Similarly, Ramli & Zain (2018) found that teaching aids, library facilities, sport facilities and other infrastructure significantly impacted positively on students' academic achievement. The results of a study by Fadahunsi et al. (2019) showed that; proactive maintenance, improvement in health and safety, conducive academic environment and quality services were the benefits of adopting facilities management practices in the tertiary institutions.

The boundaries of instructional programmes and activities and how they should be implemented are stipulated in the curriculum (Görür & Babadoğan, 2021). Curriculum is an embodiment of all educational programmes/activities consciously designed and directed towards enabling learners to acquire basic skills, knowledge, competencies and to be self-reliance in order to be able to function effectively and contribute meaningfully to the society (Mkpa & Asuquo, 2019). Esu, Erukoha, and Umoren (1998) described curriculum implementation as the execution or putting into effect of a curriculum plan or programme. According to Bicknell (2009), a curriculum taught by well-trained teaching staff and supported by a meaningful assessment program is likely to yield results. Curriculum implementation are steps taken to determine how best its contents could be put into practice by way of teaching and learning at all levels of education for the purpose of achieving educational set goals and objectives. It also involves following the details of the curriculum to the latest by effectively putting its contents into actual practice (Mkpa & Asuquo, 2019). Implementation strategies entails describing all methods needed to attain what has been written down. It is the description of what is, who is, where and who is responsible for anything and the definition of time line for such activities (Isa, 2014). Mkpa and Asuquo (2019) posited that at the implementation stage, a programme of a curriculum can be made or marred. There is need for effective curriculum implementation and evaluation in order to sustain the quality of university education (Mwebi, 2015).

The result of a study carried out by Yang (2022) showed that the ability of the students to understand English Language as well as improvement in their creative ability was attributed to management of English Language training curriculum. In a study carried out by Wiyono (2018) on the influence of school-based curriculum on the learning process and students' achievement, correlation between curriculum implementation and students' achievement was among the findings of the results of the study. Saeed (2018) carried out a study on impact of

quality assurance on academic performance at Ishik University, Erbil, Iraq. The areas of quality assurance process functions were on Teaching Quality Assurance (TQA) to assess teaching activities and Continuous Academic Development (CAD) designed to enhance the knowledge and the expertise of faculties. It was discovered that these quality assurance process functions in terms of TQA and CAD brought about improvement in teaching, learning and in the area of research at the University. Positive students' attitude towards academic activities depicts effective in teaching and learning.

Indoshi, Wagah, and Agak (2010) carried out a study to specifically establish the factors that determine teachers' and students' attitudes towards art and design curriculum. The study reported that art and design curriculum implementation has not been impressive due to a decline in enrolment of students, students dropping the subject at different levels in and general low priority given to the subject in schools. It was also found that schools lacked materials, equipment and facilities and that the subject was expensive to implement and the time allocated for art and design was too short to handle the practical. Curriculum provides direction for instruction because instruction has to do with the implementing and delivering of academic curriculum (Flake, 2017). The author further stressed that curriculum and instruction must be compatible and maintain a close relationship in order to enhance student learning.

In this study, the last aspect of internal school quality assurance practice is examinations administration. Okon and Asuquo (2017) opined that in order to keep pace with standard in educational institutions, managing examination administration becomes inevitable. The authors further asserted that examination administration is the purposeful application of quality management techniques such as quality control and quality assurance by managers of tertiary institutions to ensure effectiveness and efficiency before, during and after examination. This must be done with purposeful application of quality management techniques as deemed necessary by the university management before, during and after examinations. Mwebi (2015) emphasized that the quality of students is determined when there are good and effective measures for quality evaluation. The essence of examination is to evaluate the extent of students' acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies after being exposed to a specific course of instruction in the teaching/learning processes. Effective examination administration helps to encourages good study habit among students (Okon & Asuquo, 2017). Other studies (Bassey et al., 2019; Joseph, 2018; Mitra, 2021; Sebastain, 2020) on quality assurance equally abound in the literature.

The literature reviewed in this work exposed the researchers to thorough grasp of variables that correlate with students' attitudes and performance. However, in the course of literature reviewed, the researchers were able to identify a gap. For instance, previous studies reviewed examined quality assurance practices with relation to attainment of school goals and academic performance. For these reasons, the present study on internal school quality assurance practices (maintenance of facilities, curriculum implementation and examination administration) and students' attitude towards academic activities is justified to fill the gap in the literature.

3. Statement of the Problem

University students are expected to show positive attitudes high level of commitment to their academic activities because they are being processed in order to contribute their quotas to the national development. In spite of this, observation of the researchers indicated that many university students in Cross River State display poor attitudes towards their academic activities. This is evidence in cases where many of them form the habit of staying away from lectures, get involved in submitting term papers with similar contents, take pleasure in spending time abusing social media as well as getting involve in giraffing, cheating, impersonating, copying from unauthorized materials, possessing GSM device in use, exchanging of booklets etc in the examination hall. All these poor attitudes displayed by them cannot facilitate the achievement of tertiary education goals of ensuring acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills which will enable them to be self-reliant and useful members of the society among others.

The university management, in an attempt to address the anomalies, takes orientation programme for freshmen as top priority to get them informed of expected behaviour and attitude towards academic activities. This very measure seems not to improve the attitudes of many students towards their academic activities. The need to address the poor attitudes on the part of many university students in Cross River State prompted the researchers to investigate the relationship between internal school quality assurance practices in terms of maintenance of facilities, curriculum implementation and students' attitude towards academic activities.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine internal quality assurance practices and students' attitude towards academic activities: A case of public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study aimed at examining:

- 1) Maintenance of facilities and students' attitude towards academic activities
- 2) Curriculum implementation and students' attitude towards academic activities
- 3) Examination administration and students' attitude towards academic activities

5. Statement of Hypotheses

- 1) Maintenance of facilities does not significantly relate to students' attitude towards academic activities.
- 2) Curriculum implementation does not significantly relate to students' attitude towards academic activities.
- 3) There is no significant relationship between examination administration and students' attitude towards academic activities.

6. Methodology

Ex-post facto research design was adopted in this study. The study was conducted to cover the two public universities (University of Calabar (UNICAL) and Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH)) in Cross River State, Nigeria. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting 2,500 undergraduate students in their third year of study across the public universities in the study area. Purposive sampling has the assumption that with good judgement and acceptable approach, the researcher creditably and intentionally include in his sample, elements which are judge to be characteristic of the population being investigated (Isangedighi, Joshua, Asim, & Ekuri, 2004). This position informed the use of purposive sampling in this study. Table 1 below shows the distribution of the sample of the study.

Table 1. The distribution of the sample of the study that was conveniently selected from the two public universities

S/N	University	Sample
1.	UNICAL	1,700
2.	CRUTECH	800
Total		2,500

The instrument for data collection was entitled "Internal Quality Assurance Practices and Students' Attitude Towards Academic Activities Questionnaire (IQAPSATAAQ) with modified four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was designed in two sections (A and B). Section A was used to obtain respondents' demographic data. Section B comprised 28 items. Eighteen (18) of the items measured internal quality assurance practices while 10 items measured students' attitude towards academic activities. The instrument was face and content validated. This was done though scrutiny by experts in the Department of Educational Management and two other experts in Measurement and Evaluation from the Faculty of Education of the University of Calabar, Calabar.

The reliability of the instrument was tested using split-half reliability estimates of .81, .86, .83, and .80. These values made the instrument to be regarded as being internally consistent for measurement. Copies of the instrument were administered to the respondents by the researchers and with the help of research assistants. The instruments were retrieved and data collected were scored accordingly. Pearson product moment statistics was used in the analysis of data. The results from the analysis are presented as shown below.

7. Results

Table 2. Pearson's product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between maintenance of facilities and students' attitude towards academic activities (N = 2,500)

Variables	Mean	SD	R	Sig
Maintenance of facilities (X)	10.02	2.469	0.82*	.000
Students' attitude towards academic activities work (Y)	13.22	4.381		

Note. * $p < .05$; $df = 2498$; critical $r = 0.062$

As shown in Table 2, the calculated r-value of 0.82 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.062 at .05 level of significance with degrees of freedom 2498. With this result, maintenance of facilities had a significant relationship with students' attitude towards academic activities.

Table 3. Pearson's product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between curriculum implementation and students' attitude towards academic activities (N = 2,500)

Variables	Mean	SD	R	Sig
Curriculum implementation (X)	12.02	3.469	0.86*	.000
Students' attitude towards academic activities work (Y)	13.22	4.381		

Note. * $p < .05$; $df = 2498$; critical $r = 0.062$

The result of the analysis presented in Table 3 revealed that the calculated r -value of 0.86 is greater than the critical r -value of 0.062 at .05 level of significance with degrees of freedom 2498. This result therefore shows that, curriculum implementation had a significant relationship with students' attitude towards academic activities.

Table 4. Pearson's product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between examination administration and students' attitude towards academic activities (N = 2,500)

Variables	Mean	SD	R	Sig
Examination Administration (X)	14.02	3.412	0.86*	.000
Students' attitude towards academic activities work (Y)	13.22	4.381		

Note. * $p < .05$; $df = 2498$; critical $r = 0.062$

Table 4 shows the result of the analysis of hypothesis 3. As indicated, the calculated r -value of 0.86 is greater than the critical r -value of 0.062 at .05 level of significance with degrees of freedom 2498. This result shows that, there is a significant relationship between examination administration and students' attitude towards academic activities

8. Discussion of Findings

From the first finding as indicated in Table 2, the study established that there was a significant positive relationship between maintenance of facilities and students' attitude towards academic activities. There is no doubt about this finding because it explains the fact that, when facilities that are used for teaching and learning are properly maintained by the school management, teaching and learning become effective and this subsequently brings about students' positive attitude towards their academic activities as they are all encouraged by the state of school facilities at all times. This finding is in support of the position of Asuquo, Ekpoh, and Eton (2018) who opined that maintenance of facilities as among quality assurance practices is directed towards enhancing effective teaching and learning for the attainment of educational goals. The finding is also in line with Akpan (2011) who stated that prudent management of facilities greatly determines the quality of instruction and performance of students in the school. The positive result of this study is in consonant with Asuquo, Ekpoh, and Eton (2018) who found out a significant relationship between facilities management and secondary school goals attainment. This result could further be explained here that when facilities are maintained and made available in the school, students tend to develop positive attitude towards their academic activities which results in the attainment of educational objectives. This means that students are motivated to be serious with their academic activities in an environment where facilities are readily available, functional and accessible.

The second finding of this study established that curriculum implementation had a significant relationship with students' attitude towards academic activities. Meaning that the manner the curriculum is implemented by the academic staff by way of teaching has a correlation with students' attitude towards academic activities. Curriculum implementation requires knowledgeable, skillful, experienced and committed academic staff members who are ready to provide quality teaching (curriculum implementation) that prepares and equip students with positive attitudes, knowledge and skills for self-reliance and the world of work. Students are motivated and encouraged to be punctual and regular to the lectures they consider quite interesting in terms of delivery than those that are always boring due to poor delivery methods. Staying away from lectures due poor delivery methods or incompetency on the part of teaching staff may be the reason for students' engagement in other activities to the detriment of their academic activities.

The second finding is in support of support of Wiyono (2018) whose study indicated that correlation existed between curriculum implementation and students' academic achievement. This means that, positive students' attitudes towards academic activities results in positive students' academic achievement while the reversed is the case with negative students' attitudes towards academic activities. The finding of the present study also collaborates with Bicknell (2009) who stated that a curriculum taught by well-trained teachers and supported by a

meaningful assessment program is likely to yield results. These results are in the areas of positive attitude of students towards their academic activities because effective curriculum contents delivery by the academic staff improve students' positive attitude towards their academic activities. Interestingly, Indoshi, Wagah & Agak (2010) in their study discovered that schools lacked materials, equipment and facilities and that time allocated for art and design was too short to handle the practical and because of this, art and design curriculum implementation was not encouraging. By implication, curriculum implementation becomes very difficult if materials, equipment and facilities and time needed are not adequate. These serve as a discouraging factor to students' attitude towards their academic activities.

The third finding of the study indicated a positive and significant relationship between examination administration and students' attitude towards academic activities. The results of the study is in support of Okon & Asuquo (2017) who asserted in their study that effective examination administration helps to encourages good study habit among students. The finding also agrees with Mwebi (2015) who emphasized that the quality of students is determined when there are good and effective measures for quality evaluation. This result is not surprising because a student who knows or who is conscious of the fact that examination rules and regulations are strictly followed at all times and stringent measures are applied before, during and after examinations will not be thinking of devising any alternative or illegal means to manoeuvre his or her ways to pass examinations. This result means that when examination is administered in such a way that it is based on its rules and regulations before, during and after examination, students will be serious by being studious. By so doing morality is instilled in the students and this subsequently manifest in their positive attitude towards their academic activities. Thorough screening of students before being allowed into examination hall as well as invigilation based on inter-departmental/inter-faculty basis, cancellation of result and examinations where evidence of pre-knowledge of examination questions abound, rustication of students with disruptive behaviour during examinations in addition to expulsion of students who involved in various examination offences, emphasis on conference marking and scoring as well as putting in place date line for submission and release of results constitute parts of quality assurance practices in the process of examination administration. The aim of effective examination administration is to instill morality in students and motivate them to develop positive attitude towards academic activities.

9. Conclusion

The study found a positive and significant relationship between internal quality assurance practices and undergraduate students' attitude towards academic activities in public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The attitude of undergraduate students towards academic activities in public universities in the study area will improve when internal quality assurance practices in terms of maintenance of facilities, curriculum implementation and examination administration is very effective. University with effective internal quality assurance practices is in the right direction and position to motivate students to develop positive attitude towards their academic activities. Application of maintenance of facilities, curriculum implementation and examination administration as internal quality assurance practices serve as influential variables that develop, motivate and facilitate students' positive attitude towards academic activities.

10. Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings or this study:

- 1) School facilities should be properly maintained because proper management of facilities determine to a great extent the quality of pedagogy and the academic performance of the students in schools.
- 2) Curriculum implementation which as a key responsibility of faculty members should be given priority and improved upon. Qualified and professional academic staff should be deployed for curriculum implementation because curriculum taught by well-trained and qualified lecturers positively motivate students' attitudes towards their academic activities. Again, materials, equipment, facilities and time should be made available because without these, effective curriculum implementation would not be feasible.
- 3) Administration of examinations should be such that a central body/committee is established and the existing ones improve upon to always ensure that before, during and after examinations, due processes are followed. In most cases provision should be made for central setting of examinations and vetting of examination questions to ensure quality and standard as well as central marking and scoring of students' examinations. This will help in monitoring how grades are awarded to deserved and undeserved students. With this in place students with poor attitude towards their academic activities will be serious since they are conscious of the fact that there is no way to influence examinations scores and grades to their favour.

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