Principals Effectiveness for Quality Assurance and Perceived Quality of Secondary School Students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

By

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Abstract

The study determined the relationship between principals' effectiveness for quality assurance and perceived service quality of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study formulated two specific objectives, two research questions and two null hypotheses for the research direction. It adopted a correlational research design. The target population was 56,587 secondary school II students. The stratified sampling technique was used to select subjects from 6 schools in the three senatorial districts of the State. The instrument developed by the researcher, titled "School Principals' Effectiveness for Quality Assurance (SPPQA) and Students' Perceived Service Quality Scale (SPSQS), with reliability coefficients between 0.88 and 0.91 on Cronbach's Alpha was used for data collection. The Taro Yamen's formula was employed to determine the sample of 397 respondents, randomly selected from the population, while 393 were suitable for data analyses. The data collected were subjected to Regression statistics, which the r-value was used to answer the research questions and f-value was used to test the null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The results indicated very high negative significant relationships between predictors (quality collaborations and relationship skills of school principals) and perceived service quality of secondary school students (criterion) in the study area. The study concluded among others that Principals should adhere to quality collaborations and relationship skills with teachers and other schools members in order to attain quality assurance to ensure that the perceived service quality of students is realised. It was recommended that government should enforce on the principals to employ quality collaboration and relationship skills as administrative strategy for effective learning atmosphere towards achieving quality assurance in education and students' satisfaction.
Key words: principals' effectiveness, quality assurance, collaborations, relationship skills, students' perceived service quality

Introduction

Education service is a credible investment that can emancipate the yearning needs of the people. The excellent attainment of the perceived service quality in education could regenerate in students as its customers, satisfaction that may promote sustainability in the sector if proper attention is given. Hence, Students' retention and their academic performance or effectiveness is influenced by the service quality provided by the higher education institutions (Sander, Stevenson, King and Coates, 2010). However, the rigorous processes of completion in the higher education sector, internationalisation of higher education and the classification of education as a marketable service have encouraged the management of the various institutions of higher learning to pay more attention in assessing the overall students' perceived service quality (Marzo-Navarro, Pedraja-Iglesias & Rivera-Torres, 2005; Kwek, Lau & Tan, 2010). The quality serves as a yardstick for gaining admission into tertiary institutions especially, the University system. Besides, in educational institution, students are the main customer of the organisation and it is presumed that students' satisfaction should always be considered by these higher institutions.

Recently, educational satisfaction among secondary schools products is farfetched due to students' lack of self-confidence and their undesirable behavioural characteristics exhibiting in schools. Letcher and Neves (2010) reported that students' satisfaction helps to build self-confidence, and that self-confidence helps students develop useful skills and acquire knowledge. On the other hand, student dissatisfaction can lead to negative student activities, such as a bad grade, an unpleasant relationship between themselves, the school staff and friends (Letcher & Neves, 2010). It is postulated that lack of students' satisfaction may be affected by the perceived service quality of education that is deteriorating by the day. The administrative and investment supplies of education are declining and it causes reduction in quality of input, process and output. Nevertheless, the secondary education products are not satisfied with the type and pattern of learning as well as the management which the administrators offer to them in schools. Again, the learning experiences do not complement the perceived service quality that can motivate satisfaction, retention and achievement that is needed to promote quality assurance in schools and it seems to affect the perception of students negatively.

It is noted that the Principals are the managers of education in secondary school settings. The principal's role resembled a master teacher of sorts, and one who completed extra tasks, such as coming in early to open the school building and staying late with students who needed extra help or were in trouble. The relationship changed to cast the principal more in the role of a manager, as teachers became more empowered and received collective bargaining powers, as high-stakes testing and school accountability was introduced, and students' population became more diverse, especially in urban centers (Toole, 2011). Effiong (2012) reported that the role of an effective principal is to collaborates with stakeholders in the school improvement process, shares student achievement data with all stakeholders, provides time for collaborative problem solving, demonstrates effective group-process and consensus-building skills towards school improvement efforts. The author explicated that the effectiveness of the school principals will surely reveal one's capacity to communicates the school vision, school goals and ongoing progress toward attainment of goals to staff, parents, students, and community members, nurtures and develops the leadership capabilities of others in schools.

The prime responsibility of all education leaders is to put in place learning that engages students intellectually, socially, and emotionally. Sustainable leadership goes beyond temporary gains in achievement scores to create lasting, meaningful improvements in learning (Glickman, 2012). Sustainable leadership of the principals means planning and preparing for succession, collaboration and possess interpersonal relationships skills with others – not as an afterthought, but from the first day of a leader's appointment (Stoll, Fink, & Earl, 2012). Thus, to ensure students' effective learning, school principals could build strong professional relationships, create a collaborative culture, and focus on results for students' satisfaction. Such a Principal is capable of implementing quality collaborative plans for instructional standards, strategies and common assessment that would promote quality assurance in education. Yet, to achieve high levels of students' learning, establish collaborative cultures, and produce a laser-like focus on results, effective principals who are a professional must begin by building stronger relationships with the school's teachers (Toole, 2011). Creating a collaborative environment has been described as the single most important factor for attaining quality and successful school improvement initiatives in education (Effiong & Akpan, 2016).

It is apparent to most school communities that a bond of trust, respect, and mutual support must be present between the principal and the teachers within a school building for student achievement to prosper (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004; Portin, Knapp, Dareff, Feldman, Russell, Samuelson, & Yeh, 2009; Knapp, Copland, Honig, Plecki & Portin, 2010). Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, Anderson, Michlin, Mascall, Gordon,

Strauss, Thomas and Moore (2010) noted that effective schools depend on principals and teachers to engage in reflective practice to improve students' achievement. The authors explained that this reflective practice can include professional conversations about relevant curriculum, rigorous instruction, and timely assessment and feedback. The authors further explained that productive reflective practices on public schools are based on the strength of the relationships between the principal and the teachers. Great schools show strong evidence of deep, respectful relationships between the principal and their teachers (Sergiovanni, 2006). Virtually all contemporary school reformers call for increased opportunities for teacher collaboration (Marzo-Navarro, Pedraja-Iglesias, & Rivera-Torres, 2005). Student achievement is likely to be greatest where teachers and administrators work together, in small groups and school-wide, to identify sources of student success and then struggle collectively to implement school improvement (Louis *et. al.,* 2010). Creating and sustaining change requires creating a critical mass of educators within the school who are willing and able to function as change agents. Therefore, good human relationships are important to quality teaching and learning which could promote quality assurances that can consolidate the perception of students' quality of services school offers.

Service quality could be seen as the result of the comparison that customers make between expectations about a service and perception of the way the service was delivered (Grönross, 2004). Service quality is the difference between customers' expectations for service performance prior to the service encounter and their perceptions of the service perceived (Asubonteng, McCleary & Swan, 2006). The perceived service quality is defined by Parasuraman, Zeithaml &Berry (2008) as a global judgment, or attitude, relating to the superiority of the service. Educational quality has been recognised by various scholars as excellence in education, value addition in education or defect avoidance in education process (Asubonteng, *et. al.,* 2006; Kwek, Lau & Tan, 2010). Quality is an evaluation process that judges, measures, or assesses the excellent development and delivery of courses/learning environments focused on appropriate design and best practice, and it is aimed at self-improvement that ensures quality instruction in a non-threatening way (Chapman &Henderson, 2010). Thus, quality assurance is a planned and systematic means for assuring management that the defined standards, practices, procedures and methods of the process are applied towards the achievement of the organisation objectives (Effiong & Akpan, 2016). When these elements of quality are lacking in the administrative characteristics of the school, it tends to sabotage the students satisfaction and achievement. Hence, high-performing school campuses depend on high-performing professional learning communities to get outstanding students' achievement through secondary schools products.

It is expected that secondary school as part of the basic education might endeavour to provide quality services that is needed in order to support students' achievement in higher education. Therefore, when quality is lacking in the discharge of education services, students lack confidence in the education and themselves and that may regenerate social conflict as well as deprivation in the society. It becomes the rationale to assess the relationship between the principals' performance for quality assurance and perceived service quality of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Education services have been observed to be declining by the day. The quality of school management becomes ineffective due to the Principals' inability to collaborate and implement relationship skills that could bring teachers and other schools members together for effective work behaviours. These uncooperative behaviours tend to contribute to students'laxities in learning competencies and they are not satisfied with perceived service quality of education. Students in Akwa Ibom State in particular and Nigeria at large find it very difficult to cope with their learning and most of them are socially frustrated due to the disappointment in the services schools offers to them. Principals and teachers are not

cooperating in their tasks performance, they tend not to be effective, and they are lacking in their interpersonal relationships skills with each other. Specifically, the principals are exhibiting attitude of negligence towards collaborations with other school members. Hence, the leadership of the school management are exhibiting behaviours that result to lack of commitment to teaching and learning that may positively or negatively relate to students' dissatisfaction. Notably, the poor quality of educational services provided by higher education in Nigeria may be associated with the unattainable perceived quality output of secondary school students in recent times. This has instigated the researcher to verify whether principals' effectiveness for quality assurance correlate with the perceived service quality of secondary school students in the study area.

The specific objectives of this study sought to:
1) Determine the relationship between quality collaboration and perceived service quality of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.
2) Determine the relationship between relationship skills and perceived service quality of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions
The following research questions were postulated:
1) What is the relationship between quality collaboration and perceived service quality of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?
2) What is the relationship between relationship skills and perceived service quality of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?

Null Hypotheses
The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at .05 level of significance:
1) There is no significant relationship between quality collaboration and perceived service quality of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.
2) There is no significant relationship between relationship skills and perceived service quality of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Method
The study adopted a correlational research design. The reason for using this design was that the researcher sought to investigate the relationship between variables of this study without manipulating them and the nature of the relationship that exists within them. The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State, which was created from the former Cross River State on 23rd September, 1987. The state capital is in Uyo with the landmass of 7,245,925 square kilometres of Nigeria's Wealth Basin; lying between the Latitudes $4^0 30^1$N and $5^0 33^1$N North of Equator and Longitudes $7^0 30^1$E and $8^0 25^1$E of East of the Greenwich Meridian with the population of 4,805,451 people (2006 Census Figure of the National Population Commission, Abuja).The population for this study consisted of all the 53,587 students of Senior Secondary II (SS2) in Akwa Ibom State public secondary schools (Planning, Research and Statistics Directorate of the State Secondary Education Board, Akwa Ibom State Students' Enrolment of 2018/2019 Session). A sample size of 397 JSS3 students (176 males and 221 females) was determined using Taro Yamane population reduction formulae, selected from the target population.

Taro Yamane method is as follows: $n = N/(1+N (e)^2)$, where; n – signifies the sample size, N – signifies the population under study, e – signifies the margin error.

The stratified sampling technique was used to select the subjects from 6 schools of the three education zones of Akwa Ibom State. The research instrument called "*School Principals' Performance for Quality Assurance (S*PPQA) *and Students' Perceived Service Quality of Scale* (SPSQS) was developed by the researcher, derived from the reviewed literature related to the study. Students responded to the items of the instrument. The instrument had three sections, A, B and C. Section A obtained personal information from the

respondents, Section B elicited data from the variables of school management indicators for quality assurance such as quality planning (5 items), quality collaborations (5 items) and quality professional development (5 items). Section C obtained information from students' perceived service quality experience (5 items). The instrument was personally administered by the researchers to the subjects, after obtaining permission from the principals of schools. A total of 397 copies of the instrument were administered to the respondents, collected on the spots; while 393copies were suitable for statistical analyses.

The face and content validity of the instrument was ascertained by experts in educational management and planning, and measurement and evaluation, all in Faculty of Education, University of Uyo, Uyo. They checked for accuracy of items and reliability. The instrument was subjected to internal consistency test with the Cronbach Alpha statistics that generated between 0.88 and 0.91 coefficients, through a trial test on 20 SS2 students of public secondary schools in Uyo that were not part of the main study. This study used r-value of Linear Regression statistics to answer the Research Questions, while f-value was used to test the Null Hypotheses. However, all the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 levels of significance. The bases for the decision of the research questions conclusion were as follows: 0.00 – 0.20 = very low relationship, 0.20 – 0.40 = low relationship, 0.40 – 0.60 = moderate relationship, 0.60 – 0.80 = high relationship and 0.80 – 1.0 = very high relationship.

Results

The results of data analyses of this study are presented in tables 1 to 4 below:

Research Question 1

What is the relationship between quality collaboration and perceived service quality of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 1: Summary of correlation between quality collaboration and perceived service quality of secondary school students

Variable	n	r	r^2	Decision
Quality collaboration Students' perceived service quality	393	-0.96	0.96(96%)	Very High Negative Relationship

Table 1 indicates that the sample of 393 gave an r-value as -0.96, r^2 as 0.96 and the relationship is negative. This implies that the correlation between principals' quality collaboration and perceived service quality of students in the study area is very high and negative. The answer to the research question is that there is a very high negative relationship between quality collaboration and perceived service quality of secondary schools students in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Question 2
        What is the correlation between principals' relationship skills and perceived service quality of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?
Table 2: Summary of correlation between principals' relationship skills and perceived service quality of secondary school students

Variable	n	r	r^2	Decision
Principals' relationship skills Students' perceived service quality	393	-0.92	0. 92 (92%)	Very High Negative Relationship

        Table 2 shows that, the sample of 393 gave an r-value as -0. 92, r^2 as 0.92 and the relationship is negative. This implies that the correlation between principals' relationship skills and perceived service quality of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State is very high and negative. Hence, the research question is answered as there is a very high negative relationship between principals' relationship skills and perceived service quality of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Null Hypothesis
Null Hypothesis 1
        There is no significant relationship between quality collaboration and perceived service quality of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.
Table 3: Summary of f-test of significance of correlation between quality collaboration and perceived service quality of secondary school students   n = 393

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Beta	F	*p*-value	Decision
1	Regression	3390.006	1	3390.006				
	Residual	48.55	391	.374	0.99	73.196	.000[b]	Significant
	Total	3438.555	392					

        **correlation is significant at .05 level, df = 392 (2-tailed)
        Table 3 shows that the f-calculated of 73.19 is greater than the *p*-value of .000, at $p<$ .05 levels, and degree of freedom of 391. As in Table 3 the f-value between quality collaboration (predictor variable) and perceived service quality of secondary school students (criterion variable) is significant. The hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is significant correlation between quality collaboration and perceived service quality of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Null Hypothesis 2
        There is no significant correlation between quality teachers' professional development and record keeping skills among secondary schools teachers
Table 4: Summary of f-test of significance of correlation between principals' relationship skills and perceived service quality of secondary school students   n = 393

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Beta	f	*p*-value	Decision
1	Regression	2380.003	1	2380.003				
	Residual	44.65	391	.294	2.99	37.34	.000[b]	Significant
	Total	2424.653	392					

        **correlation is significant at .05 level, df = 392 (2-tailed)

Table 4 shows that the f-calculated of 37.34 is greater than the *p*-value of .000, at *p<* .05 levels, and degree of freedom of 392. As in Table 4, the f-value between principals' relationship skills (predictor variable) and perceived service quality of secondary school students (criterion variable) is significant. The hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is significant correlation between principals' relationship skills and perceived service quality of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

Discussion of Findings

Finding of this study indicated a very high negative correlation between quality collaborations of the school principals and perceived service quality of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. The correlation was significant. The result is based on the coefficient of r^2 = -0.96 (coefficient of determination), which means 96 per cent of the variation in perceived service quality of secondary school students was accounted for by quality collaborations of the school principals, and it was only 4 per cent could be explained by principals' quality collaboration activities. The fact that the correlation coefficient value was negative entails that, as quality collaboration of the school principals negatively decreases by 96 per cent so also the perceived service quality of secondary school students by 4 per cent. This finding is in support of the finding of Effiong (2012), who reported that the role of an effective principal is to collaborates with stakeholders in the school improvement process, shares student achievement data with all stakeholders, provides time for collaborative problem solving, demonstrates effective group-process and consensus-building skills in school improvement efforts.

Finding of this study indicated a very high negative correlation between principals' relationship skills and perceived service quality of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. The correlation was significant. This entails that the calculated r^2 value was -0.92 (coefficient of determination), which means 92 per cent of the variation of perceived service quality of secondary school students was accounted for by principals' relationship skills, and it was only 8 per cent could be explained by the perceived service quality of secondary school students. The fact that the correlation coefficient value was negative means that, as the principals' relationship skills was negatively decreases with 92 per cent so also perceived service quality of secondary school students by 8 per cent. This finding is in support of the finding of Letcher and Neves (2010), which revealed that students' dissatisfaction can lead to negative student activities, such as a bad grade, an unpleasant relationship between themselves, the school staff and friends.

Conclusion

The study concluded that school Principals' quality collaborations and their relationship skills are important factors that can improve quality assurances that would make the perceived service quality of students realisable. It is further concluded that poor quality collaboration of principals and their effective relationship skills has thrown educational services of secondary schools into a mud and that has ridicule the satisfaction of students. It has also negatively affected secondary school students' perception, self-confidence and self-concept.

Recommendation

The study is recommended as follows:

1) Government of Akwa Ibom State should endeavour to attach importance to the Principals' monitoring and supervision as well as other school staff to enforce them to attain to their administrative responsibilities in order to help ensure quality collaboration is implemented for the achievement of effective educational goals in the study area.

2) The principals should endeavour to improve upon their relationships with teachers and students as well as other schools for effective teaching and learning atmosphere

that would promote quality assurance in education and students' satisfaction in schools.

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