



Enhancing quality assurance strategies for business education programmes in universities in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined Enhancing Quality Assurance Strategies in Business Education Programmes in Universities in Rivers State. Two research questions and two corresponding null hypotheses in line with two objectives were posed to guide the study. The descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The population comprised 3919 lecturers in three public Universities in Rivers State. A proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to draw a sample size of 259 academic staff. The instrument used for data collection was 10-item questionnaire. Test-retest method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument which yielded a coefficient index of 0.87 using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The validity of the instrument was ensured by two experts. Mean, standard deviation and rank order were used in answering the research questions while z-test statistics was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed among others that developing business education teacher professionally as well as improving quality of instruction is supervision and evaluation service strategies that can enhance quality assurance in business education programme. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that there should be regular and periodic monitoring and evaluation of academic programmes in Rivers State universities for improvement in the quality of products.

Keywords: enhancing, quality assurance, strategies business education, programmes and universities

Introduction

Business Education Programme assists individuals acquire skills, that can propel them to solve problems in business and office occupation situations (Ogunmayi, 2008) ^[14]. In the same vein, business education programmes play an important role in preparing and equipping students with increased skills that will offer them opportunity of finding jobs across territorial boundaries after the university. In that, Business Education programme can equip the students with the necessary skills and knowledge they need to create their own job (Ntukidem, 2012). Osuala (2014) ^[16] also posited that Business education programmes provide instruction in two parts: Vocational education programme, which offer opportunities for office careers through refresher courses for upgrading education which also leads to employment and advancement in chosen career and (b) business education, which is a programme of instruction, that provides students with the needed information and competencies for managing personal business and using the services of the business world. From the above interpretations, it is obvious that everybody needs Business Education either for occupational purposes or for a general business purposes.

The purpose of establishing the school as an institution is to ensure that effective learning and teaching takes place. Learning plays a pivotal role in the all-round development of an individual and the school is purposefully organized to facilitate effective teaching and learning process by eliminating aversive stimuli in the environment and increasing satisfying stimuli (Eriega, 2013) ^[7]. Universities are instrument per excellence and generally confer social, economic and political status on individuals and the society. The relevance of universities largely depends upon their ability to undertake the major task of teaching, research and extension services. Such institutions must be able to educate and produce highly educated, refined graduates with productive capacity for economic development (Christopher & Ikpesu, 2014) ^[4]. As service providers to industries, commerce and other educational institutions, universities produce qualifies graduates with transferable knowledge and skills that add economic value to the process of production. But this understanding is now being challenged by the demands for accessibility and quantity rather than quality. No doubt, Nigeria generally and Rivers State in particular are faced with increasing demand for university education (NUC, 2013). The uncontrollable increase in student admission and enrolment witnessed across Nigeria universities has outweighed the process of teaching and learning and overstretched available infrastructure. The quality of input resources are major determining factors towards attaining the minimum standards and producing quality output that can meet the expectations of consumers. Many Faculties and Departments that were once accredited in the past now fail to fulfil the requirements of the minimum standards in recent time.

Teaching students the fundamentals, theories and processes of business involves business education programmes. Education at this stage occurs at several levels e.g secondary and higher education with the greatest activity occurring at the higher education level. Business education programmes prepare students for occupation in business and business related field or a career in teaching (Dhaka, 2011) ^[6]. In the same vein, Esene (2012) ^[8] posited that Business Education is also seen as education for and about business or training of individuals in relevant skills and office occupation. The goals of business education are outlined hereunder by (Asuquo, 2015 in Okoro 2015) ^[2, 15]:

- To provide opportunity for practice, job preparation or vocation studies for students in order to make them render effective and efficient services in office, distributive and service occupations.
- To prepare students, based on interests and aptitudes with the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to enter into a business occupation, advance and profit in it.
- To provide opportunities for students to develop a system of the nation so as to enable them to participate actively as producers and consumers of goods and services.
- To develop in students the basic awareness of the contribution which business and office employees make to the nation's Economy.
- To develop and improve the personal qualities and attitudes of students as required in personal and employment situations.
- To serve as a guide for individual students for suitable placement in business and office employment.
- To enable students have career consciousness and economic understanding of the free enterprise system.
- To prepare students for leadership position in both public and private lives.

Business Education programmes are offered both in secondary schools and universities. At the university level, courses are taught in Accounting, Management, Office Technology and Marketing. Students are expected to have relevant knowledge skills and, attitude to enable them perform effectively in their businesses and offices. The purpose of establishing the school as an institution is to ensure that effective learning and teaching takes place (Nzokurum & Humphrey, 2019) ^[13]. Learning plays a pivotal role in the all-round development of individuals and the school is organized to facilitate smooth teaching and learning process. No wonder Eriega (2013) ^[7] posited that eliminating aversive stimuli in the environment and increasing satisfying stimuli results to effective teaching and learning. Universities are instrument per excellence and generally confer social, economic and political status on individuals and the society. The relevance of universities largely depends upon their ability to undertake the major task of teaching, research and extension services. Such institutions must be able to educate and produce highly educated, refined graduates with productive capacity for economic development (Christopher & Ikpesu, 2014) ^[4]. As service providers to industries, commerce and other educational institutions, universities produce quality graduates with transferable knowledge and skills that add economic value to the process of production. But this understanding is now being challenged by the demands for accessibility and quantity rather than quality. No doubt, Nigeria generally and Rivers State in particular are faced with increasing demand for university education (NUC, 2013). The uncontrollable increase in student admission and enrolment witnessed across Nigeria universities has outweighed the process of teaching and learning and overstretched available infrastructure. The quality of input resources are major determining factor towards attaining the minimum standards and producing quality output that can meet the expectations of the consumer. Many faculties and departments that were once accredited in the past now fail to fulfil the requirements of the minimum standards in recent times.

Universities that have the Business Education Programmes must achieve their designed goals. They must make use of quality enhancing strategies that will ensure that quality graduates are produced as manpower for national development. Such strategies include: adequate, effective monitoring and evaluation, review of programmes, recruitment of quality staff, use of quality materials, in-depth assessment and staff development as well as standardization requirements for intake of quality students (Olufunwa, Wasiri & Olorunmolu, 2013). Quality assurance refers to the planned and systematic activities used to carryout quality management system so that quality requirement for a product or service will be fulfilled. Quality assurance is a process of ensuring effective resource input, control, refining of the processes and raising the standard of the output to meet the stated goals, Ayeni (2012) ^[3] asserted that quality assurance in education is the efficient management, monitoring, evaluation and reviewing of the resource inputs and transformation process (teaching and learning) to produce quality outputs (students) that meet set standards and expectations of the society.

Quality assurance in education aims at preventing quality problems and ensures that the products of the system conform to the expected standards. Thus, the quality of education is the degree of excellence of the output (students) which can be achieved through effective management of staff personnel. Mckeowon (2011) viewed quality assurance in education as the totality of the combination of some indispensable variables such as quality teachers, quality instructional materials and quality infrastructures (classrooms, seats, tables, chalkboards, etc). Okoro (2015) ^[15] and Chibuike (2013) ^[5] posited that quality assurance is the systematic measurement, comparison with a standard monitoring of processes and an associated feedback that confers error prevention. In the same vein, quality control focused on outputs whose principles are fit for purpose. The product should be suitable for the intended consumers and; first time mistakes should be avoided at all cost as supported by (Dhaska, 2011). Some measuring criteria for quality assurance in Business Education programme include: quality of resources input, output, process, and content as posited by (Nnorom & Gaivs-Oke (2013) ^[11].

Therefore, the inability of schools to acquire relevant teaching materials together with the present emphasis on electronic driven method of teaching generally posed a threat to quality education in our school system. Anioke (2011) ^[1] notes that most Rivers State schools lack modern teaching facilities, laboratories, workshops and instructional materials to impart the knowledge and skills needed to maintain quality education in our schools. It is on record that even when the facilities are available, it is either they are not enough for the learners or are too obsolete to stand the test of time. This, on the other hand, affect students negatively in the process of acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge for successful employment. As reiterated by Chibuike (2013) ^[5] the strategies for enhancing quality assurance in Business Education programmes include: quality of syllabus and curriculum, accreditation, quality of teachers, discipline of students and teachers, availability of infrastructure and facilities, through selection of students during admission, good governance, constant supervision, training and development of teachers and constant assessment of quality of works/researches (Okoro, 2015) ^[15]. Nnorom and Gaivs-Oke (2013) identified some quality assurance strategies which include the following: minimum academic standard, accreditation, carrying capacity admission quota, visitation, impact and research assessments, research and development, publications and research assessment and structures, infrastructures and utilities and employee ratings.

The study was anchored on Theory of Skills Acquisition propounded by Hubert and Stuart in (1986). The theory states that formal system of education is a gradual process that involves being embodied in different ways and developing skills that would make it possible for people to deal with the world (Okoro, 2015). The main idea behind Dreyfus and Dreyfus's skill development theories is the distinction they make between "knowing that" and knowing how"; the knowing-how and knowing-what is acquire through a formal system of deduction. Dreyfus and Dreyfus in the article "five stages from Novice to expert" noted that human beings acquire skills through instruction and experience, they do not leap suddenly from rule guiding "knowing that" to experience-based "knowing-how". Hubert and Stuart believe that there is a gradual process for a student to go through in order to reach the stage of expertise or knowing-how. The skills acquisition processes show that a student goes through five stages of different knowledge of a specific task and ways of decision-making as he improves his skills. These five stages are novice, advanced beginner, competence, proficiency, and expertise. This assertion holds true in a business education programme where several courses, both theoretical and practical, are taught to the students, who before had little or no knowledge about such courses. This assumption relates to the study as follows:

Novice stage has some general ideas and is the process of learning the rules, with no responsibility beyond following the rules exactly. The business education students at the university level are exposed to the basic principles of skills acquisition and other related introductory knowledge, which will prepare them for world of work and skills acquisition.

Advanced beginner state

At this stage, the individual is faced with limited situational perception. All aspect of work is treated with equal importance. The business education student's performance improves to a relatively acceptable level only after the novice has had enough experience in coping with the real situation the students start to show unique performance through personal experience.

Competence stage is when the individual develop organizing principles to quickly access the particular rules that are relevant to business educations student who start becoming personally involved with the task. Students start to see more than one option from which he has to choose the best for optimal performance. Proficiency stage: This stage is stage whereby individuals develop intuition to guide their decisions and devise their own rules to formulate plans. Their progression is from rigid adherence to rules to an intuitive mode of reasoning based on tacit knowledge. The business education student, while intuitively understanding his task, still thinks analytically about his actions. At this level, the business education student must have acquired skills that will enable him/her think creatively On what he can do to become self-employed after graduation, analysing the possible ways of raising fund, locating his business, and other business strategies will come to mind at this stage.

The last stage is called expertise stage where experts in general know what to do base on mature understanding of the task. An expert has had so much experience with the task that the skill of doing the task is a part of him. He acts upon correct intuitions without analytically thinking about his every move. This lays emphasis that on the fact that practice is required for the agent to maintain the know-how. Without practice, the agent will gradually lose his expertise and is most likely to regress as far back as the competence stage. This is the level to which the ability to create jobs will in turn make a business student self-employed with necessary initiative as posited by (Okoro, 2015) ^[15].

Statement of the Problem

The inability to attain quality assurance in Business Education programme in Universities in Rivers State, which seems to result from ineffective and inefficient delivery system, has been the bane of the education programme in Nigeria and other developing countries. Institutions offering Business Education Programmes have found themselves lagging behind in the realization of their objectives due to inherent poor delivery system. Products of the programme are ill-equipped and short of the necessary and needed ingredients for self-realization. As a result, the society has been denied the much desired benefit of the programme as the products cannot contribute adequately and meaningfully to the economic and social growth of the society. The problem of the study is

therefore, what are the enhancing quality assurance strategies in business education programme in universities in Rivers State?

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to examine the enhancing quality assurance strategies in business education programmes in Universities in Rivers State.

Specifically, the objectives were to:

1. Determine the instructional supervision strategy for enhancing quality assurance in business education programmes in Universities Rivers State.
2. Examine the evaluation strategy for enhancing quality assurance in business education programmes in universities in Rivers State.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female university lecturers on instructional supervision strategy for enhancing quality assurance in business education programmes in universities Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female university lecturers on the evaluation strategy for enhancing quality assurance in business education programmes in Universities in Rivers State.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The study sought the opinion of university lecturers on the strategies of quality assurance in business education programmes. The population of this study was made up of all the three (3) public universities in Rivers State: which are University of Port Harcourt (UPH) comprising Twelve (12) Faculties with two thousand five hundred and twenty (2,520) academic staff; Rivers State University (RSUST) comprising Seven (7) Faculties with eight hundred and one academic staff and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) comprising Six (6) Faculties with five hundred and ninety-eight (598) teaching staff. The total population was 3919 academic staff from all the three universities under study. Proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to select the sample size of 259 academic staff for this study. The instrument for data collection was 10- item questionnaire titled: Enhancing Quality Assurance Strategies for Business Education Programmes Questionnaire (EQASBEPQ). The instrument was structured after 4 points modified Likert type scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with weights of 4,3,2,1 with criterion mean of 2.50. The instrument was validated by experts in the Departments of Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation of the University of Port Harcourt. Test-retest method was used to determine the reliability of the instrument using data from the pilot study carried out on 20 participants outside the sample size. A reliability index of 0.87 was obtained using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient which is high, reliable and adequate for the study. The Research questions were answered using mean, standard deviation and rank order. The mean scores of 2.50 and above were rated as agreed while means scores below 2.50 were rated as disagreed while the null hypotheses formulated were tested using z-test at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

Results

The result of the analysed data for each research questions and its corresponding hypotheses are presented on tables below:

Research Question 1: What are the instructional supervision strategies for enhancing quality assurance in business education programmes in universities in Rivers State?

Table 1: Weighted mean, standard deviation and rank order statistics of male and female lecturers on the instructional supervision strategy for enhancing quality assurance in business education programmes in universities in Rivers State. n= 154 n= 89

S/No	Items	Male		Female		Mean Set $\frac{\bar{x}_1 + \bar{x}_2}{2}$	Rank Order	Remark
		\bar{x}_1	SD	\bar{x}_2	SD			
1.	Improve quality of instruction through developing business education teachers professionally	2.71	1.05	2.82	1.05	2.774	4 th	Agree
2.	Provision of guide for development of business education staff	2.90	1.11	2.91	1.13	2.91	2 nd	Agree
3.	Ensures that high quality standard	2.98	0.90	3.01	0.91	2.99	1 st	Agree

	is maintained through feedback							
4.	Ensuring instructional orderliness by classroom visitation	2.85	0.89	2.81	0.86	2.83	3 rd	Agree
5.	Instructional supervision to instil the spirit of business consciousness Through workshop	2.66	1.08	2.66	1.09	2.66	5 th	agree
	Grand Mean	14.10	5.03	14.21	5.04	14.16		
		2.82	1.01	2.83	1.01	2.83		

Source: Survey Data (2022)

Data on table 1 showed that all the items (1-5) had weighted mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 and were adjudged as the ways of enhancing instructional supervision strategy for quality assurance in business education programmes in universities in Rivers State. In summary, with an aggregate weighted mean score of 2.83 which is above the criterion mean of 2.50, the respondents agreed that the ways instructional supervision strategy enhances quality assurance in Rivers State universities are that instructional supervision helps to develop business education teachers professionally as well as improving quality of instruction; provides guide for business education staff development; ensures high quality standard through feedback; ensures instructional orderliness by classroom visitation and instils the spirit of business consciousness through workshops. On the ranking, item 3 ranked first, followed by item 2 as second, item 4 ranked third, item 1 ranked fourth and item 5 ranked fifth. Finally, Item 3 was rated first while item 5 was rated last.

Research Question 2: What are the evaluation strategies for enhancing quality assurance in business education programmes in universities in Rivers State?

Table 2: Weighted mean, standard deviation and rank order statistics of male and female lecturers on evaluation strategies for enhancing quality assurance in business education programmes in universities in Rivers State. n = 154 n = 89

S/No	Items	Male		Female		Mean Set $\frac{\bar{x}_1 + \bar{x}_2}{2}$	Rank order	Remark
		\bar{x}_1	SD	\bar{x}_2	SD			
1.	Ensuring continuous quality improvement.	2.60	0.97	2.63	0.96	2.62	4 th	Agree
2.	Ensuring progress towards goal achievement.	2.56	1.11	2.66	1.19	2.61	5 th	Agree
3.	Ensuring excellence/ Exceptional High standard.	3.03	0.67	3.00	0.91	3.02	1 st	Agree
4.	Improving efficiency of task accomplishment	2.62	0.89	2.72	0.84	2.67	3 rd	Agree
5.	Ensuring increased stakeholders participation	2.58	1.18	2.87	1.09	2.73	2 nd	Agree
	Grand Mean	13.39	4.82	13.88	4.99	13.65		
		2.68	0.96	2.78	0.99	2.73		

Source: Survey Data (2022)

Data on Table 2 showed that all the items (6-10) had weighted mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 and were adjudged as evaluation strategies for enhancing quality assurance in business education programmes in universities in Rivers State. In summary, with an aggregate weighted mean score of 2.73 which is above the criterion mean of 2.50 the respondents agreed that evaluation strategies for enhancing quality assurance in business education programmes in universities in Rivers State include among others: ensuring continuous quality improvement, ensuring progress towards goal achievement, ensuring excellence/exceptional high standard, improving efficiency of task accomplishment and increasing stakeholders participation. On ranking, item 8 was first, followed by item 10 as second, item 9 as third, item 6 as fourth and item 7 as fifth. Finally, item 8 was adjudged first while item 7 was last.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female University Lecturers on the ways instructional supervision strategy enhances quality assurance in business education programme in Rivers State.

Table 3: Z-test analysis of mean ratings of male and female lecturers on instructional supervision strategies for enhancing quality assurance in business education programmes in universities in Rivers States.

Group	n	\bar{x}	SD	Level of Sig.	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Decision
Male Lecturers	154	2.82	1.01	0.05	257	-0.538	+1.960	Accepted
Female Lecturers	89	2.83	1.02					

Table 3 showed that male lecturers have mean and standard deviation scores 2.82 and 1.01 while female lecturers have mean and standard deviation scores of 2.83 and 1.02 respectively. With a degree of freedom of 257 at an alpha level of 0.05, the calculated z-value of -0.538 is lesser than the critical z-value of +1.960. Therefore the null hypothesis was accepted. By implication, there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female lecturers on instructional supervision strategies for enhancing quality assurance in business education programmes in universities Rivers State.

Table 4: Z-test analysis of mean ratings of male and female university lecturers on evaluation strategies for enhancing quality assurance in business education programmes in universities in Rivers State.

Group	n	\bar{x}	SD	Level of Sig.	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Decision
Male Lecturers	154	2.68	0.96	0.05	257	-1.741	+1.960	Accepted
Female Lecturers	89	2.78	0.99					

Table 4 showed that male lecturers have mean and standard deviation of 2.68 and 0.96 while female lecturers have mean and standard deviation scores of 2.78 and 0.99 respectively. With a degree of freedom of 257 at an alpha level of 0.05, the calculated z-value of -1.741 is lesser than the critical z-value of +1.960, therefore the null hypothesis was accepted. By implications, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female lecturers on evaluation strategies for enhancing quality assurance in business education programmes in universities in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that the instructional supervision strategies for enhancing quality assurance in business education programmes in Rivers State include: improving quality of instruction by development of teachers of business education, provision of guide for business education staff development, ensuring high quality standard, ensuring instructional orderliness by classroom visitation and instilling the spirit of business consciousness. The test of hypothesis one showed that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female lecturers on the instructional supervision strategies for enhancing quality assurance in business education programmes in universities Rivers State. In line with the above findings, Olufunwa, Waziri and Olorunmolu (2013) rightly noted that if institutions that have the Business Education Programme must achieve their goals, they must put in place quality enhancing strategies that will ensure the production of quality graduates for national development.

The findings also revealed that ensuring continuous quality improvement; ensuring progress toward goals achievement; ensuring excellence/exceptional high standard; improving efficiency of task accomplishment and increased stakeholders participation are the evaluation strategies for enhancing quality assurance in business education programmes in universities in Rivers State. The test of hypotheses one and two showed that there is no significant differences between the mean ratings of male and female lecturers on the supervision and evaluation strategies for enhancing quality assurance in universities in Rivers State. In agreement with the findings, Ayeni (2012) [3] opined that supervision and evaluation strategies enhance efficient management and review of the resource inputs and transformation processes of (teaching and learning) to produce quality outputs (students) that met set standards and expectations of the society.

Conclusion

Business education programmes involve acquisition of relevant skills which enables the recipients function effectively and work after university graduation. Therefore, adequate criteria for measuring quality assurance in Business education programmes in Rivers State universities should be strictly adhered to. Strategies for stimulating qualities of teaching and learning for enhancing quality assurance in Business Education should be properly carried out through instructional supervision and evaluation services among others.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, these recommendations were made for implementation:

1. That there should be regular and periodic monitoring and evaluation of business education programmes in universities in Rivers State for improvement in the quality of products.
2. Adequate funding and logistics should be provided by the government for effective function of business education programmes.
3. Business education curriculum should be enlarged to take care of marketing, accounting, office technology and management.

4. Regular quality assurance should be carried out on regular basis by the university authorities to determine the strength of business education programme.

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