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Barriers to Implementing Internal Quality Assurance Practices in Public Secondary Schools in Enugu State.

[1]Anachuna, Obinna Nonso, PhD
Phone: +2348063260029. Email: on.anachuna@unizik.edu.ng
&
[2]Obinna-Ifesi, Catherine Chinonye

[1&2]Department of Educational Management and Policy, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.

Abstract
This study investigated the state of quality assurance in secondary education in Nigeria, focusing on the implementation of internal quality assurance measures to enhance educational outcomes in Enugu State. The study was guided by give research purposes. Drawing on qualitative and quantitative data analysis from stakeholders, including educators, administrators, and policymakers, the research identifiedt critical challenges hindering effective quality assurance practices. These challenges include inadequate funding, insufficient professional development opportunities for educators, lack of stakeholder collaboration, and minimal involvement of teachers in decision-making processes. The study emphasized the need for a comprehensive strategy that fosters a culture of collaboration and open communication among all stakeholders in the education sector. Recommendations include among others; the establishment of ongoing professional development programs, mentorship initiatives for teachers, and active engagement of educators in quality assurance decisions to mitigate resistance and promote ownership of initiatives. Furthermore, the study advocates for increased funding from educational authorities to provide necessary resources, such as teaching materials and technology. By addressing these issues, the research posited that Nigeria could enhance its educational quality, by contributing to sustainable development and improved student outcomes in the increasingly competitive global landscape.

Keywords: *Internal Measures, Quality Assurance*

Introduction

Education serves as a vital instrument for intellectual empowerment, character building, emotional stability, and cultural development, significantly contributing to societal transformation. It equips individuals with essential skills and competencies for self-reliance and personal actualization, enabling meaningful contributions to societal progress. However, the quality of Nigeria's secondary education system has noticeably declined in recent years, as evidenced by increasing failure rates in public examinations conducted by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and the National Examinations Council (NECO). For instance, in the May/June 2023 WAEC examination, only 44.29% of candidates achieved the benchmark of five credits, including English Language and Mathematics. This is a significant drop from previous years: 76.36% in 2022, 81.07% in 2021, and 65.24% in 2020 (National Bureau of Statistics). This persistent decline raises serious concerns about the quality of education in public secondary schools, which were once known for producing well-prepared candidates equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary for further studies and workforce integration.

Today, however, there are widespread complaints from parents, tertiary institution leaders, and employers of labour regarding the inadequate preparations of secondary school graduates. This trend undermines the objectives of Nigeria's secondary education system as outlined by the Federal Government of Nigeria (2013), which aims at fostering self-improvement, national unity, moral integrity, and provide a foundation for higher education and vocational skills necessary for self-reliance. The decline in educational quality not only threatens individual student success but also poses significant challenges to national development, as secondary education acts as the bridge

between basic and tertiary education. To address these challenges, implementing robust internal quality assurance measures at all educational levels is crucial, especially in secondary schools, which play a critical role in shaping the future workforce. Quality assurance encompasses ensuring that the standards of teaching, learning, and overall school management align with stakeholder expectations but includes contributing positively to educational outcomes. Internal quality assurance measures refer to the internal policies educational institutions adopt to ensure they fulfill their purposes and meet the standards required for secondary education.

As noted by Garba (2011), the effectiveness of secondary school principals in implementing measures that ensure quality in school output is critical for overall school effectiveness. Such measures include maintaining teacher quality, thoroughly evaluating students' learning experiences, ensuring quality student intake, and providing adequate facilities. Additionally, Garba (2011) identifies supervisory, administrative, and in-house capacity-building strategies as essential components of quality assurance. Fredrick (2002) emphasizes that quality assurance in educational settings, including secondary schools, requires employing trained teachers, constant monitoring of instructional activities, provision of instructional materials, staff motivation, regularly exposing teachers to seminars and workshops to enhance their competencies.

This study focuses on several internal quality assurance measures: strategic supervision, teacher quality, guidance and counseling, and evaluation of students' learning experiences. Strategic supervision involves overseeing teaching and non-teaching staff activities to ensure conformity with established standards and policies while providing professional guidance to enhance the learning environment (Obiweluzor, Momoh, & Ogbonnaya, 2013; Igwe, 2001). Effective principals identify key areas for supervision to improve the quality of secondary education, including lesson delivery, classroom management, and resource inspection (Afolabi & Loto, 2008). Teacher quality is another critical aspect of internal quality assurance, as no education system can surpass the quality of its educators (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2013). Teacher quality directly influences the quality of instruction and, consequently, the overall quality of education. Factors affecting teacher quality include qualifications, training, experience, professional development, and expertise in curriculum interpretation (George et al., 2008; as cited in Agi & Yellowe, 2012). Teachers play a pivotal role in translating and contextualizing the curriculum, thus ensuring it is meaningful and beneficial to students.

Guidance and counseling services are also essential for quality assurance in secondary schools. Defined by Okorodudu (2010) as a process involving trained professionals applying psychological principles to assist individuals and groups in addressing life adjustment needs, guidance and counseling enhance students' understanding of personal and interpersonal experiences necessary for achieving educational and societal goals (Arenu, 2002; Iyeke & Fakroghe, 2012). Furthermore, effective evaluation of students' learning experiences is crucial for maintaining quality in secondary education. Evaluation, defined by Nkwocha (2004) as gathering and estimating various types of information about individuals or groups, is integral to determining educational outcomes and ensuring standards for promotion and certification (Ajuonuma, 2007). Secondary school principals in Nigeria utilize different evaluation techniques to assess student learning experiences, with continuous assessment and end-of-semester examinations comprising 30% and 70% of the total score, respectively.

Despite these measures, the effective implementation of internal quality assurance practices in public secondary schools in Enugu State faces significant challenges. Although school principals are tasked with managing and overseeing their institutions, their capacity to implement strategic supervision, ensure teacher quality, provide guidance and counseling services, and evaluate student learning often falls short. This shortfall contributes to the continued decline in educational standards, with many public secondary schools struggling to meet students' needs. Consequently, this situation undermines the objectives of secondary education as articulated by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) (2013). The objectives emphasize the importance of providing opportunities for higher education, offering diversified curricula, training manpower in applied sciences and technology, promoting Nigerian languages and culture, inspiring self-improvement and excellence, fostering patriotism and national unity, raising morally upright individuals, and equipping students with entrepreneurial skills for self-reliance and economic development. Recognizing these objectives,

Nigerian states invest resources to ensure accessible secondary education for all citizens while tailoring policies to uphold quality.

Given that quality assurance is a management function, school principals play a central role in ensuring educational quality. However, the absence of a formal national system of external accreditation for secondary education providers in Nigeria, unlike the established accreditation processes for universities through the National Universities Commission (NUC), exacerbates these challenges. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to identify and examine the barriers to implementing internal quality assurance practices in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Addressing these barriers is critical for improving educational quality in the state and ensuring that secondary school graduates are adequately prepared for the challenges of higher education and the workforce.

Statement of the Problem

The decline in the quality of secondary education in Nigeria, as evidenced by alarming failure rates in public examinations and the prevalence of examination malpractice, has raised significant concerns among stakeholders, including parents, educators, and policy makers. Despite the essential role that secondary education plays in preparing students for further academic pursuits and societal engagement, only 44.29% of candidates achieved the benchmark of five credits, including core subjects such as English Language and Mathematics, in the May/June 2023 WAEC examination. This trend highlights systemic problems within the educational framework, particularly in the areas of teacher effectiveness and school management. Inadequate supervision of teachers regarding punctuality, lesson preparation, and instructional delivery directly impacts student learning outcomes. Furthermore, lack of professional development opportunities hinders teachers' ability to enhance their teaching practices. Given these challenges, it is crucial to examine the extent to which school principals are implementing internal quality assurance measures such as strategic supervision, guidance and counseling, and the evaluation of learning outcomes to address the persistent decline in educational standards.

This study aims to investigate the barriers to implementing these internal quality assurance measures in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Identifying these systemic challenges is essential for improving the quality of education and ensuring that secondary school graduates are adequately prepared for the demands of higher education and the workforce.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the barriers to implementing internal quality assurance measures in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Identify and examine the existing internal quality assurance measures currently in place in public secondary schools and evaluate their effectiveness in promoting quality education.
2. Analyze the role of school principals in implementing strategic supervision and fostering an environment conducive to teacher development and student success.
3. Assess the factors affecting teacher quality, including supervision, professional development opportunities, and resources available for instructional practices.
4. Evaluate the impact of internal quality assurance measures on student performance.
5. Identify systemic challenges or barriers that hinder the effective implementation of internal quality assurance measures in public secondary schools.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is a fundamental aspect of establishing and maintaining credibility for educational programs, institutions, and national systems of higher education worldwide. It aims to prove and improve the quality of an institution's methods, educational products, and outcomes. The concept of quality assurance encompasses various dimensions, ranging from meeting predetermined specifications and standards to providing value for money and ensuring fitness for purpose. Zelvys (2004) notes that quality has emerged as one of the most significant concepts in contemporary educational discourse. Many educators have attempted to define the quality of education and educational assurance. The International Organization for Standardization (1994) defines quality as

the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated needs. Furthermore, Article II of the World Declaration on Education (2003) emphasizes that quality is a multidimensional concept encompassing all functions and activities within schools.

Alele-Williams (2004) defines quality assurance in educational institutions as that which indicates the unique characteristics that distinguish one institution from others. Bisong (2000) posits that the educational enterprise involves establishing and maintaining standards, which are generally set by society and educational authorities at various levels. According to Whiteley (2001), quality assurance has become an all-encompassing concept that includes all policies, processes, and actions aimed at developing and maintaining the quality of education provided. Lysons (1996) connects quality assurance to Total Quality Management (TQM), which focuses on managing organizations to ensure that every job and process is performed correctly the first time. Walklin (1992) describes quality assurance as the avoidance of non-performance through proper planning, execution, monitoring, and evaluation. The Commonwealth of Learning (1999) defines quality assurance as an organizational approach that establishes systems to ensure everything operates according to plan. Ajayi and Akindutire (2007) argue that quality assurance signifies an institution's ability to meet the expectations of its stakeholders regarding the skills acquired by its graduates. Similarly, Okebukola (2004) views quality assurance as a continuous improvement process in teaching and learning activities, facilitated by internal and external mechanisms.

Ehindero (2004) emphasizes that quality assurance focuses on:

1. The entry behaviors, characteristics, and demographic factors of learners that can influence their learning.
2. The qualifications, values, pedagogical skills, and preparedness of teachers.
3. The teaching-learning processes, including curriculum structure and the learning environment.
4. The outcomes defined in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, supported by appropriate assessment tools.

Quality assurance in secondary education thus refers to the ability of secondary schools to meet specific criteria concerning academic matters, staff-student ratios, staff qualifications, staff development, physical facilities, and library resources, among others. It is essential for building institutional reputation in both local and global contexts and provides a foundation for consumer protection (NUC, 2004). Assuring the quality of educational provision is critical for gaining and maintaining credibility for programs, institutions, and national systems of higher education globally. Internal quality assurance involves implementing school objectives, while external quality assurance aligns with national objectives. A systematic and consistent quality assurance system fosters a good reputation and image for institutions, leading to increased public confidence, greater student satisfaction, and efficient processes. This results in enhanced learning experiences for students, characterized by better quality instruction, learning materials, and interactions with staff, ultimately leading to improved learning outcomes. Fadokun (2005) summarizes quality assurance in education as a programmatic effort to maintain and enhance standards within educational institutions. It encompasses the attitudes, objectives, actions, and procedures that, through their existence and implementation of internal measures, ensure that appropriate academic standards are maintained and enhanced across all programs. Quality can also be assessed based on the effectiveness of teachers, the adequacy and accessibility of teaching and learning resources, and the preparedness of graduates to meet societal challenges.

In conclusion, quality assurance represents a commitment to ensuring that secondary school education delivers on its objectives as outlined by the Federal Government of Nigeria (2013). This includes producing graduates equipped to meet labor market expectations, access higher education without parental support or resorting to examination malpractice, and contribute positively to society. Thus, the emphasis on proactive quality assurance measures focuses on training personnel to enhance their performance, preventing quality problems, and ensuring that secondary school graduates meet expected standards. Likoko, Wasike, and Ndinyo (2013) reinforce this by describing quality assurance as a systematic management, monitoring, and evaluation process adopted to ensure that the learning environment and curriculum of an educational institution meet specified standards to achieve established goals and produce outputs that satisfy the expectations of stakeholders (society). Quality assurance-oriented schools are characterized by core values and elements identified by UNICEF

(2000), including quality learners, learning environments, curriculum content, teaching and learning processes, and learning outcomes.

Challenges in Implementing Internal Measures for Quality Assurance in Secondary Schools

Quality assurance in education is a crucial mechanism for enhancing teaching effectiveness and improving student outcomes, particularly in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. The significance of internal measures for quality assurance, especially through strategic supervision, cannot be overstated. These measures are essential for ensuring continuous improvement and accountability in educational practices. However, the implementation of these measures often faces significant challenges that can hinder their effectiveness. Understanding these challenges is vital to identifying the barriers to effective internal quality assurance in secondary education. This essay outlines the primary challenges associated with implementing internal quality assurance measures and discusses their implications in the context of this study.

Resistance to Change

One of the most significant obstacles to implementing internal quality assurance measures is resistance to change among educators. Many teachers hold firmly established beliefs about their teaching methods and practices, making them hesitant to adopt new supervisory approaches. This resistance often stems from a fear of the unknown or a belief that their current methods are sufficient to achieve educational goals. Moreover, the perception of supervision as a mechanism for evaluation can create anxiety among teachers. They may fear that supervision will lead to punitive measures rather than constructive feedback, resulting in an environment of mistrust.

To address this resistance, educational leaders can employ change management strategies that emphasize open communication, stakeholder involvement, and gradual implementation. Involving teachers in the development and design of quality assurance measures can increase their sense of ownership and mitigate resistance. By fostering a culture that embraces change and views supervision as an opportunity for professional growth rather than a threat, schools can enhance the effectiveness of internal quality assurance measures.

Lack of Training for Supervisors

Effective supervision is contingent on supervisors being well-trained in contemporary pedagogical practices and evaluation techniques. Unfortunately, many educational institutions lack sufficient training programs for supervisors, leaving them ill-equipped to provide meaningful feedback and support to teachers. This gap in training can severely limit the effectiveness of supervision and, consequently, the quality assurance measures implemented within schools.mInvestigating the training needs of supervisors is critical for improving internal quality assurance measures. By identifying specific training deficiencies and addressing them, schools can enhance the quality of supervision provided, ultimately leading to improvements in teaching effectiveness and student performance. Professional development opportunities for supervisors should focus on contemporary evaluation techniques, pedagogical practices, and effective communication strategies.

Inadequate Resources

Inadequate resources pose another significant challenge to the implementation of internal quality assurance measures in secondary schools. Many educational institutions operate under tight budgets, limiting their ability to invest in essential resources such as training materials, professional development workshops, and classroom supplies. Insufficient funding can undermine the successful implementation of quality assurance initiatives, as schools may struggle to provide the necessary support for teachers and supervisors. Technological barriers can hinder the implementation of modern supervision practices. In today's digital age, access to technology is essential for effective teaching and evaluation. Schools lacking adequate technological infrastructure may find it challenging to implement contemporary supervision practices, which can lead to disparities in teaching quality. Identifying the availability of resources will help to highlight systemic barriers to quality assurance in public secondary schools and inform strategies to overcome these challenges.

Time Constraints

Time constraints further complicate the implementation of internal quality assurance measures. Teachers and principals often face demanding schedules filled with administrative tasks, leaving little time for classroom observations, feedback sessions, and professional development activities. This lack of time can significantly limit the effectiveness of quality assurance measures. When teachers are overwhelmed by various responsibilities, initiatives aimed at long-term improvement may be sidelined. To enhance the implementation of internal quality assurance measures, schools must prioritize professional development and support systems that allow for dedicated time for supervision and collaboration among educators. Streamlining administrative tasks and creating structured time for quality assurance activities can foster a more conducive environment for continuous improvement.

Inconsistent Evaluation Standards

The absence of clear and consistent evaluation standards can also hinder the implementation of internal quality assurance measures. When evaluation criteria are poorly defined, teachers may struggle to assess student performance consistently, leading to confusion regarding expectations. This lack of clarity can undermine trust in the evaluation process, thereby eroding confidence among educators. Additionally, variability in supervisory styles and personal biases can result in inconsistent feedback. When teachers perceive evaluations as subjective, it can lead to disengagement from quality assurance initiatives. Understanding the evaluation standards currently in place will be essential for identifying gaps and inconsistencies that need to be addressed to improve internal quality assurance measures.

Insufficient Collaboration

Collaboration among educators is crucial for the successful implementation of internal quality assurance measures. When teachers are not actively involved in developing and implementing these measures, they may feel disconnected from the process. This disconnection can lead to disengagement and resistance to adopting new practices. Many educators work in isolation, with limited opportunities for collaboration and peer support. This lack of interaction can hinder the sharing of best practices, which is essential for professional growth and the overall effectiveness of quality assurance measures. The study aims to explore ways to foster collaboration among teachers, which can significantly enhance the implementation of internal quality assurance measures.

External Influences

External influences, such as changing education policies and regulations can complicate the implementation of quality assurance measures. Frequent changes in policy may require schools to shift focus or reallocate resources unexpectedly, disrupting ongoing improvement efforts. Additionally, pressure from parents, the community, and educational authorities for immediate results can lead to a focus on short-term gains rather than sustainable quality improvements. This short-sightedness can undermine the long-term effectiveness of quality assurance initiatives. Analyzing the impact of external influences on quality assurance measures will help identify the need for more stable policies and practices that support long-term educational goals. Schools should engage with stakeholders to advocate for consistent policies that foster an environment conducive to educational improvement.

Socioeconomic Factors

Socioeconomic factors can create unique challenges in implementing internal quality assurance measures in secondary schools. Schools serving diverse student populations must address varied academic and social needs. Quality assurance measures that do not account for these differences may fail to meet the specific challenges faced by all students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Moreover, a lack of community engagement and support can hinder schools' efforts to implement quality assurance measures effectively. Community buy-in is crucial for fostering an environment conducive to educational improvement. The study seeks to explore the role of community engagement in supporting quality assurance initiatives in secondary schools.

The implementation of internal measures for quality assurance in secondary schools is a complex endeavour that requires careful navigation of various challenges. Addressing issues such as resistance to change, inadequate training, resource limitations, time constraints, inconsistent evaluation standards, insufficient collaboration, external influences, and socioeconomic factors is essential for creating an environment conducive to effective supervision. By proactively tackling these challenges, this study aims to identify systemic barriers to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Enugu State, ultimately proposing actionable solutions to enhance educational outcomes and the overall quality of education.

Conclusion

The investigation into the barriers to implementing internal quality assurance practices in public secondary schools in Enugu State reveals critical insights into the challenges faced by educational stakeholders. The findings underscore the importance of addressing these barriers to enhance the effectiveness of internal quality assurance measures and improve overall educational outcomes. The study identifies several significant barriers, including inadequate resources, insufficient training for educational personnel, and resistance to change, and lack of commitment from key stakeholders. These obstacles hinder the successful implementation of quality assurance practices, ultimately affecting the quality of education delivered in public secondary schools. Inadequate funding and infrastructural limitations impede the provision of necessary tools and materials, while insufficient training and professional development leave staff ill-prepared to engage in effective quality assurance practices. Moreover, resistance to change among educators and administrative staff creates an environment that is not conducive to the adoption of new policies and practices. This resistance is often rooted in fear of criticism, lack of understanding of the benefits of quality assurance, and a perception that current practices are sufficient. Without addressing these underlying issues, efforts to implement quality assurance practices will likely remain superficial and ineffective. Additionally, the lack of commitment from educational authorities and policymakers poses a significant challenge. When quality assurance is not prioritized at the systemic level, it sends a message that these practices are not integral to educational improvement. Consequently, the necessary support and resources required for successful implementation are often lacking.While the barriers to implementing internal quality assurance practices in public secondary schools in Enugu State are significant, they are not insurmountable. By acknowledging these challenges and adopting strategic approaches to address them, stakeholders can pave the way for a more robust quality assurance framework. Such a framework is crucial for enhancing the educational experiences of students and ensuring that public secondary schools in Enugu State can meet the demands of a rapidly changing educational landscape.

Recommendations

Based on the challenges discussed regarding the implementation of internal quality assurance measures in secondary schools, several recommendations can be made to enhance the effectiveness of these practices. These recommendations include:

1. Principals should establish a collaborative environment is essential for the successful implementation of quality assurance measures. Schools should promote open communication channels among teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. Regular meetings, workshops, and feedback sessions can facilitate discussions on quality assurance practices, enabling all stakeholders to share their insights and contribute to the continuous improvement of educational standards.
2. Continuous professional development is critical for keeping educators updated on effective teaching methodologies and assessment techniques. Schools should invest in regular training programs focusing on quality assurance practices, innovative instructional strategies, and contemporary evaluation methods. By aligning professional development with the educational system's goals, educators will be better equipped to implement quality assurance measures effectively.
3. Principals should involve teachers in the development and implementation of internal quality assurance measures can significantly mitigate resistance to change. When educators feel that their concerns are acknowledged and their input is valued, they are

more likely to take ownership of the initiatives. Schools should create platforms for teachers to participate in discussions and decisions related to quality assurance practices, fostering a sense of community and commitment.

4. Government should advocate for increased funding for public secondary schools to ensure the availability of essential resources, including teaching materials, technology, and infrastructure. Allocating sufficient funds can enable schools to invest in training programs, classroom supplies, and technological advancements necessary for implementing quality assurance measures effectively.
5. Principals should establish structured professional development programs focused on quality assurance practices, assessment methods, and instructional strategies is crucial. These programs should be mandatory for teachers and administrative staff, ensuring that all educators possess the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute to quality assurance initiatives. Collaborative workshops, peer observations, and hands-on training can enhance educators' capacity to implement effective internal quality assurance measures.
6. Principals should create mentorship programs where experienced educators guide and support their peers can foster a culture of continuous improvement. These programs can facilitate knowledge sharing, skill development, and emotional support, enabling less experienced teachers to implement quality assurance practices effectively. Mentorship relationships can also encourage professional growth and enhance collaboration within the school community.
7. Principals should engage teachers, parents, and community members in discussions about internal quality assurance initiatives can foster a sense of ownership and commitment. Schools should create forums for discussion and feedback, allowing stakeholders to share their perspectives and collaborate on solutions. This involvement can enhance transparency, trust, and community support for quality assurance efforts.
8. School principals should actively recognize and reward teachers who demonstrate commitment to quality assurance initiatives. Implementing recognition programs, such as awards or incentives, can motivate educators to engage actively in improving teaching practices and student outcomes. Celebrating successes, no matter how small, can help create a positive attitude towards change and encourage others to participate.
9. Educational policymakers should develop clear policies emphasizing the importance of internal quality assurance and outlining the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in its implementation. These policies should provide a framework for quality assurance practices, ensuring consistency and accountability across schools. Furthermore, regular reviews and updates to these policies can address emerging challenges and maintain alignment with educational goals.
10. The government should offer training programs for school principals focused on effective supervision and quality assurance practices. Well-trained principals can guide their teachers and students in implementing quality assurance measures, fostering a culture of continuous improvement within their schools. Training should cover leadership skills, instructional practices, and strategies for fostering collaboration among staff.

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