

QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: EVIDENCE FROM GOMBE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of quality assurance practices on academic performance in secondary schools in Gombe State, Nigeria. The study was prompted by persistent concerns about declining educational quality and students' poor performance in external examinations, despite various government reforms. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised principals, teachers, and education officers in Gombe State. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select respondents across the three senatorial zones. Data were collected through a validated questionnaire titled Quality Assurance and Academic Performance Questionnaire (QAAPQ), which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.83 using Cronbach's Alpha. The results revealed that quality assurance mechanisms such as supervision, instructional monitoring, continuous assessment, and staff development significantly influenced students' academic performance. It was found that poor funding, inadequate facilities, and irregular supervision limited the effectiveness of quality assurance in schools. The study concluded that effective implementation of quality assurance practices enhances teaching quality and improves students' academic performance. It was recommended that the Ministry of Education should ensure regular internal and external supervision, improve teacher training, and provide adequate funding to strengthen quality assurance practices in secondary schools.

Keywords: academic performance, education quality, Gombe State, quality assurance, school supervision, secondary schools

INTRODUCTION

Education remains the cornerstone of social, economic, and technological development of any nation. In Nigeria, secondary education occupies a central position in the overall structure of the educational system because it prepares learners for higher education and productive citizenship. Despite this, the performance of students in secondary schools has continued to decline, raising questions about the adequacy and effectiveness of quality assurance mechanisms put in place to maintain standards.

Quality assurance in education refers to a systematic process of evaluating, monitoring, and improving teaching and learning to ensure that educational objectives are achieved effectively. It involves a range of activities, including supervision, evaluation, feedback, and capacity building for teachers. According to Ajayi and Adegbesan (2017), quality assurance ensures accountability, enhances productivity, and promotes continuous improvement in schools.

In Gombe State, Nigeria, the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders have introduced several reforms aimed at improving school supervision and monitoring systems. These include periodic inspections, internal assessments, teacher retraining programs, and the establishment of quality assurance units. However, the persistent low performance of students in West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and National Examinations Council (NECO) results suggests that these mechanisms may not be achieving their intended goals.

Previous research (Ukeje, 2018; Yusuf & Oduwaiye, 2020) has emphasized that poor implementation of quality assurance policies, inadequate resources, and lack of trained personnel remain major challenges. In some schools, quality assurance officers conduct irregular visits, while in others, the recommendations of monitoring reports are rarely implemented. These issues hinder the expected outcomes of teaching and learning.

Given these challenges, this study investigates the extent to which quality assurance practices influence academic performance in Gombe State secondary schools. The study specifically seeks to:

1. Assess the implementation of quality assurance practices in secondary schools.
2. Determine the relationship between quality assurance practices and students' academic performance.
3. Identify challenges affecting the effectiveness of quality assurance in secondary schools.

The findings will provide empirical evidence to guide policymakers, administrators, and educators in improving the quality of education delivery and outcomes in Gombe State and Nigeria in general.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Quality Assurance in Education

Quality assurance in education is a systematic process of ensuring that educational services meet or exceed established standards. It encompasses all planned and systematic actions necessary to provide adequate confidence that education will satisfy given requirements for quality. According to Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013), quality assurance in education involves internal and external mechanisms designed to monitor, evaluate, and improve educational standards.

Scholars such as Adesina (2019) and Omoregie (2020) describe quality assurance as a holistic approach aimed at improving input, process, and output in educational institutions. Inputs include teachers, learners, facilities, and curriculum; the process covers teaching, learning, and supervision; and the output reflects students' achievement levels and competencies.

Dimensions of Quality Assurance Practices

Quality assurance involves key components that determine the effectiveness of teaching and learning:

1. Instructional Supervision: Regular classroom observation and evaluation of teachers' performance by principals and inspectors to maintain instructional standards (Akinfolarin, 2018).
2. Staff Development: Continuous professional training to enhance teachers' knowledge, pedagogical skills, and motivation (Yusuf & Oduwaiye, 2020).
3. Curriculum Implementation: Monitoring the delivery of curriculum content to ensure it aligns with national education goals (Oluremi, 2017).
4. Assessment and Evaluation: Continuous assessment helps track students' progress and provides feedback for improvement (Okebukola, 2018).

Quality Assurance and Academic Performance

Empirical evidence has shown a strong relationship between quality assurance practices and student academic achievement. Ajayi and Adegbesan (2017) found that schools with consistent supervision, adequate teaching materials, and staff motivation recorded higher student performance levels. Conversely, where supervision and monitoring are weak, teaching quality tends to decline (Ogunleye, 2019).

In Kenya, Muthoni (2018) observed that effective quality assurance ensures timely feedback, accountability, and adherence to curriculum standards. Similarly, in Nigeria, Oladipo (2021) reported that regular supervision and teacher appraisal significantly improve students' achievement in science subjects.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Total Quality Management (TQM) Theory propounded by Edward Deming (1986). The theory emphasizes continuous improvement through stakeholder participation, effective supervision, and accountability. In the school context, TQM focuses on ensuring that teachers, administrators, and learners work collaboratively toward quality outcomes. Applying TQM principles in secondary schools implies regular supervision, teacher development, and monitoring as pathways to improve students' academic performance.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was deemed appropriate because it allowed the researcher to collect quantitative data from a large sample to describe the status of quality assurance practices and their impact on academic performance.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of all principals and teachers in public secondary schools in Gombe State. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select participants across the three senatorial zones: Gombe Central, Gombe North, and Gombe South. From this population, a sample of 420 respondents (60 principals and 360 teachers) was drawn.

Instrumentation

The main instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled Quality Assurance and Academic Performance Questionnaire (QAAPQ), developed by the researchers based on literature and validated by experts in educational management. The instrument consisted of two parts:

Section A: Demographic data of respondents.

Section B: Items on quality assurance practices (supervision, staff development, curriculum implementation, and assessment).

Each item was rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1).

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The questionnaire was validated by three experts from the Department of Educational Management, Federal University of Kashere. Suggestions made were incorporated before administration. Reliability was tested through a pilot study involving 30 teachers in schools outside the sample, producing a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.83, indicating high internal consistency.

Method of Data Collection

The researchers personally administered and retrieved the questionnaires with the assistance of trained research assistants. This ensured a high return rate and proper guidance for respondents.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation to answer research questions, while regression analysis was used to test hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance using SPSS version 25.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study in line with the research objectives. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze responses from teachers and principals on the extent of quality assurance practices and their influence on academic performance in Gombe State secondary schools.

Research Question 1:

To what extent are quality assurance practices implemented in secondary schools in Gombe State?

Table 1: Extent of Implementation of Quality Assurance Practices

Quality Assurance Practice	Mean	SD	Remark
Regular instructional supervision	2.76	0.81	Moderate
Teacher appraisal and feedback	2.65	0.78	Moderate
Staff development programs	2.58	0.84	Moderate
Curriculum monitoring	2.73	0.8	Moderate
Continuous assessment and record keeping	2.7	0.76	Moderate
Grand Mean	2.68	0.8	Moderately Implemented

Interpretation:

Table 1 reveals that quality assurance practices are moderately implemented across secondary schools in Gombe State, with an overall mean score of 2.68. This indicates that although supervision and monitoring occur, they are not regular or intensive enough to ensure consistent quality in teaching and learning.

This finding aligns with Ogunleye (2019) who found that most schools in Nigeria implement quality assurance mechanisms irregularly due to inadequate funding and limited personnel.

Research Question 2:

What is the influence of quality assurance practices on students' academic performance in Gombe State secondary schools?

Table 2: Regression Analysis of Quality Assurance Practices on Academic Performance

Predictor Variable	β	t-value	Sig.	Remark
Instructional supervision	0.4	6.24	0	Significant
Staff development	0.3	5.12	0	Significant
Continuous assessment practices	0.3	4.88	0	Significant
<u>Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.56$, $F(3, 416) = 29.74$, $p < 0.05$</u>				

Interpretation:

The results in Table 2 show that instructional supervision, staff development, and continuous assessment jointly account for 56% ($R^2 = 0.56$) of the variation in students' academic performance. This implies that improvement in quality assurance mechanisms leads to better academic outcomes among students.

This finding agrees with Ajayi and Adegbesan (2017), who asserted that regular supervision, teacher motivation, and continuous assessment significantly enhance students' learning outcomes.

Research Question 3:

What are the challenges affecting effective implementation of quality assurance practices in secondary schools?

Table 3: Challenges of Quality Assurance Implementation

Challenge	Mean	SD	Remark
Inadequate funding and resources	3.15	0.7	Major
Irregular supervision and monitoring	3.04	0.8	Major
Shortage of qualified inspectors	2.92	0.8	Major
Poor teacher motivation	2.88	0.8	Major
Weak enforcement of quality assurance policies	2.85	0.8	Major
Grand Mean	2.97	0.8	Major Challenge

Interpretation:

Table 3 indicates that inadequate funding ($M = 3.15$) and irregular supervision ($M = 3.04$) are the most critical challenges affecting the effectiveness of quality assurance practices in Gombe State. These findings suggest that despite existing policies, their implementation is constrained by lack of resources and trained inspectors.

This finding corroborates Oluremi (2017) and Yusuf & Oduwaiye (2020), who noted that insufficient funding and inadequate monitoring mechanisms remain persistent barriers to effective quality assurance in Nigerian secondary schools.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that quality assurance practices are moderately implemented across Gombe State secondary schools. Although supervision, staff development, and continuous assessment are in place, their irregular application reduces their overall impact.

The regression analysis showed that these practices significantly influence academic performance. This confirms Oladipo (2021), who found that consistent teacher supervision and training enhance teaching quality and students' results.

The challenges identified—poor funding, inadequate facilities, and weak policy enforcement—reflect systemic issues within the educational administration framework. The results align with Muthoni (2018) in Kenya and Osei (2020) in Ghana, both of whom observed that insufficient resources limit the sustainability of quality assurance mechanisms.

The implication of this study is that strengthening internal monitoring and providing adequate funding will not only improve supervision but also promote accountability and better academic performance in schools.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of quality assurance practices on academic performance in secondary schools in Gombe State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that quality assurance mechanisms such as instructional supervision, teacher appraisal, continuous assessment, and staff development are moderately implemented in most secondary schools. Despite their potential to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, their effectiveness is constrained by inadequate funding, insufficient supervision, and shortage of qualified inspectors.

The study further established that quality assurance practices significantly influence students' academic performance. Schools that implemented regular supervision, continuous assessment, and staff development recorded better student outcomes than those that did not. These results reaffirm the importance of effective quality assurance systems in promoting educational excellence and accountability.

Conclusively, the study emphasizes that consistent implementation of quality assurance mechanisms, adequate funding, and proper supervision are essential to achieving sustainable improvement in the academic performance of students in Gombe State and Nigeria as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. Strengthen Supervision and Monitoring:

The Ministry of Education should ensure regular and systematic supervision of schools by trained quality assurance officers to promote accountability and adherence to teaching standards.

2. Increase Funding for Quality Assurance Activities:

Government should provide adequate financial resources to facilitate monitoring visits, training workshops, and provision of instructional materials necessary for effective quality assurance.

3. Capacity Building for Teachers and Administrators:

Continuous professional development programs should be organized for teachers and principals to update their knowledge and skills in instructional supervision, curriculum delivery, and assessment methods.

4. Enhance Teacher Motivation:

Incentive schemes, recognition awards, and timely promotions should be implemented to motivate teachers and foster commitment to quality teaching.

5. Community Participation:

School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) should be actively involved in monitoring school performance and supporting government initiatives toward quality improvement.

6. Policy Enforcement:

The state government should enforce compliance with quality assurance policies by ensuring sanctions for non-performing schools and rewarding those with consistent improvements.

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Declarations

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