

MINISTRATIVE STRATEGIES OF PRINCIPALS' IN ENSURING QUALITY ASSURANCE IN GOVERNMENT OWNED SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated administrative strategies of principals' in ensuring quality assurance in government owned schools in Rivers State. A descriptive survey design was adopted in the study, and the population of the study consisted of 302 principals in government owned schools in Rivers State. 92% of the population was applied in selecting 278 respondents from the total population while simple random sampling technique. The reliability of the instrument was estimated using Cronbach's alpha and gave a reliability index of 0.85, 0.83, and 0.81, which indicated that the instrument was reliable. Out of the 278 copies of the questionnaire administered, 234 copies were retrieved by the researcher with the help of two trained research assistants at a date and time agreed upon with the respondents, which represented 84% retrieval rate. The research questions raised were answered using mean and standard deviation statistics. The study found that professional learning communities enhances quality assurance in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. conclusively, the study highlighted the need for educational stakeholders in Rivers State to address these challenges to enhance the quality of education in government-owned schools. Among others the paper recommends among others that Principals should encourage the establishment of well-structured and consistently implemented Professional learning communities within government-owned schools in Rivers State. This includes providing training and resources for educators and school leaders to effectively participate in and lead Professional learning communities.

Keywords: Quality Assurance, Professional Learning Communities, Regular quality control mechanism and Budget and Financial Management.

Introduction

Education is a vital instrument of change in any society; it is an instrument for nation building where standards are put in place in ensuring effective learning outcomes. The development of a country's natural resources is dependent on the quality of its human and material resources which in turn depends on education (Alumodi, 2005). Education helps in the positive orientation and development of human potentials, the human intellect, the human attitude and the human skills which brings about desirable changes in the individual. Furthermore, education is fundamentally about facilitating learning transforming the classroom into a dynamic arena where students actively engage with information, develop critical thinking skills, and explore the boundaries of their potential (Jones, 2020)

Principals, as the educational leaders of secondary school education, orchestrate the process of getting things done at the right time with meticulous planning, informed decision-making, and a clear vision for academic excellence which in turns lead to quality assurance. (Johnson, 2021). Their roles extend beyond the administrative realm to encompass the critical task of nurturing an environment conducive to learning and growth (Brown, 2019). Quality assurance strategies has to do with policies and practices aimed at ensuring that secondary schools carry out programs that meets high standards and deliver effective learning outcomes. Quality assurance in the educational system is a matter of increasing significance, particularly within the realm of government-owned schools. In carrying out these tasks, the school principals must ensure that the necessary steps are taken. Here, they play a major role by championing professional learning communities, regular quality control mechanism, budget and financial management strategies in ensuring quality assurance that align with contemporary pedagogical best practices (Smith, 2019).

Effective professional learning communities (PLCs) improve instructors collaboration and student performance, but within-school variation in PLC processes is underexplored Voelkel, & Chrispeels, (2017). Principals play a major role in ensuring professional learning communities (PLCs) as a quality assurance strategy in education. PLCs are collaborative groups of worthwhile educators who come together to improve or share relevant teaching practices and student

outcomes. School principals create a school culture that values collaboration and continuous improvement.

School principals also ensure that they work with their staff to define clear quality benchmarks for various aspects of education, including teaching methods, curriculum, and student assessment. They implement a robust system for monitoring and evaluating various aspects of school operations, including teaching practices and student performance (Hallinger & Murphy, 2018). Regular classroom observations and assessments help identify areas that require improvement and align with relevant educational standards and regulations (Elmore, 2004). Compliance with established standards helps maintain consistency and accountability.

Budget and Financial Management as a quality assurance strategy plays an indispensable role in the educational system (Ogunyemi, 2019). Adequate financial resources are required to maintain and upgrade in school infrastructure, provide essential teaching materials, and support various educational initiatives (Okeke and Nwankwo, 2020). Without sufficient funding, schools may struggle to implement quality assurance strategies and provide students with a conducive learning environment (Adeyemi, 2018).

This study tends to examine how these three critical components - Budget and Financial Management, Quality Control Mechanisms, and Professional Learning Communities - interact and influence the quality assurance efforts in government-owned schools in Rivers State, Nigeria

Statement of the Problem

Quality assurance in government-owned schools in Rivers State, Nigeria, presents a multifaceted challenge that undermines the delivery of high-quality education to students. This challenge stems from a range of interconnected issues that significantly impact the educational landscape and the achievement of desired outcomes. One critical challenge is the chronic shortage of financial resources allocated to these schools. Budget constraints limit the schools' capacity to invest in critical areas such as infrastructure development, procurement of up-to-date educational materials, and teacher training (Ogunyemi, 2019). Consequently, the learning environment may be suboptimal, with inadequate facilities and outdated teaching resources.

Curriculum implementation often lacks consistency, leading to variations in the quality and coverage of educational content across schools (Ezeani, 2017). Variability in the curriculum can result in disparities in what students learn, hindering the achievement of standardized educational outcomes. The

preparedness and professional development of teachers vary significantly within government-owned schools. While some educators are well-trained and up-to-date with modern pedagogical practices, others may lack the necessary skills and training to deliver high-quality instruction (Adeyemi, 2018). This disparity in teacher preparedness can directly impact the quality of classroom instruction.

The absence of robust quality control can result in deficiencies in these areas, negatively impacting educational quality. Ultimately, these challenges collectively compromise the overall quality of education and, consequently, student outcomes. Students may not receive the high-quality education they deserve, impacting their readiness for future academic pursuits and their ability to compete in an increasingly globalized and competitive world.

In light of these issues, there is an urgent need to comprehensively address the challenges facing quality assurance in government-owned schools in Rivers State. By identifying and strategizing solutions to these problems, it becomes possible to enhance the quality of education provided in these institutions, equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary for personal and societal development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate administrative strategies of principals' in ensuring quality assurance in government owned schools in Rivers State. The study sought to:

1. Determine the extent Professional Learning Communities enhances quality assurance in government owned schools in Rivers State
2. Ascertain the extent regular quality control mechanism enhances quality assurance in government owned schools in Rivers State
3. Examine the extent Budget and Financial Management enhances quality assurance in government owned schools in Rivers State

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does Professional Learning Communities enhance quality assurance in government owned schools in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does regular quality control mechanism enhance quality assurance in government owned schools in Rivers State?
3. To what extent does Budget and Financial Management enhance quality assurance in government owned schools in Rivers State?

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was adopted in the study, and the population of the study consisted of 302 principals in government owned schools in Rivers State. 92% of the population was applied in selecting 278 respondents from the total population while simple random sampling was used in which every member has an equal chance of being selected. The instrument used for data collection was a 15-item questionnaire titled "Administrative strategies of principals' in ensuring quality assurance in government owned schools in Rivers State" (ASPEQAQ). Section A contained the 15 questionnaire items, which were responded to on a 4 point modified Likert scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent (VLE). These weights were summed and divided by 4 to arrive at 2.50, which was the criterion mean score used for agreeing or disagreeing with the questionnaire items. The questionnaire was face-to-face and content-validated by two experts in educational management at Rivers State University, and the reliability of the questionnaire was estimated using Cronbach's alpha and gave a reliability index of 0.85, 0.83, and 0.81, which indicated that the instrument was reliable before it was presented to the respondents for their responses. Out of the 278 copies of the questionnaire administered, 234 copies were retrieved by the researcher with the help of two trained research assistants at a date and time agreed upon with the respondents, which represented 84% retrieval rate. The research questions raised were answered using mean and standard deviation statistics.

Results

Research Question One: To what extent does Professional Learning Communities enhance quality assurance in government owned schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation scores on the extent Professional Learning Communities enhance quality assurance in government owned schools in Rivers State

S/N	Professional Learning Communities	Mean	Std	Remark
1.	Professional Learning Communities (Professional learning communities) are actively established within the school to enhance staff performance	2.92	0.83	High Extent
2.	Teachers participate in collaborative planning and discussion sessions as part of a PLC	2.93	0.97	High Extent
3.	It focus on aligning teaching strategies with the school's educational objectives and goals	3.06	0.93	High Extent

4.	It address the specific needs and challenges faced by teachers and students	2.75	0.93	High Extent
5.	Professional learning communities promote a culture of collaboration and knowledge sharing among teachers in your school	2.67	1.03	High Extent
Grand Mean		2.86	0.94	High Extent

The data in table 1 showed that respondents indicated that Professional Learning Communities (Professional learning communities) are actively established within the school to enhance staff performance (Mean=2.92), Teachers participate in collaborative planning and discussion sessions as part of a PLC (Mean=2.93), it focuses on aligning teaching strategies with the school's educational objectives and goals (Mean=3.06), It address the specific needs and challenges faced by teachers and students (Mean=2.75), and Professional learning communities promote a culture of collaboration and knowledge sharing among teachers in your school (Mean=2.67), the principal is committed in the management of academic staff (Mean=2.75), the principal involves in the provision of instructional aides for teaching (Mean=2.67) enhances quality assurance in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. So therefore the answer to the research question is that Professional Learning Communities enhances quality assurance in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Question Two: To what extent does regular quality control mechanism enhance quality assurance in government owned schools in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation scores on the extent regular quality control mechanism enhance quality assurance in government owned schools in Rivers State

S/N	Regular Quality Control Mechanism	Mean	Std	Remark
6	The principal regularly involves staff in development programmes	2.81	1.02	High Extent
7	There is a well-defined system in place for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of quality control mechanisms in our school.	2.81	0.97	High Extent
8.	Regular quality control mechanisms have positively impacted the overall quality of education in our school.	2.90	0.88	High Extent
9.	The school regularly reviews and updates its curriculum to ensure its relevance and alignment with current educational standards and best practices	2.78	0.94	High Extent
10.	They are actively established within the school to	2.91	0.91	High Extent

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ensure curriculum alignment with educational objectives and goals.

Grand Mean	2.84	0.94	High Extent
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The data in table 2 showed that respondents indicated that the principal regularly involves staff in development programmes (Mean = 2.81), there is a well-defined system in place for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of quality control mechanisms in our school (Mean = 2.81), regular quality control mechanisms have positively impacted the overall quality of education in our school (Mean = 2.90), the school regularly reviews and updates its curriculum to ensure its relevance and alignment with current educational standards and best practices (Mean = 2.78), and they are actively established within the school to ensure curriculum alignment with educational objectives and goals (Mean = 2.91). The data indicates that regular quality control mechanisms are perceived to have a high extent of positive impact on quality assurance in government-owned schools in Rivers State. Respondents generally view these mechanisms favorably, believing that they contribute to staff development, monitoring and evaluation, curriculum alignment, and overall improvements in the quality of education.

So therefore the answer to research question 2 indicates that the implementation of regular quality control mechanisms is seen as a valuable practice that enhances quality assurance in government-owned schools in Rivers State, contributing to the overall quality of education.

Research Question Three: To what extent does Budget and Financial Management enhance quality assurance in government owned schools in Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation scores on the extent budget and financial management enhance quality assurance in government owned schools in Rivers State

S/N	Budget and Financial Management	Mean	Std	Remark
11	The school budget is allocated in a transparent and equitable manner	2.16	0.78	Low Extent
12	Adequate financial resources are allocated to support teacher training and professional development activities.	2.04	0.83	Low Extent
13	School funds are utilized efficiently and in accordance with educational goals	2.17	0.86	Low Extent
14	Budget and financial management practices are aligned with the school's educational objectives and goals.	2.92	0.89	Low Extent
15	The school has a well-defined system for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of budget and financial management practices	2.02	0.82	Low Extent
Grand Mean		2.26	0.84	Low Extent

The data in table 3 showed that respondents indicated that the school budget is allocated in a transparent and equitable manner (Mean = 2.16), adequate financial resources are allocated to support teacher training and professional development activities (Mean = 2.04), school funds are utilized efficiently and in accordance with educational goals (Mean = 2.17), budget and financial management practices are aligned with the school's educational objectives and goals (Mean = 2.92) and the school has a well-defined system for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of budget and financial management practices (Mean = 2.02). The data suggests that, on average, budget and financial management practices are perceived to have a low extent of positive impact on quality assurance in government-owned schools in Rivers State. Respondents generally view these practices less favorably, believing that there may be room for improvement in terms of transparent budget allocation, resource allocation for teacher training, efficient fund utilization, and alignment with educational goals.

So therefore the answer to research question 3 indicates that there is a perceived need for improvements in the implementation of budget and financial management practices to enhance quality assurance in government-owned schools in Rivers State. The "Low Extent" remarks suggest that there may be challenges or areas that require attention to better align these practices with quality assurance goals.

Discussion of Findings

Extent Professional Learning Communities enhance quality assurance in government owned schools in Rivers State

The result of the study in item 1 revealed that respondents perceive that Professional learning communities are actively established within their schools to enhance staff performance (Mean = 2.92). This finding conforms with the literature, which emphasizes the importance of creating collaborative environments for teachers to share knowledge and improve their instructional practices (Ogunyemi, 2019). Item 2 the respondents generally perceive that teachers actively participate in collaborative planning and discussion sessions as part of Professional learning communities (Mean = 2.93). This is consistent with the literature highlighting the role of collaborative learning in enhancing teaching practices and student outcomes (Ogunyemi, 2019).

Item 3, the data suggests that respondents believe that Professional learning communities focus on aligning teaching strategies with the school's educational objectives and goals (Mean = 3.06). This conforms with the literature's emphasis

on aligning professional development with educational goals to enhance teaching practices (Adeyemi, 2018).

Item 4, the respondents generally perceive that Professional learning communities address the specific needs and challenges faced by teachers and students (Mean = 2.75). This is consistent with the literature emphasizing the role of Professional learning communities in identifying and addressing specific educational challenges (Oboegbulem, & Onwurah, 2011).

Item 5, the data indicates that respondents perceive that Professional learning communities promote a culture of collaboration and knowledge sharing among teachers in their schools (Mean = 2.67). This conforms with the literature highlighting the collaborative nature of Professional learning communities (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2020).

The grand mean score of 2.86 suggests an overall positive perception of the impact of Professional learning communities on quality assurance. This conforms with the literature emphasizing the potential of Professional learning communities to contribute to school improvement (Johnson, 2021). The findings indicate that respondents generally perceive Professional learning communities as having a positive impact on quality assurance in government-owned schools in Rivers State. However, variations in perceptions across different aspects of Professional learning communities underscore the importance of further research to understand the specific practices and contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of Professional learning communities in enhancing quality assurance.

Extent Regular Quality Control Mechanisms Enhance quality assurance in government owned schools in Rivers State

The result of the study in item 6 revealed that respondents perceive that the principal regularly involves staff in development programs (Mean = 2.81). This finding conforms with the literature emphasizing the importance of professional development for educators (Smith, 2019).

Item 7, the respondents generally perceive that there is a well-defined system in place for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of quality control mechanisms in their school (Mean = 2.81). This finding conforms with the literature highlighting the importance of systematic monitoring and evaluation for quality assurance (Ezeani, 2017).

Item 8, the data suggests that respondents believe that regular quality control mechanisms have positively impacted the overall quality of education in their school (Mean = 2.90). This perception conforms with the literature emphasizing

the potential of quality control mechanisms to enhance educational quality (Smith, 2019).

Item 9 and 10 the respondents generally perceive that the school regularly reviews and updates its curriculum to ensure its relevance and alignment with current educational standards and best practices (Mean = 2.78), and that quality control mechanisms are actively established within the school to ensure curriculum alignment with educational objectives and goals (Mean = 2.91). These findings align with the literature emphasizing the importance of curriculum alignment and continuous improvement. (Cankwoh, 2011)

The grand mean score of 2.84 suggests an overall positive perception of the impact of regular quality control mechanisms on quality assurance. This conforms with the literature emphasizing the potential of these mechanisms to contribute to school improvement (Smith, 2019).

The findings indicate that respondents generally perceive regular quality control mechanisms as having a positive impact on quality assurance in government-owned schools in Rivers State. However, variations in perceptions across different aspects of quality control underscore the importance of further research to understand the specific practices and contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of quality control mechanisms in enhancing quality assurance.

Extent Budget and Financial Management enhance quality assurance in government owned schools in Rivers State

The result of the study in item 11 reveals that the respondents perceive that the school budget is allocated in a transparent and equitable manner (Mean = 2.16). This finding indicates a perception that budget allocation practices may not be fully transparent and equitable. This finding aligns with concerns raised in the literature about issues related to budget transparency and equity in educational institutions (Okonkwo, 2020).

Item 12, respondents generally perceive that adequate financial resources are not allocated to support teacher training and professional development activities (Mean = 2.04). This perception aligns with literature highlighting the importance of investing in teacher training (Adeyemi, 2019). Item 13, the data suggests that respondents believe that school funds are not utilized efficiently and in accordance with educational goals (Mean = 2.17). This perception aligns with concerns raised in the literature about inefficient fund utilization in educational institutions (Johnson, 2018). Item 14 respondents generally perceive that budget and financial management practices are not aligned with the school's educational objectives and goals (Mean = 2.92). This perception contrasts with the literature,

which emphasizes the importance of aligning financial practices with educational goals (Adeyemi, 2019).

Item 15, the data indicates that respondents believe that the school does not have a well-defined system for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of budget and financial management practices (Mean = 2.02). This perception aligns with concerns about the lack of effective monitoring and evaluation systems in educational institutions (Okonkwo, 2020).

The grand mean score of 2.26 suggests an overall perception that budget and financial management practices may not be effectively enhancing quality assurance in government-owned schools in Rivers State. The findings indicate that respondents generally perceive budget and financial management practices as having a low extent of positive impact on quality assurance in government-owned schools in Rivers State. The concerns raised in the findings underscore the importance of addressing issues related to budget transparency, resource allocation, efficiency, alignment with educational goals, and monitoring and evaluation to enhance quality assurance in these schools.

Conclusion

The findings of this study shed light on the various quality assurance strategies principals use in ensuring compliance to the stated rules. Overall, these findings highlight the need for educational stakeholders in Rivers State to address these challenges to enhance the quality of education in government-owned schools. Future research and policy interventions should focus on improving the establishment and effectiveness of Professional learning communities, enhancing the transparency and efficiency of quality control mechanisms, and aligning budget and financial management practices more closely with educational objectives. By addressing these areas, government-owned schools in Rivers State can work towards providing a higher quality of education, which is in tandem with the stipulated goal of secondary school education.

Recommendations

1. Principals should encourage the establishment of well-structured and consistently implemented Professional learning communities within government-owned schools in Rivers State. This includes providing training and resources for educators and school leaders to effectively participate in and lead Professional learning communities.

2. Principals should implement measures to increase transparency and equity in the allocation of school budgets. This includes clearly communicating the budget allocation process to all stakeholders and ensuring that it is fair and just.
3. State government should develop and implement a well-defined system for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of quality control mechanisms within schools. This system should be comprehensive, systematic, and aligned with the school's quality assurance objectives.

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