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ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES OF HEADTEACHERS IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN EBONYI STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the quality assurance practices of headteachers in public primary schools in Ebonyi State. Two purposes, two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised seven thousand, seven hundred and thirty-nine teachers in 1,074 public primary schools in Ebonyi State. The sample size for the study was 387 respondents using taro Yamane formular. Also proportionate random sampling technique was used to select 168 male and 219 female teachers for the study. Structured questionnaire by the researcher tagged "Assessment of Quality assurance practices of headteachers in public primary schools Questionnaire" (AQAPHPPSQ), was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts, two of whom were from the Department of Educational Foundations and one from Measurement and Evaluation Unit from Science Education Department, all in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The reliability coefficient yielded 0.77 using Cronbach Alpha method. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation, while t-test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result revealed among others that financial records keeping practice and fund utilization as quality assurance practices for quality education in public primary schools in Ebonyi State were to a high extent. The result further revealed that there is significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent to which financial records recorded practice by headteachers served as quality assurance practice for quality education in public primary schools. Based on the findings, the researcher recommended that Ebonyi State ministry of education should introduce in-service training on financial record-keeping for headteachers to upgrade their knowledge in ways to prepare records so as to ensure transparency.

Keywords: Assessment, quality assurance, practices, headteachers, public primary schools.

Introduction

The place of education in enhancing productivity of any organization cannot be over emphasized. Education helps the organization have optimum quality of goods or services. Therefore, education as a catalyst for service delivery in any organization, requires great attention for purpose of quality service. The products of education be it primary, secondary or tertiary constitute national assets and labour which go a long way to facilitate socio-economic development of every nation (Ifeoma, 2022). Obtaining quality

education underpins a range of fundamental development drivers (Lingan, Cornforth & Pollard, 2023). Unfortunately, Nigeria could not meet up with the Education For All (EFA goals) targeted for year 2015 for all nations by the United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) because quality education is still found to be very low (Chiaha, Onu, Ogakwu & Amaefula, 2019). One cannot but wonder if Nigeria will attain the SDG-4 by 2030. This elucidates the crucial need for a quality assurance measure in the educational system through regular supervision of schools especially -in primary schools. To achieve the needed quality in education system, it is obligatory for educational administrators to adopt quality assurance mechanisms for quality education in schools.

Assurance for quality education is a holistic process concerned with ensuring integrity of outcomes. Assurance implies checking or comparing intentions with actualities and then doing something when actualities are too far from intentions. It includes taking action through assigned responsibilities in order to close gaps between what has occurred and what is intended (Harvey, 2018). Thus, the responsibility for quality assurance rests with school managers, which is expressed through relationships with other stakeholders in the education system.

In the past 15 years, the notion of quality assurance has been left solely in the hands of headteachers and some groups of teachers (Lingan, Cornforth & Pollard, 2023). Consequently, this is regarded as an unsatisfactory way of ensuring quality in educational delivery. This underscores the reason Ebonyi State Government in 2016 created Quality Assurance department in the State Ministry of Education to supervise all educational activities in primary and junior Secondary Schools (JSS) in the State (Osiobe, 2011).

Basic education, according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014), shall be nine (9) years comprising 6 years of primary education and three (3) years of junior secondary education which shall be free and compulsory. Primary education as explained by Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014) is the education given to children between the aged 6 to 11 plus. The document added that since the rest of the education system is built upon it, the primary level is key to the success or failure of the whole system. The FRN goals for the primary education include:

> Permanent literacy and numeracy; ability to communicate effectively; lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking; give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society; mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child's changing environment; give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively

> in the society within the limits of the child's capability; and provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality (FRN, 2014:13).

The goal of primary education therefore is to enable pupils learn, realize their full potentials and participate meaningfully in the society. Therefore, to achieve the stated goals in primary education, the need for quality assurance becomes imperative. Quality assurance in primary schools in Ebonyi State is, therefore, not limited to Universal Basic Education Board but to headteachers and teachers who take care of the curricula (Kisuniene, 2022). It could therefore, be concluded that quality assurance practice is a process through which an organization seeks to ensure that quality is maintained or improved upon in which headteacher plays a crucial role to facilitate.

The headteacher is a major facilitator for the objectives of primary education. He/She is the coordinator and manager of human and material resources available in primary schools. As human resource personnel, he has numerous areas to effectively and adequately manage if he is to be successful. He has to manage the school environment in such a way that it will be conducive for teaching and learning to take place. To adequately manage these resources effectively, fund is necessary. In support of this statement, Ekundayo (2018) said that the headteacher is the chief executive and accounting officer who is entrusted with the responsibilities of controlling the revenue accruing from the school and ensuring judicious utilization of Parents Teachers Association's (PTA) levy. The headteacher as chief executive plays a crucial role in achieving quality education. Nwankwo (2021) highlighted the following as mechanism for quality assurance which ranges from: supervision of instruction, provision instructional facilities, motivation of teachers, supervision of instruction, curriculum development, adequate teachers' recruitment, effective sources of funds, utilization of funds, provision of infrastructural facilities and provision of instructional materials. In context of this study, quality assurance practices border on financial records keeping and utilization of funds.

Financial records keeping refers to the practice of accurately recording and organizing financial transactions and information related to an organization's finances (Nwankwo, 2021). According to Nwankwo, documenting income, expenses, assets, liabilities, and other financial data should be systematic and in organized manner. Effective financial records keeping is essential for tracking financial misconduct, complying with regulations, making informed business decisions, and ensuring transparency and accountability in financial management (Utuka, 2022). Headteachers effectively manage the school's budget, track

expenses, and allocate resources efficiently by keeping accurate and up-to-date financial records. This practice allows for transparency and accountability in financial management, ensuring that funds are utilized appropriately to support educational needs of pupils.

Headteachers play vital roles in the utilization of funds within their schools, as they are responsible for managing the financial resources efficiently and effectively (Asodike, 2020). When headteachers prioritize the allocation of funds towards educational resources and programs that directly impact the quality of education, it serves as a quality assurance practice for ensuring that pupils receive high-quality education. By investing in resources such as updated textbooks, technology, qualified teachers, professional development opportunities, and extracurricular activities, headteachers can enhance the overall learning experience for pupils (Adetula, 2022). Additionally, utilizing funds to maintain school facilities, provide safe and conducive learning environment, support pupils' well-being can contribute to the quality of education provided. Furthermore, effective financial management by headteachers according to Okoro (2021) leads to improved academic outcomes of pupils' performance, and overall school success.

Gender refers to the idea that educational systems do offer the same and equal type of opportunities for upward mobility to both sexes. Thus, gender is the state of being sensitive to the needs of both sexes. In the context of primary schools, male and female teachers play a vital role in the educational process, contributing to the diversity and inclusivity of the learning environment in order to achieve quality education. Both male and female educators bring unique perspectives and experiences that can enrich the educational experience for pupils (Ayeni, 2016). Recognizing and supporting the diverse roles that both male and female teachers play, headteachers can enhance the effectiveness of their staff, promote staff/student engagement, and support the overall goals of equitable education. UNICEF (2017) knew that individuals male or female is free to express his or her individuality and those male and female learn to live together and work together for the promotion of educational system. Igwe (2019) also observed that female teachers adhered to school rules for ascertaining quality education than that of male teachers.

Quality assurance practices of headteachers in public primary schools are essential for promoting high educational standards, fostering accountability, supporting pupil's outcome and ensuring continuous improvement but the short fall of primary education remains a thing of concern. Most time the quality assurance practices of headteachers in public primary schools face challenges due to inadequate resources, insufficient training and inadequate support from educational authorities/managers. Sunday (2021) observed that headteachers in public primary schools constitute a great

problem in the administration of primary education. Thus, this study sought to ascertain quality assurance practices of Headteachers for Quality Education in Public Primary Schools in Ebonyi State.

Statement of the Problem

Researcher's personal experience and observation indicate that quality assurance practices which are tools of ensuring the employment of qualified teachers, provision of instructional materials, provision of funds, utilization of funds and the availability of facilities needed in ensuring quality education in Ebonyi State is greatly inadequate. Quality output has constituted a problem because pupils no longer find it easy to compete with their private school counterparts, hence, the mass exodus from public to private schools where teachers, adequate facilities and proper management is guaranteed. These lead to poor academic performance and poor school system development in Ebonyi State. It is on this premise that this study deemed it imperative to ascertain quality assurance practices of Headteachers in Public Primary Schools in Ebonyi State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to assess Quality Assurance Practices of Headteachers for Quality Education in Public Primary Schools in Ebonyi State. Specifically, the study sought to ascertain:

1. the extent financial records keeping serves as quality assurance practice for quality education in public primary schools in Ebonyi State
2. the extent utilization of funds serves as quality assurance practice for quality education in public primary schools in Ebonyi State

Research Questions

In line with the objective of this study, the following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent does financial record keeping serve as a quality assurance practice for quality education in public primary schools in Ebonyi State?
2. To what extent does utilization of funds serve as a quality assurance practice for quality education in public primary schools in Ebonyi State?

Hypotheses

Five null hypotheses were formulated for the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent financial records keeping serve as a quality assurance practice for quality education in public primary schools in Ebonyi State
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent utilization of funds serves as a quality assurance practice for quality education in public primary schools in Ebonyi State

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey design is the plan of study which does not attempt to control or manipulate any of the variables

but is focused on describing an event as it is. The area of the study was Ebonyi State. Ebonyi State is located in the South-East Geo-political zone of Nigeria. Ebonyi State shares geographical boundaries with Benue State in the North, Abia State in the south, Cross River state in the East; and Enugu State in the West. The population of the study comprised seven thousand, seven hundred and thirty-nine teachers in 1,074 public primary schools in Ebonyi State. The sample for the study was 387 respondents made up of two hundred and nineteen female and one hundred and sixty-eight male teachers using Yaro Yamane formular, for finite population. The instrument for data collection for this study is a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher, titled 'Assessment of Quality assurance practices of headteachers in public primary schools Questionnaire" (AQAPHPPSQ)). The instrument which was designed to elicit information from the respondents, is divided into sections A and B. The instrument was structured on a 4-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent (VLE) weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively for positive items and the reverse for negative items. Three (3) copies of the questionnaire were validated by three (3) experts from Faculty of Education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. Out of the three (3) experts, two (2) experts were from the Department of Educational Foundations, Administration and Planning while one (1) expert was a Measurement and Evaluation specialist from Science Education Department. In all the overall reliability yielded 0.77. The instrument was adjudged reliable because each of the reliability coefficient obtained from the instrument was above 0.50 as indicated by Nworgu (2006), that any reliability score above 0.50 obtained after a reliability test shows that such instrument is reliable. In answering the research questions, data collected from respondents were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 25) using mean and standard deviation. In answering the research questions, range values were adopted, that is 1.00-1.49 for Very Low Extent (VLE), 1.50 – 2.49 for Low Extent (LE), 2.50 – 3.49 for High Extent (HE) and 3.50 - 4. 00 for Very High Extent (VHE). In testing the hypotheses, t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does financial records keeping serve as a quality assurance practice for quality education in public primary schools in Ebonyi State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Extent Financial Records Keeping serves as a Quality Assurance Practice for Quality Education

S/No.	Item Statement	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1	Headteacher provides regular reports on financial matters to improve the income level of the school	360	2.42	0.55	LE
2	Headteacher ensures that stakeholders are informed about how funds are utilized to improve the educational status	360	2.63	0.79	HE
3	Headteacher demonstrates commitment to upholding the principles of accountability for the development of the school	360	2.60	0.77	HE
4	Headteacher upholds ethical standard in discouraging misappropriation through proper posting of funds with hope to increase social mobility	360	2.43	0.65	LE
5	Headteacher presents annual financial update to stakeholders mainly for the betterment of the school	360	2.61	0.75	HE
	Grand Mean		**2.53**		**HE**

Data in Table 1 reveals that items 1 and 4 which showed that headteacher provides regular reports on financial matters in order to improve the income level of the school and upholds ethical standard by discouraging misappropriation of funds with hope to increase social mobility recorded low extent with mean score of 2.42 and 2.43 while 2, 3 and 5 which revealed that Headteacher ensures that stakeholders are informed about how funds are utilized in order to improve the educational status, that headteacher demonstrates commitment to upholding the principles of accountability for the development of the school and on presentation of annual financial update to stakeholders mainly for the betterment of the school with the mean scores of 2.6, 2.60 and 2.61 respectively, indicating high extent. The grand mean for the cluster is 2.53 which is above the criterion mean of 2.50. Therefore, the results showed that financial record keeping practices of the headteachers serve to a high extent as quality assurance practice for quality education in primary schools.

Research Question 2: To what extent does headteachers' funds utilization serve as quality assurance practice for quality education in public primary schools in Ebonyi State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Extent Headteachers' Funds Utilization Practices for Quality Education

S/No	ITEM STATEMENT	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
6	Headteacher monitors every money that comes into the school purse to ascertain transparency in the education sector	360	2.59	0.61	HE
7	Headteacher ensures equal access distribution for the betterment of pupils in the school	360	2.93	0.44	HE
8	Headteacher ensures that funds are distributed equitably across various sections in the school in order to ensure effective development	360	2.83	0.52	HE
9	Headteacher ensures that financial resources are properly managed for the promotion of transparency in the school system	360	2.25	0.56	LE
10	Headteacher allocates money for purchases of relevant items in various departments	360	2.55	0.64	HE
11	Receipts are issued for all monies collected from pupils to ascertain accountability	360	2.17	0.66	LE
	Grand mean (x)		**2.58**		**HE**

The results in Table 2 reveals that the responses on items 6,7,8,9, 10,11 and 12 with mean scores of 2.59, 2.93, 2.83, 2.77 and 2.55 with standard deviation of 0.61, 0.44, 0.52 0.81 and 0.64 respectively, indicated high extent. That is accepted that headteacher monitors every money that comes into the school purse to ascertain transparency in the education sector, headteacher ensures equal access distribution for the betterment of pupils in the school, headteacher ensures that funds are distributed equitably across various sections in the school in order to ensure effective development, headteacher ensures equitable distribution of ICT resources in order to improve pupils innovative skills and that headteacher allocates money for purchases to relevant departments. Only items 9 and 11 recorded low extent as it relates to managing fund for promotion of transparency and receipt of all monies collecting from pupils but based on the overall mean value for the cluster which is 2.58 is between 2.49 corresponds to a High Extent. This shows that headteachers fund utilization practices serve as quality assurance for quality education is to a high extent.

Hypotheses

$H0_{-1}$: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent financial records keeping serve as a quality assurance practice for quality education in public primary schools in Ebonyi State.

Teachers' view on extent financial records keeping serves as a quality assurance practice for quality education in public primary schools was separated across gender and subjected to test of significance difference using t-test statistical tool. Summary of results are shown on Table 3 below:

Table 3: Summary of t-test of Difference on the Extent Financial Record Keeping serve as a Quality Assurance Practices for Quality Education

Items	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	P-Value	Decision
1	Male Teachers	159	2.42	0.57	358	0.026	0.980	Not Significant
	Female Teachers	201	2.42	0.53				
2	Male Teachers	159	2.51	0.77	358	2.449	0.015	Significant
	Female Teachers	201	2.72	0.80				
3	Male Teachers	159	2.44	0.75	358	3.510	0.001	Significant
	Female Teachers	201	2.72	0.77				
4	Male Teachers	159	2.53	0.65	358	2.478	0.014	Significant
	Female Teachers	201	2.36	0.64				
5	Male Teachers	159	2.49	0.71	358	2.698	0.007	Significant
	Female Teachers	201	2.71	0.77				

Significant @ P < 0.05

The result of t-test analysis presented in Table 3 indicated that only item 1 recorded no significant while item 2-5 indicated that there is significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers' response on the extent to which extent to which financial records keeping serve as a quality assurance practices for quality education in public primary schools. This is because all item p-value is less than 0.05 except item 1, which has 0.98. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected with respect to record keeping practices of headteachers for quality education in schools.

$H0_2$: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent utilization of funds serves as a quality assurance practice for quality education in public primary schools in Ebonyi State.

Teachers view on the extent utilization of funds serves as a quality assurance practice for quality education in public primary schools was separated based on gender and was subjected to test of significant difference using t-test analysis. Summary of results was shown on table 4 below.

Table 4: Summary of t-test of Difference on the extent Utilization of Funds Serves as a Quality Assurance Practice for Quality Education in Public Primary Schools

Items	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	P-Value	Decision
6	Male Teachers	159	2.66	0.57	358	1.921	0.056	Not Significant
	Female Teachers	201	2.54	0.63				
7	Male Teachers	159	2.92	0.41	358	0.437	0.662	Not Significant
	Female Teachers	201	2.94	0.47				
8	Male Teachers	159	2.78	0.50	358	1.526	0.128	Not Significant
	Female Teachers	201	2.87	0.53				
9	Male Teachers	159	2.23	0.56	358	0.601	0.548	Not Significant

	Female Teachers	201	2.26	0.56				
10	Male Teachers	159	2.74	0.82	358	0.738	0.461	Not Significant
	Female Teachers	201	2.80	0.80				
11	Male Teachers	159	2.69	0.63	358	3.756	0.001	Significant
	Female Teachers	201	2.43	0.63				

Significant @ P < 0.05

Result in Table 4 indicated that difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent to which utilization of funds serves as a quality assurance practice for quality education in public primary schools is not significant, as p-values was greater than the alpha level 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the mean rating on the extent utilization of funds serves as a quality assurance practice for quality education in public primary schools is not rejected.

Discussion

The results of the study revealed that the headteacher ensured that stakeholders are informed about how funds are utilized in order to improve the educational status, demonstrated commitment to upholding the principles of accountability in primary school administration in Ebonyi State and presentation of annual financial update to stakeholders to a high extent. The result further revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent financial records keeping by headteachers serves as a quality assurance practice for quality education in public primary schools.

This finding is in consonance with that of Seyfried and Pohlenz, (2018) who asserted that effective record-keeping is pivotal in ensuring that funds are appropriately allocated and utilized, enabling headteachers to monitor financial health and make informed decisions. The finding is also in support of the findings of Quadri (2010) which observed that school record keeping practice foster trust among stakeholders, including parents and the community, thereby encouraging further investment in the school. The practice is commendable, it also raises questions about whether these records translate into actionable insights for improving educational quality or whether they remain static documents without real impact.

Result study indicated that to a high extent, headteacher monitored every money that comes into the school purse to ascertain transparency in the education sector, headteacher ensured equal access distribution for the betterment of pupils in the school, ensured that funds are distributed equitably across various sections in the school in order to ensure effective development, ensured equitable distribution of ICT resources in order to improve pupils innovative skills and that headteacher allocates money for purchases to relevant departments to handle rapid development.

The finding is in agreement with Oluwole, & Ivagher, (2017) who asserted that Headteachers' leadership significantly influences how resources, including

financial funds, are allocated and utilized within their institutions. Headteacher's utilization of funds effectively suggests a proactive approach in managing available resources for educational improvement. High levels of fund utilization indicate that headteachers adapt to identifying and prioritizing critical areas that require financial input.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings revealed a nuanced picture of regarding quality education. There is a contrasting trend in financial management and utilization of resources. Specifically, headteachers demonstrated high competency in maintaining financial record and effectively utilizing available funds. This indicated strong commitment to resource management; despite the challenges faced in sourcing additional funding for infrastructural development. This indicates that while there may be limitations in external funding and infrastructure, headteachers are actively engaging in practices that enhance educational delivery within their existing framework. There are therefore, needs for improvement on headteacher's capacity in financial record keeping and instructional supervision. Addressing these gaps will be essential for fostering an enriched educational environment that meets the needs of pupils and educators alike.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made;

1. Ebonyi State ministry of education should introduce in-service training on financial record-keeping for headteachers to upgrade their knowledge in ways to prepare records so as to ensure transparency.
2. The ministry of education in Ebonyi state should encourage headteachers to measure and report on the outcomes of fund utilization, helping to illustrate their positive impact on educational quality, which can further motivate continued funding efforts.

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