

Principals' Administrative Process Strategies for the Achievement of Quality Assurance in Secondary Schools in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study examined principals' administrative process strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools in Ikom education zone of Cross River State. Specifically, the study was to examine principals' planning strategies, organizing strategies, and principals' coordinating strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State. **Method:** The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised 129 principals of the 129 public secondary schools. The entire population was used. The instrument was of Principals' Quality Assurance Strategies Questionnaire (PQASQ) with reliability coefficient of 0.76 was used for data collection. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. Independent *t*- test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. **Results:** The result showed that principals' administrative strategies do significantly impact on quality assurance of secondary schools in the areas of enhancing instructions and promoting school plants management, provision of instructional materials, encouraging job training and staff development, promoting sports and psychomotor domains, and supporting financial management and accountability. **Novelty:** Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that principals should be adequately enlightened with more robust administrative strategies through seminars and conferences which may include classroom observation, analysis/strategy, post observation conferences and post conferences analysis and that Ministries of Education should make it mandatory for all school heads to be involved in quality assurance in order to assess teachers' job outputs as well as students' academic performance.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a vital instrument for achieving socio-economic and technological growth in any nation. It develops human intellect, technical skills, character, and effective citizenship, fostering self-reliance and national development [1]. Education serves as a critical tool for academic progress, social mobilization, and political survival, and it constitutes the largest enterprise in Nigeria [2]. The educational policy of any nation aims to achieve education for all (E.F.A.) [3], ensuring equitable access and improvement in the quality of education at all levels. Secondary school principals play a pivotal role in directing the activities of teachers, students, and staff towards achieving school objectives. Their responsibilities can be categorized into two main areas: supervision of school programs and interpersonal relations, which include school discipline, evaluation of teacher performance, and community involvement. Principals are planners, directors, coordinators, and problem-solvers, tasked with identifying goals that align with national objectives [4]; [5]. Effective school administration requires a comprehensive framework

for organizing human and material resources. This involves processes such as planning, organizing, coordinating, motivating, and evaluating, which are essential for achieving educational goals [6]. Planning, as defined by [7], is the process of deciding in advance the methods and procedures necessary to accomplish outlined objectives. Given the scarcity of resources, effective planning is crucial for maximizing available assets.

In educational institutions, the principal's administrative strategies must encompass planning, organizing, and coordinating to ensure quality assurance. Quality assurance involves ensuring that educational inputs, processes, and outputs meet established standards [8]. The decline in the quality of education in public schools, particularly in Cross River State, underscores the need for effective administrative strategies. Indicators of declining quality include high dropout rates and poor academic performance, prompting parents to seek alternatives in private schools. The objectives of this study are to determine principals' planning strategies for achieving quality assurance, ascertain their organizing strategies, and identify their coordinating strategies in secondary schools within the Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State. Quality assurance in education is not just about maintaining standards but also about fostering an environment conducive to learning and development. Hence, secondary education plays a critical role in personal and national development, bridging the gap between primary and tertiary education [1]. Improving the quality of secondary education is essential for producing competent individuals who can contribute effectively to society. This study seeks to explore how principals' administrative strategies can be optimized to achieve quality assurance in secondary schools, addressing the pressing challenges in the educational system.

Statement of the Problem

Ideally, secondary school administration is expected to promote quality assurance in Education of the citizens for national development. It is the expectation of the government, parents and even students that quality education is received by students in Nigeria secondary schools through the adoption of appropriate administrative process/strategies by the principals. However, observations have shown that there seems to be poor principals' administrative process/strategies which have led to poor quality assurance in secondary schools in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State. This can be seen in the areas of inadequate funding, inadequate facilities, poor instructional supervision, conflict among principal arising from postings and transfers, poor vision of the principals, poor principal/teacher relationship and poor administrative style of the principals among others. These situations seem to have led to poor academic achievement among the secondary school students, high drop-out rate, and high rate of examination malpractice, poor reading and writing cultures among others. The above situation should not be allowed to continue, hence the problem of this study put in question form is, 'what are the principals administrative processes/strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools in Ikom Education Zone Cross River State'?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine principals' administrative process strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Determine principals' planning strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State.
2. Ascertain principals' organizing strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State.
3. Identify principals' coordinating strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study.

1. What are the principals' planning strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State?
2. What are the principals' organizing strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State?
3. What are the principals' coordinating strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State?

Literature Review

Concept of Principalship

A principal is the head administrator of a school, especially a grade school or a secondary school. [9] posits that the title of principal is an appropriate designation for the chief administration of a school. [10] refer to the principal as the executive head of a secondary school. The early school principalship was given to any teacher found to possess some sign of demonstrable administrative ability. A teacher with academic qualifications and the right type of personality could be appointed the administrative head in addition to full - time teaching duty. Many of such principals were preoccupied with such takes as scheduling, attendance taking; reporting among others. The idea of a principal serving as a teacher as well as an administrator continues today in small urban communities and most rural areas [11]. As school became more complex, the principal was relieved at least some part of the teaching duties. Principalship is the key to a good school environment and in achieving teaching and learning quality. A good leader is important to teachers, and it affects their decision about where to work. More effective principals are able to attract better employees to their schools [12]. The word principal also means 'servant leadership' [13]. This paints a picture of someone who is responsible for ministering to the needs of schools they serve. Thus, a principal must deal with the professional and technical experts in education, parents and community members, superintendents and students. With such important responsibilities and roles, school principals must implement their own duties responsibly and carefully otherwise mistakes would cause dissatisfaction among teachers. Consequently, it could lead to low achievement for the school management.

Principal as a Chief Learning Officer

Business organizations have a chief executive officer (CEO), a chief financial officer (CFO), and a chief learning officer (CLO) among other titles. In the school, the principal serves as the chief learning officer (CLO), he is the instructional leader, open to new learning even when that learning challenges his strong held beliefs. He must model the behaviours he wants to see in others talking about teaching and learning, attending seminars, reading constantly and encouraging the school to do so. As the primary function of a school is teaching, the most important duty of a school principal as the chief learning officer (CLO) is to plan and coordinate teaching and learning activities. Austin (2009) is of the view that principals are those who discharge this function very well and are often found to be characterized by strong participation in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the instructional programme. Being the chief learning officer requires building a culture of motivation where everyone is involved in action and constantly collecting, analyzing and interpreting data for improvement. According to [14], the function of instructional programme provides insight into the ability of principals to serve as educational leaders of schools through active involvement, instructional leadership and curriculum development.

Concept of Quality

The word quality is often used indiscriminately for many different meanings. The word "Quality" represents the properties of products and services that are valued by the consumer. Quality can be defined as "fitness for use," "customer satisfaction," "doing things right the first time," or "zero defects." These definitions are acceptable because quality can refer to degrees of excellence. [15] defined quality as "an inherent characteristic, property or attribute." Quality can be defined as a characteristic of a product or process that can be measured. Quality is the ongoing process of building and sustaining relationships by assessing, anticipating, and fulfilling stated and implied needs. Quality is a momentary perception that occurs when something in our environment interacts with us, in the pre-intellectual awareness that comes before rational thought takes over and begins establishing order. Judgment of the resulting order is then reported as good or bad quality value. Quality is doing the right things right and is uniquely defined by each individual. Quality is meeting the customer's needs in a way that exceeds the customer's expectations [16].

Quality education includes:

Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities; Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities; Content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace; Processes through which trained teachers use child- centred teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skilful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce

disparities; Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in the society (p.23).

Concept of Quality Assurance

Assurance is the act of giving confidence, the state of being certain or the act of making certain. Quality Assurance is a planned and systematic activities implemented in a system so that excellence requirements for a product or service will be fulfilled. The term quality assurance describes all the planned and systematic actions necessary to assure that a product or service will satisfy the specified requirements [16]. Usually this takes the form of an independent final inspection. The quality assurance function should represent the customer and be independent of the quality control function, which is an integral part of the manufacturing operation. Quality assurance (QA) is designed to serve both management and production equally. Management is served when quality assurance monitors the complete maintenance effort of the department, furnishes factual feedback of discrepancies and deficiencies, and provides the action necessary to improve the quality, reliability, and safety of maintenance. Production is served by having the benefit of collateral duty inspectors formally trained in inspection procedures; it is also served in receiving technical assistance in resolving production problems [17]. Production personnel are not relieved of their basic responsibility for quality work when one introduces quality assurance to the maintenance function. Instead, one increases their responsibility by adding accountability. This accountability is the essence of quality assurance.

Quality Assurance Strategies in Education

Quality assurance is a mechanism for ensuring an appropriate learning process; be it a degree of control over what is permitted as an education experience, ensuring that the institution complies with basic requirements, or is accountable to its stakeholders, including funders and students, or has processes in place to enhance the learning process. The strategies used for quality assurance in education include: monitoring, evaluation, supervision, inspection, quality control and access and equity.

Monitoring: It refers to the process of collecting data at intervals about ongoing projects or programmes within the school system. The aim is to constantly assess the level of performance with a view of finding out how far a set objectives are being met [18].

Evaluation: This is a formal process carried out within a school setting. It is based on available data which are used to form conclusions. It could be formative or summative. The aim of evaluation as a quality assurance strategy is to see how the system can be assisted to improve on the present level of performance (formative) [19].

Supervision: Supervision might involve inspection, but it goes beyond inspection and includes attempt at bringing about improvement in the quality of instruction. It involves staff as essential part of the process. It is a way of advising, refreshing, encouraging and stimulating staff [20].

Inspection: Usually involves an assessment of available facilities and resources in an institution with a view to establishing how far a particular institution has met

prescribed standards, it is more of an assessment rather than an improvement induced exercise [21].

Concept of Administration

Administration is a social process concerned with identifying, maintaining, motivating, controlling and unifying formally and informally organized human and material resources within an integrate system designed specifically to achieve predetermined objectives. Administration has to do with getting things done with the accomplishment of defined objectives [22]. On a broader perspective Administration could be seen as an integral part of any organization. It is crucial for maintaining and expanding the relevance, effectiveness and productivity of complex institutions. Such as Government Department, Prisons, School Systems, Universities among others [23]. For example, the survival of all the organization, like the School and other institutions is dependent largely on the quality of administrative services available.

[24] defined Educational Administration as "essentially a service, activity or tool, through which the fundamental objectives of the educational process may be more fully and efficiently realized". Educational Administration is therefore concerned with the utilization of adequate resources and the harmonization of relationships and interactions in a suitable environment, in order to foster the attainment of the goals of teaching and learning. Educational Administration involves prudent management of resources and high degree of accountability on the part of organizational members. Educational administration broadly means running of educational institutions, which involves guidance, leadership, and controlling of the efforts of individuals in the achievement of the goals of the institution [25].

Educational Administration also involves management of resources; human, material, and evaluation or appraising the result of educational efforts. In other to drive the discussions home, one will agree with the researcher that administration in an educational organization otherwise known as Educational administration is aimed at directing all activities towards the attainment of the goals of teaching and learning. All the people working in an educational institution will have to contribute towards the accomplishment of these goals. Teachers and other professional staff are involved, such as parents and lay members of the community. Also involved are members of Schools Boards, Local Education Authorities, Inspectors, Ministries of Education and so forth.

Theoretical Framework

Systems Theory

Systems theory hold that an organization is a social system made up of integrated parts. The theory was propounded by a biophysicist Ludwig Von Bertalanffy in 1920. The system was seen as a series of interrelated and interdependent parts in such a way that the interaction of any part of the system affects the whole system. That is, one part of the system must interact and depend on the other parts around it to function effectively. The system theory is relevant to education system because education system (school) is a system and the concept of interaction and interdependence of parts with the education system like all other social systems has identical properties with the other system. This

study is anchored on system theory. The schools are looked at in terms of social system as complex interactive examined structurally and operationally. The theory is of immense help to this project work as the principal reflects in the objectives, functions and the ultimate goal of the educational system in which they operate. The principal as the administrator represents a crucial component of the social system. This implies that the principal as the chief executive of the school deals with people at all times and is bound to get along with them. For the principal to perform his administrative role very well, he is expected to ensure that he exhibits the qualities required of him so as to achieve secondary school objectives and goals as stipulated in the National Policy (FRN, 2004). This brings to the limelight the ideas of principal's administrative process. It contends that when special attention is given, the principals do their works very well and productivity is likely to be high.

Review of Empirical Studies

[26] examined the administrative tactics used by principals in Delta State's public secondary schools to accomplish quality assurance. It was intended to be a descriptive survey. Three research questions and three null hypotheses served as the study's compass. The study's participants were 490 principals from public secondary schools in Delta State. The sample size for this study is 267 principals. The researchers developed a structured questionnaire titled "Principals Quality Assurance Strategies Questionnaire (PQASQ). Cronbach Alpha data were used to produce a dependability index of 0.84. To address the study issues, the mean and standard deviation of the obtained data were analyzed, and the null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance using t-test statistics. The results showed that principals' use of planning, decision-making, and motivational techniques at Delta State's public secondary schools were not very significant. The study concluded that principals need to strengthen their administrative strategies to achieve quality assurance needed to meet global standard. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that the government should provide public school principal with training opportunities to enhance their administrative skills.

[26] examined the administrative tactics used by principals in Anambra State's public secondary schools to accomplish quality assurance. The study was designed as a descriptive survey. The study was led by three null hypotheses and three research questions. 267 principals from all of Anambra State's public secondary schools made up the study's population. The study employed the census sampling technique. The Principals Quality Assurance Strategies Questionnaire (PQASQ) is a structured questionnaire that the researchers created. Cronbach Alpha data were used to produce a dependability index of 0.84. To address the study issues, the mean and standard deviation of the obtained data were analyzed, and the null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance using t-test statistics. The results showed that the planning, decisionmaking, and motivational techniques employed by principals at Anambra State's public secondary schools were not very important. The study came to the conclusion that in order to attain the quality assurance required to satisfy international standards, principals must improve their administrative techniques. Among other things, it was

suggested that the government give public school principals opportunities for training to improve their administrative abilities in light of the findings.

[27] investigated principals' administrative strategies as a predictor of managerial effectiveness in public secondary schools in Delta State. Four research questions guided the study and four null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Correlational research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprised 465 principals in public secondary schools in Delta State. All the 465 principals were used for the study due to relatively manageable size of the population. Two sets of instruments namely "Administrative Strategies Questionnaire (ASQ) and "Managerial Effectiveness Scale (MES)" were used for data collection. The instruments were subjected to face validation by three experts made up of two experts in Educational Management and an expert in Measurement and Evaluation, all from Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus. The construct validation of the instruments was determined using factor analysis. The internal consistencies of the instruments were determined using Cronbach Alpha which yielded overall reliability indices of 0.81 for ASQ and 0.78 for MES respectively. The instruments were administered by the researcher with the help of five research assistants who are secondary school teachers in Delta State. A total of 465 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and 456 were properly filled and successfully retrieved indicating 98% return rate. Data analysis was done using simple regression. The findings of the study revealed among others that principals' planning and motivational strategies were strong predictors of managerial effectiveness in public secondary schools in Delta State. It was also found that principals' communication and disciplinary strategies are significant predictors of managerial effectiveness in public secondary schools in Delta State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that Delta State Ministry of Education should organize annual capacity building programme in form of in-service training for principals to professionally up-date their skills and knowledge of administrative strategies for enhancing managerial effectiveness.

[28] investigated the influence of principals' management strategies in the achievement of quality assurance in public secondary schools in Benue State, Nigeria. The study was guided by three (3) specific objectives. Three research questions were raised for the study. Also, three hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. This study adopted the survey research design. The population of the study is 4888 principals and teachers in all the public secondary schools in Benue State. The sample size is 370 respondents. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Influence of Principals' Management Strategies in the Achievement of Quality Assurance Questionnaire (IPMSAQAQ)". An overall reliability coefficient of 0.89 was obtained for the instrument. Mean and Standard Deviation were used in answering the research questions while Chi-square goodness of fit was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level. The findings of the study revealed that principals' instructional, physical facilities and supervisory management strategies significantly influence the achievement of quality assurance in public secondary schools in Benue

State. In view of the findings of this study, it was concluded that the utilization of instructional, physical facilities and supervisory management strategies by principals will enhance the sustainability of quality assurance in public secondary schools in Benue state. In view of the findings of this study, it was recommended that; School administrators in Benue State should prioritize the development and implementation of effective personnel management strategies for principals in public secondary schools.

[29] conducted a research on state university students' perceived service quality assurance. The study aimed to identify: university students' perceived service quality assurance dimensions; the dimensions contributing most towards overall students' perceived service quality assurance; and whether there is a difference in perceived quality assurance level of each dimension based on students' year of study and gender in the context of undergraduate students of state universities in Nigeria. The study uses a quantitative approach through a survey method. Four research questions and two hypotheses were posited for the study. The population of the study was made up of all the state university students from two states. The respondents of this study are 155 state university students from two state universities selected through simple random sampling techniques. Questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. Both multiple regression analysis and t-test analysis are used to analyze the data. Research results show that there are seven perceived service quality assurance dimensions considered important to university students, i.e. curriculum, facilities, contact personnel, social activities, education counselors, assessment, and instruction medium. The perceived service quality assurance dimensions contributing most towards overall perceived service quality assurance of a state university is facilities. Furthermore, the research also shows that university students with a different study period have a different perceived quality assurance level on the social activities dimension, while university students with different gender have a different perceived quality assurance level on two dimensions, i.e. social activities and facilities. The study is related to the present study to an extent, the design of the study is similar to that of the present study. The respondents of the study are state university students, while that of the present study will comprise principals in state secondary schools. Both multiple regression analysis and t-test analysis were used to analyze the data in the study, but only t-test analysis will be used to analyze data in the present study. The instrument of data collection for the study and that of the present study were analogues.

In the research work conducted by [30] on secondary school head teachers' quality assurance strategies and challenges in Nigeria. The study seeks to find the head teachers' quality assurance strategies and challenges in Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was used in the study. In view to carrying out this study, the researchers used 120 public secondary schools as the population. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 'five girls', 'four boys' schools and 37 co-educational schools. Questionnaire, interviews and observations were used to obtain data. Data were analyzed by the use of descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages. Data from interviews were analyzed qualitatively in an on-going process as the theme and sub-

themes emerged from data. Findings of the study showed that head teachers' curriculum supervisory methods were limited to checking of teachers' professional records and gave less emphasize to department supervision, self-appraisal and class-visits. Therefore, the study concluded that head teachers employed inadequate methods for the supervision of teacher's in the sampled schools, preferring to rely on written records to establish the quality of education. The study relates to the current study in the sense that it was conducted on secondary school head teacher' quality assurance strategies and challenges. The research design used in the study was also used in the present study. Questionnaire, interviews and observations comprised the instrument of data collection in the study, while only questionnaires were used for data collection in the present study. Data were analyzed by the use of descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages. Sample adopted by the reviewed work was so small that it lacks representative power. This means it is not adequate to be used for generalizing inferences. The current study will improve significantly on the size of sample through multi-stage random draw of population from Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State.

[31] carried out a study on analysis of administrative roles of principals in private secondary schools in Aba Education Zone of Abia state. The study investigated the administrative roles of private secondary school Principals in Aba education zone of Abia State. It is a survey research and it adopted seven research questions that guided the study. Sample of six hundred and sixteen (616) respondents' was chosen from group of teachers of schools. The six hundred and sixteen respondents were selected by stratified, random proportionate techniques across Aba education zone of Abia State. A 35 - item questionnaire on principal administrative tasks performance evaluation question (PATPEQ) which was based on 4 - point scale of Highly Effective, Effective, Moderately Effective and Not Effective was used to collect data. The result was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The result revealed that principals were moderately effective in financial and school business administration, students' personnel administration, staff personnel administration, instruction and curriculum development and in general tasks. The principals were effective in school- community relation and they were not effective in school plants. The study investigated the administrative roles of private secondary school Principals in Aba Education Zone of Abia State, while the present study examines principal's quality assurance strategies for effective secondary school administration in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State. The design of the study was a survey design which will also be used in the present study. The instrument of data collection and method of data analysis used in the study will also be maintained in the present study.

[32] carried out a study on the administrative problems that public secondary school head teachers face in Kenya. This study aimed at investigating the administrative problems that public secondary school head teachers face in Kenya with reference to Kitui District of Eastern province. The research was based on a descriptive design. Thirty five research questions and three hypotheses were posited for the study. The researcher adopted a stratified random sampling strategy on a target population of 85 public secondary schools in Kitui District. Data was collected by the use of questionnaires which

were self-administered by the researcher with the help of two research assistants. Measures of central tendencies were used to describe the results after analyzing the collected data with Statistical Package for Social Statistics (SPSS). The study established that lack of adequate training and experience on financial management might be the main cause of school mismanagement and hence poor academic performance. Every aspect of school management is affected by the way money is allocated. The findings indicated that head teachers spend more time reviewing finance matters with parents, teachers and the B.O.G. Issues of discipline came second in importance to the Head master as finance, because the head teachers would probably delegate them to the Deputy and other teachers. The study concluded that inadequate training and experience of the Head teacher in school financial management; discipline and teacher relation could be the cause of poor school performance. This is because the role of the Head teacher revolves around the three issues. The instrument of data collection in the study will also be used in the present study. The research used descriptive survey design, and measures of central tendencies were used to describe the results after analyzing the collected data with Statistical Package for Social Statistics (SPSS). The present study will also use survey design, but will use mean and standard deviation for data analysis and t-test statistics to analyze the hypothesis.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study employed a descriptive survey design to investigate principals' administrative process strategies and their impact on quality assurance in secondary schools within the Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State. The Ikom Education Zone, located in the Central Senatorial District, comprises six Local Government Areas (LGAs): Ikom, Boki, Etung, Obubra, Yakurr, and Abi. The zone shares borders with Ogoja LGA to the north, Biase LGA to the south, Obudu LGA and the Republic of Cameroon to the east, and Ebonyi State to the west. The population consisted of all 129 principals from the 129 public secondary schools within the Ikom Education Zone. This figure was sourced from the current list of principals obtained from the Research, Planning, and Statistics department of the Ministry of Education, Ikom Zonal Office, in 2023. The population included 82 male and 47 female principals.

Given the relatively small population size, a census sampling technique was adopted, meaning all 129 principals were included in the sample. This eliminated the need for sampling, ensuring that data was collected from the entire population of interest. Data was gathered using a researcher-developed questionnaire titled "Principal Quality Assurance Strategies Questionnaire (PQASQ)." The PQASQ was divided into two parts: Part A, which collected personal data from the respondents, and Part B, which comprised forty items organized into five clusters (A, B, C, D, and E). These clusters corresponded to the study's research questions, focusing on principals' planning, organizing, staffing, coordinating, and budgeting strategies for effective secondary school administration. Each cluster contained eight items, all designed to address the research questions guiding the study.

To ensure the PQASQ's validity, the instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts: one in Measurement and Evaluation and two in Educational Administration and Planning, all affiliated with the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), Ikom Study Centre. The reliability of the instrument was assessed through a trial test conducted on 30 principals (15 males and 15 females) from five LGAs within the Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, an area outside the study's scope. Cronbach's Alpha method was used to estimate the internal consistency coefficient of each questionnaire cluster. The resulting reliability coefficients for clusters A, B, C, D, and E were .76, .73, .73, .80, and .81, respectively, with an overall coefficient of .76, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

The researcher and three trained research assistants administered the questionnaires to the respondents. These assistants underwent a one-day training session to familiarize themselves with the study's objectives and the questionnaire's items, ensuring accurate and consistent administration. The research team provided clarifications to respondents as needed, and the completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately upon completion. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed for data analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while t-test statistics were used to test the null hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. The decision to reject or accept the null hypotheses was based on comparing the calculated t-value with the critical t-table value of 1.96. Items were rejected if the calculated t-value exceeded 1.96 and accepted if it was less than 1.96. Interpretation of mean response scores was as follows: 0.5 - 1.49 (Strongly Disagree), 1.5 - 2.49 (Disagree), 2.50 - 3.49 (Agree), and 3.50 - 4.00 (Strongly Agree). The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to facilitate the data analysis process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Research Question 1: What are the principals' planning strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State? In order to answer the research question, mean ratings analysis was performed on the data, see Table 1.

Table 1. mean ratings of male and female principals on the planning strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools.

S/No	Items	Male			Female		
		X	SD	Dec.	X	SD	Dec.
1	Preparation of school timetable on time	2.89	5.79	A	3.11	4.93	SA
2	Adequate provision of ICT facilities to enhance teaching and learning in the school	2.99	6.30	A	2.94	4.68	A

3	Provision of enough furniture in the school	2.88	5.76	A	3.02	4.81	SA
4	Equipping the school laboratories with standard laboratory facilities	3.01	6.01	SA	3.11	4.83	SA
5	Playing a major role in school curriculum implementation	2.90	5.82	A	3.19	5.10	SA
6	Introducing innovations that will bring about improvement in the academic standards	2.96	6.44	A	3.37	5.61	SA
7	Employing security operatives to ensure protection of life and properties in the school	2.87	6.15	A	2.94	4.58	A
8	Renovation of the school plant as at when due	2.86	6.03	A	3.01	4.75	SA
	Cluster Mean	2.92	6.04	A	3.09	4.91	A

Table 1 shows that the cluster mean scores of male and female principals are 2.92 and 3.09 respectively. Since the mean scores are above the cut off mean of 2.50 for accepting items, it indicates that the male and female principals are of the opinion that the planning strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools are preparation of school time table in time; adequate provision of ICT facilities, provision of enough furniture in school, equipping the school laboratories with standard laboratory facilities, playing major role in school curriculum implementation, introducing innovations that will bring about improvement in academic standard of the school; employing some security operatives to ensure protection of life and properties in the school surroundings and renovation of the school plant as at when due.

Research Question 2: What are the principals' organizing strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State? In order to answer the research question, mean ratings analysis was performed on the data, see Table 2.

Table 2. Mean ratings of male and female principals on the organizing strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools.

S/No	Items	Male			Female		
		X	SD	Dec.	X	SD	Dec.
9	Organizing programs like debate and quiz competition during special assembly at least once a week	2.39	4.78	D	2.37	4.19	D
10	Make proper arrangements prior to any external examination	2.51	5.02	A	2.62	4.44	A

11	Making sure that materials needed for conducting internal examination are available on time	2.88	5.76	A	3.02	4.81	SA
12	Organizing staff meetings on the first day of every term	2.64	5.60	A	2.88	4.71	A
13	Instructing the sport master to invite teachers from other schools to officiate inter-house sports	2.84	5.68	A	2.77	4.41	A
14	Conducting PTA meetings at least once a term	2.96	6.44	A	3.37	5.61	SA
15	Consulting with staff members before organizing a send-off party for outgoing students	2.92	5.94	A	2.79	4.51	A
16	Making sure that letters of invitation to PTA meetings are served to parents through their children	2.26	4.52	D	2.44	4.23	D
	Cluster Mean	2.67	5.47	A	2.78	4.61	A

From the data presented in Table 2 above, all the male and female principals agreed that making proper arrangements prior to any external examination; making sure that materials needed for conducting internal examination are made available to the exam committee at the right time; organizing staff meeting on the first day of every term; instructing the sport master to invite teachers from other schools to officiate the inter-house sport competition; conducting PTA meeting at least once in a term and consulting with staff members before organizing a send forth party for outgoing students are all principals' organizing strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools. This is because, their mean scores are above 2.50 which is the cut off mean for accepting an item. Table 2 again revealed that items 9 and 16 (organizing programmes like debate and quiz competition during special assembly at least once in a week and making sure that letters of invitation to attend PTA meeting are served to all parents through their children in the school) are not the principals' organizing strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools. This is because their mean scores are below the 2.49 cut off mean for rejecting an item. However, the cluster mean scores of male and female principals show that all the items are the principals' organizing strategy for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools with the Mean scores of 2.67 and 2.78 respectively.

Research Question 2: What are the principals' coordinating strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State? In order to answer the research question, mean ratings analysis was performed on the data, see Table 3.

Table 3. Mean ratings of male and female principals on the coordinating strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools.

S/No	Items	Male			Female		
		X	SD	Dec.	X	SD	Dec.
17	Ensuring that every teacher is working	6.51	-	SA	3.22	4.86	SA
18	Coordinating the activities of programs and events like inter-house sports competitions, send ceremonies, etc.	2.55	5.62	A	2.84	4.58	A
19	Ensuring that teachers and students are in the classroom during lecture periods	2.79	5.58	A	2.92	4.66	A
20	Appointment of some capable teachers and assigning some responsibilities to them	2.19	4.38	D	2.22	3.96	D
21	Appointing teachers to coordinate student associations	2.51	5.02	A	2.64	4.55	A
22	Holding periodic meetings with committees, heads of departments, or subject coordinators to identify needs/problems and proffer solutions	2.96	6.44	A	3.37	5.61	SA
23	Issuing queries to any staff caught in any act of indiscipline	2.87	6.15	A	2.94	4.58	A
24	Moving from class to class to monitor activities	3.09	6.18	SA	3.01	4.75	SA
	Cluster Mean	2.76	5.74	A	2.90	4.69	A

Data on Table 3 above indicate that male and female principals agreed that all the items (25-27 & 29-32) on cluster 4 which include ensuring that every teacher is working towards the attainment of school goals; coordinating the activities of committees during special school programmes and events like inter house sports competitions, send-off ceremonies; ensuring that teachers and students are in the class room during lecture periods; appointing teachers to coordinate student social activities like clubs, societies and associations; holding periodic meetings at different levels with staff, students, parent committee, heads of department or subject coordinators to discover areas of needs/problem and proffer solutions; issuance of query to any staff caught in any act of indiscipline and moving from class to class to know how students are faring are the principals' coordinating strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools. This is because their mean scores are above the 2.50 cut off mean for accepting an item. Table 4 as well reveals that item 28 (appointment of some capable teachers and assigning some responsibilities to them) is not the principals' coordinating strategy for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools. This is because its mean score

is below 2.49 for rejecting an item. Nonetheless, the cluster mean of 2.76 and 2.90 respectively are above the cut of mean score of 2.50 for accepting items. This indicates that all the items in the cluster are to some extent the principals' coordinating strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools.

Discussion

Principals' Planning Strategies for the Achievement of Quality Assurance in Secondary Schools in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State

The result on table one shows that the planning strategies which can be adopted by school principals to ensure the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools include preparation of school time table on time, adequate provision of ICT facilities to enhance teaching and learning in the school, provision of enough furniture in the school, equipping the school laboratories with standard laboratory facilities, playing major role in school curriculum implementation, introducing innovations that will bring about improvement in academic standard of the school among others. It again reveals that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on principals' planning strategies for achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools. The respondents accepted that all the items depicted in the table one can be acknowledged as a good principals' planning strategies for achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools. The implication of the findings is that there are a good number of planning strategies for achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools. That when the planning strategies documented by this study are adopted by the principles are the heads of secondary school administration, quality assurance will be guaranteed.

Principals' Organizing Strategies for the Achievement of Quality Assurance in Secondary Schools in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State

The result on table two reveals that the organizing strategies which can be adopted by school principals to ensure the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools include making proper arrangements prior to any external examination, making sure that materials needed for conducting internal examination are made available to the exam committee at the right time, organizing staff meeting on the first day of every term, instructing the sport master to invite teachers from other schools to officiate the inter house sport competition, conducting PTA meeting at least once in a term, consulting with staff members before organizing a send forth party for outgoing students, among others. On the other hand organizing programmes like debate and quiz competitions during special assembly at least once in a week and making sure that letters of invitation to attend PTA meeting are served to all parents through their children in the school are not the principals' organizing strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools. Nonetheless, the findings on the study also reveal that, there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on principals' organizing strategies for achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools. This means that the respondents agree in one accord that the portrayed

organizing strategies in the table two can be adopted by principals in a bid to achieve quality assurance in secondary schools. This suggests that when the organizing strategies highlighted in this study are harnessed by the principals, quality assurance in secondary schools would be guaranteed.

Principals' Coordinating Strategies for the Achievement of Quality Assurance in Secondary Schools in Ikom Education Zone of Cross River State

The result on table four indicates that there are some coordinating strategies which can be adopted by school principals to ensure the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools. These coordinating strategies as shown in the table four are as follows: ensuring that every teacher is working towards the attainment of school goals, coordinating the activities of committees during special school programmes and events like inter house sports competitions, send-off ceremonies, ensuring that teachers and students are in the class room during lecture periods, appoint teachers to coordinate student social activities like clubs, societies and associations, issuance of query to any staff caught in any act of indiscipline, holding periodic meetings at different levels with staff, students, parents' committee, heads of department or subject coordinators etc. to discover areas of needs/problem and proffer solutions among others. However, appointment of some capable teachers and assigning some responsibilities to them is not the principals' coordinating strategy for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools.

Summary of Major Findings

The major findings of this work are as follows:

1. The principals' planning strategies for quality assurance in secondary schools include preparation of school time table on time, adequate provision of ICT facilities to enhance teaching and learning in the school, provision of enough furniture in the school and equipping the school laboratories with standard laboratory facilities among others.
2. The principals' organizing strategies for quality assurance in secondary schools comprise making proper arrangements prior to any external examination; making sure that materials needed for conducting internal examination are made available to the exam committee at the right time and organizing staff meeting on the first day of every term among others. While organizing programmes like debate and quiz competition during special assembly at least once in a week and making sure that letters of invitation to attend PTA meeting are served to all parents through their children in the school are not the principals' organizing strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools.
3. The principals' coordinating strategies for quality assurance in secondary schools include ensuring that every teacher is working towards the attainment of school goals; coordinating the activities of committees during special school programmes and events like inter house sports competitions, send-off ceremonies among others while appointment of some capable teachers and assigning some

responsibilities to them is not the principals' coordinating strategy for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: Based on the findings of the study and the discussions that followed, the following conclusions were made: The principals' planning strategies for quality assurance in secondary schools include preparation of school time table on time, adequate provision of ICT facilities to enhance teaching and learning in the school, provision of enough furniture in the school and equipping the school laboratories with standard laboratory facilities among others. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the principals' planning strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools. Hence, adoption of these planning strategies by the school principals would enhance quality assurance in secondary schools. The principals' organizing strategies for quality assurance in secondary schools comprise making proper arrangements prior to any external examination; making sure that materials needed for conducting internal examination are made available to the exam committee at the right time and organizing staff meeting on the first day of every term among others. While organizing programmes like debate and quiz competition during special assembly at least once in a week and making sure that letters of invitation to attend PTA meeting are served to all parents through their children in the school are not the principals' organizing strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools. However, there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the principals' organizing strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools. Therefore, the proper use of the documented organizing strategies by school principals could promote quality assurance in secondary schools. The principals' coordinating strategies for quality assurance in secondary schools include ensuring that every teacher is working towards the attainment of school goals; coordinating the activities of committees during special school programmes and events like inter house sports competitions, send-off ceremonies among others while appointment of some capable teachers and assigning some responsibilities to them is not the principals' coordinating strategy for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools. The findings of this study suggest that there are a good number of principals' coordinating strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools. **Implication:** Hence, adoption of these planning strategies by the school principals would enhance quality assurance in secondary schools. Therefore, the proper use of the documented organizing strategies by school principals could promote quality assurance in secondary schools. The findings of this study suggest that there are a good number of principals' coordinating strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools. **Limitation:** There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals on the principals' planning strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools. In the same way, there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female principals

on the principals' organizing strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools. **Future Research:** The findings of this study suggest that there are a good number of principals' coordinating strategies for the achievement of quality assurance in secondary schools.

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