

# RE-ENGINEERING TERTIARY EDUCATION FOR QUALITY PERFORMANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AKWA IBOM STATE

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## **Abstract**

*The purpose of this paper is to assess the quality of tertiary education institutions for quality performance and sustainable development. A survey design was employed for the study. The population for the study consisted of 2000 unit heads drawn from the four state owned tertiary institutions: Akwa Ibom state University, Ikot Akpaden, College of Education, Afaha Nsit, Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua and Akwa Ibom State College of Art and Science, Nung Ukim. The sample that actually participated in the study consisted of 200 unit heads randomly selected from the population. A 36 item questionnaire developed by the researcher was used to obtain data from the sample. The data obtained were treated with descriptive statistics (frequency counts and mean computation) for results. The study revealed that control practices of tertiary education institutions are designed to ensure quality of learning and administration. Inappropriate monitoring, supervision and accreditation constitute the challenges of tertiary education in Nigeria. Most of the infrastructures, teaching and learning facilities are deteriorated. To address the identified challenges State Government as a matter of urgency should provide adequate financial allocations to tertiary institutions in order to assist them in their efforts of achieving quality assurance in education. Hostel systems should be revived and rehabilitated to beef-up the efforts of the institutions towards quality performance. Leadership position and responsibility should not be based on ethnicity and “man-know-man” but on qualification, seniority, experience and area of specialization. Supervisory and monitoring practices should be adequately encouraged and maintained for maximum goal attainment for the good of the state and nation.*

## **Introduction**

Ensuring educational quality is one of the key responsibilities of educational institutions and of those who work in them. Education in Nigeria and in Akwa Ibom in particular is regarded as an instrument par excellence for effecting sustainable national development (FRN, 2013). Education is viewed as a veritable tool for social, economic and political development of Nigeria. The assumed and projected goals of education

would be fully achieved only to the extent that quality delivery is rendered in tertiary education (Asiyai, 2013). Tertiary education is the education given after post Basic Education in institutions such as Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics, Universities and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, School of Health Technology and the National Teacher's Institutions (NTI) (FGN, 2013). A tertiary education institution is viewed as a unique institution which is differentiated from others in terms of research and its management.

Yusuf & Alabi (2012) reported that education has been an instrument for effective national development through tertiary education. It is the bed rock of economic, political and technological development of a nation. In view of the above, the same source pointed out that for the past three decades, Nigerian educational system has continued to witness enormous quantitative growth at the expense of qualitative development. The ongoing reforms in the education sector in the area of planning, curriculum innovation and teacher education among others are management mechanism to revamp the education industry just to instill sustainable school quality reforms.

The executive administrators of tertiary education institutions are designated as Provosts, Rectors and Vice-Chancellors. Tertiary Education is, therefore, described in terms of the levels and functions of the educational experiences offered (Bernett 1997). Tertiary education institutions according to Mckimm (2009), are responsible for the standards and quality of the provisions and each has its own internal procedures for assuring and enhancing the quality of its programmes. The internal quality processes include assessment of students, processes for the design and approval of new programme and regular monitoring and periodic review of continuing programmes. World Bank (1999) reported that tertiary or higher education is a fundamental instrument for the construction of knowledge economy and the development of human capital all over the world. Peretomode (2008) stressed that tertiary or higher education is the facilitator, the bed rock, the power house and the driving force for the strong socio-economic, political, cultural and industrial development of a nation. Higher education institutions are key mechanisms increasingly recognized as wealth and human capital development industries. Effective human capital development facilitates and sustains development in the nation. Kors (2008) affirmed that only human capital can sustain growth. If quality education is provided, individual minds would be sharpened and as well help in the transformation of the society, economically, socially and politically. The sustainability of development of a nation is attained through improved training at the tertiary level of the skills of their human capital. The goals of tertiary education according to Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) Section 5 (81) of the National Policy on Education are:

- a Contribute to national development through high level manpower training
- b Provide accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in response to the needs and interest of all Nigerians
- c Provide high quality career counseling and lifelong learning programmes that prepare students with the knowledge and skills for self-reliance and the world of work.
- d Reduce skills shortage through production of skills manpower relevant to the need of the labour market.
- e Promote and encourage entrepreneurship and community service.
- f Promoting and creating national and international unity, understanding and interaction.

According to section 5 (82) of FRN (2013), tertiary education institution should pursue the stated goals through:

- a Provisions and enhancement of quality education and learning.
- b Facilitation of research and development.
- c High standards in the quality of facilities, services and resource
- d Maintenance of minimum educational standards through appropriate regulatory agencies (which in this context are NCCE, NBTE & NUC)
- e Generation and dissemination of knowledge, skills and competencies that contribute to national and local economic goals which enable learners succeed in knowledge-based economy.
- f Dedicated services to the community through extramural and extension services.

The foregoing goals are related to quality education which the citizenry expect. The term or variable “quality” is broad and subject to many meanings. Oxford dictionary defines “quality” as the standard of something or services provided compared to other things like it to show how good or bad something is. For example “quality” is used to refer to individual student’s performance, the outputs of educational programme, and the student’s learning experience or the teaching provided (Harvey, Burrows and Green, 1992 and Mickimm, 2009). According to Colleen (1999) and Yusuf and Alabi (2012)s “quality” is related to a body of knowledge about products, services and customer/client satisfaction. Quality is creating an environment in which educators, parents, government officials and community representative work together to provide students with the resources they need to meet the current and future academic and social needs (Arcaro, 2005). Quality has to be seen as relationships rather than intangible and unattainable goals.

Harvey and Associates in Mckimm (2009) subdivided quality into six categories as follows:

- a **Quality as Excellence:** This implies traditional academic view aim demonstrating high academic standard.
- b **Quality as Zero Errors:** Is most relevant to mass production in industry where detail product specifications can be established and standardized measurements of uniform products can show conformity to them.
- c **Quality as Fitness for Purpose:** This focuses on customers' or stakeholders' needs (e.g. students, employers, academic community, and government as representative of society at large).
- d **Quality as Enhancement:** This emphasizes continuous improvement, centers on the idea that achieving quality is essential to tertiary education and stresses the responsibility of tertiary education institutions to make the best use of institutional autonomy and teacher's academic freedom.
- e **Quality as Transformation:** applies to students behaviour and goal being changed as a result of their studies or to socio- political transformation achieve through tertiary education. The later is more difficult to measure.
- f **Quality as Threshold:** defines minimum standard, as broad definition of desired knowledge, skill and attitude of graduate (e.g. subject benchmarking). Tertiary education institutions are expected to operate beyond these minimum standards.

### **Quality Assurance (QA)**

The Oxford dictionary by Hornby (1995) defines quality assurance as the practice of managing the way goods are produced or services are provided to make sure they are kept at a high standard. This paper sees quality assurance to mean the policies, processes and actions through which quality education is maintained and developed. The important motive for quality assurance is accountability. Accountability according to Mckimm (2009) is assuring students, society and government that quality is well managed, and is often the primary focus of external review. QA is not a new concept in higher education. It involves the involvement of external examiners in assessment processes, and the peer review system for evaluating research publications as well as established quality assurance processes. Evaluation is the key part of quality assurance. Quality assurance deals with the proactive or preventive means of ensuring quality inputs, teaching – learning process, the outcome and the academic achievement of students ( Babalola, 2004 and Akudo, 2006 ). QA is aimed at getting things done right at the first time and every time.

Quality control, by dictionary definition is the practice of checking products of an organization as they are being produced, to make sure that they are of a high standard. It is based essentially on inspection, monitoring and control of school in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Tertiary education is the education offered at the post secondary level. It is a level of education that breeds quality performance for sustainable development of any nation. Re-engineering tertiary education in Akwa Ibom State to enable it achieve its objectives sustainable development, implies that this level of education has fallen short of public expectation. The questions to raise at this point are: what are the achievements of tertiary education in terms of quality performance and sustainable development in Akwa Ibom state? What are the quality control practices employed to assist tertiary education in its mission accomplishment? What are the challenges against administration and supervision of tertiary education for quality performance and sustainable development? What roles do stakeholders play in helping tertiary education achieve its mission? Accurate and precise answers to the above questions are not readily available because very limited research has been done in this area. Whatever answers are available may either be opinion-based or borne out of un-comparable research situation to the one at hand. In other words such answers may not fit with the present problem situation and even if they were, it would be advisable to replicate such studies in order to confirm or support earlier efforts. It is however, the absence of or limited research evidence to indicate the extent to which tertiary education has achieved quality performance for sustainable development of Akwa Ibom State that provided the focus of the problem for this investigation.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the extent to which tertiary education institutions in Nigeria have discharged their function of attaining quality performance in learning and administration for sustainable development.

Specifically, the study was designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. Ascertain the quality control practices in tertiary education institution in pursuance of quality delivery.
2. Ascertain challenges of achieving quality performance in tertiary education institutions.
3. Ascertain the stakeholders/agencies responsible for ensuring quality performance in tertiary education institutions.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were designed to guide the study.

1. What are the quality control practices necessary for quality performance of tertiary education institutions for sustainable development?
2. What are the challenges against the attainment of quality performance in tertiary institutions?

3. Who are the stakeholders/agencies responsible for ensuring quality performance in the Nigerian tertiary education institutions for sustainable development?

### **Review of Related Literature**

Development has defined as a system integration and planned approach to improve the effectiveness of an individual (Koonz and Weinirich, 1990). Nzotta (2002) described development as the progress made by a person which involves intellectual or conceptual growth along with practical performance. In order to achieve sustainable development for socio -economic growth, all hands must be on deck. Stakeholders in tertiary education institutions (both internal and external) concerned with youth development and growth should ensure its development and sustenance to the fullest. Therefore, sustainable development is the complex activities that can be expected to improve and maintain the human conditions in such a manner that the improvement can be maintained (kurya, 2006).To Boardia (2004), sustainable development is development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their needs. The principle of sustainable development is that any development achieved today must meet the basic human survival needs of food and shelter of the present generation as well as of the future generations. It consists in the economic and social changes that promote human prosperity and quality of life without causing ecological or social damages as viewed by Kurya & Hassan, (2007).

It is the quality of tertiary education that breeds quality performance and sustainable development. Otive, (2006) and Mutairu & Adamola, (2007) affirmed that the quality of training in tertiary education is generally low. They argued that emphasis is on theory and certification rather than on skills acquisition and proficiency testing. Shortage of highly skilled lecturers, obsolete and insufficient training equipment, lack of instructional materials, poor funding, nonprofessional administrators are some of the factors that have combined to interface the effectiveness of tertiary education institutions in meeting their mission of quality performance for sustainable development of the third world nations with Akwa Ibom State in Nigeria included (Subrathmanian, 2002, World Bank, 2004, Otive, 2006 and Oyebade, Okadipo & Adetoro, 2007).

In the face of these challenges, tertiary education institutions cannot meet the public expectations on the aspect of quality of instruction, graduates and sustainable growth. The state of tertiary education institutions in Akwa Ibom State is lamentably poor. This is noticed in the areas of absence of sufficient staff offices where two to three lecturers occupy one small office with poor quality of fixtures and fittings, inadequate class space, overcrowded classroom, teachers are inadequate in number, poorly equipped laboratories and classes; majority of text books are written by non

indigenes, poor treatment of academic staff in terms of staff development, promotion and remuneration, intermittent supervision and monitoring of academic activities and insufficient financial support. These and others not mentioned here are all the challenges that plague the effectiveness of tertiary education institutions.

Tertiary Education requires adequate attention from stakeholders/ agencies for quality assurance of tertiary institutions graduates in Akwa Ibom State and the nation at large. The major agencies are National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and National Universities Commission (NUC). The major role of these agencies irrespective of their area of jurisdiction is to provide adequate guidelines on the implementation of academic programmes, status of teaching staff engaged by the institution, supervisory control and monitoring role to ensure quality assurance. Getting things done right at the first time and every time is the major aim of quality assurance. Quality assurance emphasizes preventive strategies for ensuring and attaining quality inputs, teaching-learning process, the outcome and academic achievement of learners (Babalola, 2004 and Akudo, 2006).

Okebukola (2005) and Ramson & Yusuf (2005) noted that quality assurance is the process of maintaining standards in products and services through inspection and testing of samples. Furthermore, quality assurance is an umbrella concept for a host of activities that are designed to improve the quality of inputs, process and output of tertiary education system. Hence, quality assurance emphasizes availability of quality teaching materials, infrastructural facilities capable of enhancing teaching-learning, conducive learning environment, learners, recommended curriculum, quality of teaching and quality of teachers. It is the quality assurance that is designed to prove and improve the quality of an institution's methods, graduates' education and outcomes. The accrediting agents are presently performing these functions but the extent of their success in improving tertiary education is yet to be ascertained.

## **Method**

A survey research design was employed for the study. The area of study was Akwa Ibom. The study covered four tertiary education institutions namely, Akwa Ibom State University, Ikot Akpaden, College of Education, Afaha Nsit, Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, and Akwa Ibom State School of Art and Science, Nung Ukim. The population for the study consisted of 2000 heads of department from the 4 tertiary institutions. The population comprised Deans of Schools/Faculties, Directors of Units and heads of departments. The sample that actually participated in the study consisted of 200 randomly selected from the institutions under investigation. A 36 - item instrument developed by the researcher was employed to obtain data from the

sample. Each instrument item had 4 response options namely: Strongly Agree (SA) Agreed (A) Disagree (D) Strongly Disagreed (SD) prior to its administration. The instrument was validated by two experts from University of Uyo, Uyo, and College of Education, Afaha Nsit. Data obtained were analyzed with descriptive statistics: frequency counts and mean computation. Any item with a mean value of 2.5 was acceptable while any item attracting mean value less than 2.5 was not acceptable.

### Results

The results of this investigation are presented after each research question as follows:-

**Research Question 1:** What are the quality control practices necessary for quality performance of tertiary education institutions for sustainable development?

**Table 1: Summary of Responses to the Questionnaire Item Related to Research Question 1**

S/N	Items	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Total	Mean	Decision
1	Regular Supervision.	80	60	35	25	200	3.0	A
2	Monitoring of academic activities.	150	50	-	-	200	3.6	A
3	Administrators and teachers test product of tertiary education institution.	70	80	30	20	200	3.0	A
4	External assessment of examination by external examiner.	120	80	-	-	200	3.6	A
5	Control of academic programme.	120	60	10	10	200	3.5	A
6	Regular and periodic review of continuing programme.	115	60	15	10	200	3.4	A
7	Budgetary allowance for education matters.	60	80	25	35	200	2.8	D
8	Regular dismissal of erring staff.	20	40	100	40	200	2.0	D
9	Report of academic performance of student to parents/guardians.	20	40	100	30	200	2.2	A
10	Accreditation and approval of a new programme.	110	84	5	5	200	3.5	A



Summary of responses in table 1 indicates that 8 items have mean value of 2.5 and above which is the stipulated positive decision rule, while 2 items have mean values below 2.5 which disqualified the acceptability of the items as strategies of interest. Therefore, these eight items were regarded as the strategies in which tertiary education institutions in Akwa Ibom State are controlled.

**Research Question 2:** What are the challenges of achieving quality performance in tertiary institutions?

**Table: 2 Summary of Responses to the Questionnaire Items Related to Research Question 2**

	Items	SA(4)	A( 3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Total	Mean	Decision
11	Insufficient funds	140	60	-	-	200	3.7	A
12	Poor implementation policy	70	50	50	30	200	2.8	A
13	Examination malpractice by students, lecturers and parent.	80	70	20	30	200	3.0	A
14	Poor management of fund.	60	70	30	40	200	2.8	A
15	Absence of enough qualified lecturers.	80	76	24	20	200	3.1	A
16	Irregular supervision and monitoring	90	60	21	29	200	3.1	A
17	Absence of regular periodic accreditation of programmes.	110	62	10	18	200	3.2	A
18	Inadequate laboratory and workshop.	140	60	-	-	200	3.7	A
19	Library facilities without current text books	60	120	-	20	200	3.1	A
20	Insufficient classroom and space.	60	64	40	36	200	2.7	A
21	Non-availability of equipment needed for effective teaching and learning.	85	79	21	15	200	3.2	A
22	Incessant strikes.	130	70	-	-	200	3.7	A
23	Presence of cultism	90	110	-	-	200	3.5	A
24	Poor staff development strategy	120	80	-	-	200	3.6	A
25	Appointment of unqualified administrators	90	60	30	20	200	3.1	A

The summary in table 2 indicates that 15 items have mean value above 2.5 is stipulated positive decision rule. This indicates that all these factors were responsible for the poor quality performance of tertiary education institutions.

**Research Question 3:** Who are the stakeholders/agencies responsible for ensuring quality performance in tertiary education institutions for sustainable development?

**TABLE: 3 Summary of Responses to the Questionnaire Item Related to Research Question 3**

S/N	Items	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Total	Mean	Decision
26	Government.	80	40	50	30	200	2.9	A
27	Student.	70	60	30	40	200	2.6	A
28	Lecturer.	60	60	30	50	200	2.7	A
29	Parent.	55	60	70	15	200	2.8	A
30	National Universities Commission (NUC).	70	70	30	30	200	2.9	A
31	National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE).	60	60	50	30	200	2.8	A
32	National Board for Technical Education (NBTE).	60	60	40	40	200	2.7	A
33	Professional Organizations.	50	50	70	30	200	2.6	A
34	Governing Councils.	80	80	40	—	200	3.2	A
35	Sectional /unit/ departmental heads.	60	70	60	10	200	2.9	A
36	Social group/ union	40	50	60	20	200	2.3	D

The summary in table 3 indicates that 10 items have mean values of 2.5 and above which is the stipulated position rule, while one item has mean value below 2.5 which indicated negative decision rule. Therefore, these 10 items were regarded as those stakeholders/agencies responsible for ensuring good quality performance in higher education institution for sustainable development while the social group and unions are not agents of quality.

**Findings**

Based on the responses to the 3 research questions, the following findings were made:

1. Quality performance was the product of adequate quality control practices in tertiary education institutions.
2. Quality performance in terms of learning and administration in tertiary education institutions was hindered by attendant challenges.
3. Quality Control is the responsibility of all stakeholders/agencies except social groups.

## **Discussion**

The findings of this investigation are stated and discussed as follows:

The findings of this study revealed that government, teachers, students and parents are those who should contribute positively to the high quality of tertiary education institutions. Others include NUC, NCCE and NBTE which are the accreditation bodies vested with the responsibility of assessing the programmes and courses offered by tertiary institutions. The findings are in line with the report of Oyebade, Oladipo and Adetoro (2008) who stated that the external accreditation bodies employed various variables to determine the quality assurance of their programmes and institutions through impact assessment, carrying capacity and admission quota, visitation, accreditation, structure, infrastructures and utilities. In addition, Adepoju (2007) reported that the bodies perform other functions to include external moderation system, prescription of benchmarks and periodic review and production of document on minimum standards, monitoring, assessment and evaluation of staff strengths, students and facilities etc.

The findings also revealed that tertiary education institutions (in spite of effort to sustain quality by providing necessary assistance in terms of finance, infrastructure, and supervision and monitoring of activities and a host of others) have not been adequately equipped to produce quality performance for sustainable development. Inability of the government of the state to meet demands of the academic and non academic staff of tertiary education institutions has impeded any efforts towards achievement of quality assurance. The finding has supported the submissions of Ononokerrhoraye (1998) and Asiyai (2013) who pointed out that quality performance cannot be expected when tertiary institutions in the country are faced with the challenges such as underfunding by government, inadequate teaching staff, poor quality of teaching staff, poor policy implementation, non availability of teaching and learning resources and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities, incessant strikes embarked upon by Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), College of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU), Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP), Non Academic Staff Union (NASU) and students riots, poor staff development strategy, cultism, examination malpractices, poor institutional leadership and others. The foregoing hindrances have accounted for low quality delivery in tertiary education in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Low quality delivery in tertiary education apparently means poor quality performance for sustainable development of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

## **Conclusion**

On the bases of the study findings and discussion of same, the following conclusions may be drawn: Tertiary education in Akwa Ibom State does not and cannot achieve quality education for sustainable development in the face of the prevailing challenges. Quality performance and sustainable development of Akwa Ibom State are attainable only to the extent that tertiary education institution is offered under quality control practices and supported by the accrediting agents and committed stakeholders.

## **The Way Forward**

The following suggestions are made with a view to enhancing quality performance in tertiary education institutions in Akwa Ibom State for sustainable development;

1. There is need for increased funding of tertiary education and to shun over-dependence on students' school fees by the government.
2. There is need for the provision of basic instructional facilities and materials for effective teaching and learning.
3. Academic and non academic staff of the tertiary educational institutions should be motivated for greater productivity by paying them adequate salaries, entitlements and appropriate incentives.
4. More lecturers should be employed to achieve the recommended teacher-student ratio.
5. Position of leadership and responsibility should not be based on ethnicity and "man-know-man" but rather on seniority and area of specializations.
6. Learning facilities, student hostels and enabling environment should be provided to satisfy the needs of students and nip their rioting tendencies in the bud.
7. Regular and prudent supervision and monitoring of the activities of personnel (both teaching and non teaching) and programme/course for quality delivery in tertiary education are essential factors of quality performance for sustainable development.

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