

Original Research Article

Institutional Policies and Quality Assurance as Correlates of Entry Requirements of Undergraduates in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study was to examine the Institutional policies and quality assurance as correlates of entry requirements of undergraduates in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. To carry out this study successfully, two research questions and two null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The population of this study comprises 350 year one students from three universities in Cross River State. The sampling technique employed by the researcher in the selection of the sample was the simple random sampling technique. The sample size selected for this study was 225 year one students in selected schools which represents 5 percent of the accessible population comprising of 127 males and 98 females. The questionnaire was designed to measure the two sub-independent variables. The reliability of the instrument was 0.76 reliability coefficient. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the request questions. While Multiple and Simple linear regression analysis statistical tool was used to test the null hypotheses that were formulated to guild the study at 0.05 level of significance. The results of this study shows that institutional policies and quality assurance significantly enhances the correlates of entry requirements of undergraduates in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria and Poor implementation of quality assurance policies significantly influences institutional entry requirements of undergraduates in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study concludes that institutional policies and quality assurance significantly enhances the correlates of entry requirements of undergraduates in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria and Poor implementation of quality assurance policies does not significantly influences institutional entry requirements of undergraduates in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. Based on the conclusion, it was recommended that universities management should may formulate educational policies the will help in addressing problems of institutional policies and quality assurance in schools such as problem of student under age, Student cut off mark, departmental placement and inappropriate course of study.

Keywords: Institutional policies, Quality assurance, Entry requirements, Policies undergraduates.

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INTRODUCTION

Admissions into Nigerian universities have become a big issue over the years because of the ever increasing demands for University education and the availability of only 75 universities in the country. Prior to 1978 each University conducted its placement examination and admitted its students in line with available spaces. On realizing that very intelligent candidates obtained admissions into a number of Universities but settled for one while denying many of

opportunities the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced.

Central placement examination body. This body known as the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) was established by Decree No. 2 of 1978.

Student academic admission placement is determined by the scores in the University Matriculation Examination (UME) conducted by the Joint Admission

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and Matriculation Board (JAMB), WAEC/NECO or A – level examination and university aptitude test. The policy on educationally disadvantaged states” is seen as another euphemism in the application of admission policy under the federal character concept. According to a Federal Government Circular (FME/S/518/VO/01/99 of 2nd September 1983) in Okoroma, (2023) educationally disadvantaged States in Nigeria are Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Cross-River, Gongola, Kaduna, Lagos, Niger, Plateau, Rivers and Sokoto. “Catchment Area” is another phrase in the admission policy to promote equalization of educational opportunity. “Catchment area” refers to the locality in which federal universities are established. This policy stipulates that the states in the immediate vicinity of each University should derive special preferences in terms of admissions. The admission policy of “discretion” opportunity is given to universities to cater for good candidates that would be adversely affected in the process of applying the various quota system guidelines. The most current guideline on admission approved by the Federal government of Nigeria through the National Universities Commission (NUC, 1999) is as follow: Merit = 45%, Catchment area = 35%; disadvantaged states = 20% (NUC 1999, P. 5).

Ahaotu and Ogunode (2021) opines that many higher institutions do not have adequate lecturers to deploy for teaching in the various institutions. The shortage of lecturer is responsible for the poor quality of teaching and learning in most Nigerian higher institutions. Another issue is the qualification, how many of the academic staff are qualified to lecture in the higher institutions. According to the National Universities Commission policies on recruitment into the universities, the policies regarding qualifications of academic staff are stated below. The minimum entry qualification of a teaching staff into polytechnic is Bachelor’s degree in relevant field. In Colleges of Education, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) requires that candidates to be considered for appointment should have, besides first degree, acquire some qualification in education.

Okoroma, (2023) study Admission Policies and the Quality of University Education in Nigeria. The population of Nigeria is 140 million according to the last 2006 census. Only 75 Universities are available to cater to this population with one University for 1,866,000 people. The inability of the available Universities in Nigeria to cope with the high demand for University education has put much pressure on University admissions. In order to satisfy some interests the Government of Nigeria adopted such admission policies as the quota system, catchment areas, backwardness factor, and discriminatory fees. Following the observed fall in the standards of University education in Nigeria it is speculated that the admission policies are responsible for the situation. To confirm this an opinion survey involving 384 respondents sampled from eight (8) Universities in the South-South zone of Nigeria was

conducted. An instrument known as ‘Admission Policies and Effect on University Education Quality (APEUEQ)’ was used for gathering data after validation. The correlation coefficient reliability of the instrument was found to be 0.73. The chi-square data analysis method was applied. The finding showed that all the parameters of interest have contributed to the reduction of the quality of University education in Nigeria. The paper recommended a complete review of the admission policies and the establishment of more universities to meet the increasing demand for university education.

Ogunode, Akinlade and Abubakar, (2021) observed that even though these teaching staff/student ratios are provided by the benchmark based on carrying capacity, some universities admit students above the carrying capacity, thereby increasing the teacher/student ratio. This has a negative effect on the quality of university education in Nigeria.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent does institutional policies and quality assurance significantly enhances the correlates of entry requirements of undergraduates in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria?
2. To what extent does poor implementation of quality assurance policies significantly influences institutional entry requirements of undergraduates in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria?

Statement of Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were postulated and tested at .05 level of significance. They are;

Ho1: Institutional policies and quality assurance does not significantly enhances the correlates of entry requirements of undergraduates in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Ho2: Poor implementation of quality assurance policies does not significantly influences institutional entry requirements of undergraduates in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

The study adopted the descriptive research design. The research covered all public and private tertiary institutions. The population of this study comprise 350 students from three higher institutions in Cross River State. The sampling technique employed by the researcher in the selection of the sample was the simple random sampling technique. The questionnaire were designed to measure the three sub-independent variables. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the request questions. While Simple linear regression analysis statistical tool was employed to test

the null hypotheses that were formulated to guild the study at 0.05 level of significance.

Instrumentation:

A structured questionnaire designed by the researcher was used to collect the needed data in this study. This is titled “Institutional Policies and Quality Assurance as Correlates of Entry Requirements of Undergraduates (IPQACERUQ) questionnaire. The reliability of the instrument was determined, using the Cronbach Alpha method which involved 30 year one students who were not part of the sample used in the study. The reliability of the instrument was 0.76 reliability coefficient.

Sample and Sampling Procedure:

The stratified random sampling technique was used to select 225 year one students in selected schools which represents 5 percent of the accessible population comprising of 127 males and 98 females which gives the total sample size used for the study was 225 year one students in selected schools which represents 5 percent of the accessible population comprising used for the study. Contacts were made with the selected tertiary institutions where respondents were briefed on the aim and importance of the study and their cooperation solicited with regards to their responses to the

questionnaire items. The completed questionnaire which numbered up to 225 copies were retrieved the same day it was administered.

Validity of the Instrument:

The questionnaire was subjected to face validation by experts in Educational Measurement and a Senior lecturer of Educational Research and Statistics all of the University of Cross River State, (UNICROSS), Calabar. These experts scrutinized the relevance of the items in the instrument to the work, suitability of the number of items and appropriateness of the instrument in general to the purpose of the study and made useful correction.

Method of Data Analysis:

The research questions were answered using means score and standard deviations, while the hypotheses were tested using Multiple and Simple linear regression analysis statistical tool at alpha level of 0.05.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data in table 1 shows respondents demographic description. The result in table 1 shows that there were 127 (56.0%) males and 98 (44.0%) females.

Table 1: Demographic Description of Study Sample

Variable Name	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	127	56.0
	Female	98	44.0
	Total	225	100.0

The result in table 1 shows that there were 127 (56.0%) males and 98 (44.0%) females. Hence, the sample was considered heterogeneous enough for the study.

Data in table 2 reveals the descriptive statistics of study variables by gender. The result showed that freshmen’s adaptation to social activities has the highest mean score than freshmen’s adaptation to social relationship.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables by Gender

Variable Name	N		S.d	Sd. Error	Minimum	Maximum
Institutional policies and quality assurance	225	3.7156	.45216	.03014	3.00	4.00
Poor implementation of quality assurance policies	225	3.2844	.45216	.03014	3.00	4.00
Gender	225	1.5644	.49694	.03313	1.00	2.00

Institutional policies and quality assurance has the highest mean score of (x=3.7156) followed by Poor implementation of quality assurance policies with the mean score of (x=3.2844) and Gender (male and female students) was has the least mean score of (x=1.5644).

Data in Table 3 shows the results of multiple regression of institutional policies and quality assurance on entry requirements of undergraduates in Universities by student cut off mark, department, course of study, student gender, and student age.

Table 3: Multiple regression of institutional policies and quality assurance on entry requirements of undergraduates in Universities by student cut off mark, department, course of study, student gender, and student age

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square		Std. Error of the Estimate	
	.189 ^a	.036	.027		.05128	
Sources of variance		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Regression		779.777	1	155.955	4.311	.001 ^b
Residual		21016.826	224	36.174		
Total		21796.603	225			
Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	p-value	
(Constant)	32.280	3.177		10.161	.000	
Student age	.286	.111	.120	2.587	.010	
Student gender	.057	.117	.023	.482	.630	
Student cut off mark	-.204	.098	-.085	-2.076	.038	
Department	-.158	.069	-.093	-2.294	.022	
Course of study	.050	.089	.023	.559	.576	

*p<.05

It is obvious from the multiple regression analysis in Table 3 which gives an R-value of .189 was obtained, resulting in an R-squared value of .036. This means that the variation in and Student cut off mark, department, Student gender, student age, and Course of study on institutional policies and quality assurance on entry requirements collectively accounted for about 360% of the total variation in entry requirements of undergraduates in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. Thus, the p-value (.001) associated with the computed F-value (4.311) is less than .05. As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that, student cut off mark, department, student gender, student age, institutional policies and quality assurance significantly influence the entry requirements of undergraduates in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. To test the significance of the combination of both the regression

constant (32.280) and the regression coefficient for student age (.286), student gender (.057), student cut off mark, (-.204), department (-.158) and Course of study (.50), making significant contribution in the predict model that is, prediction of (t = -.000, .010, .630, .038, .022, and .576 p=.000 ≤ p ≥ .576), thus the mathematical relationship (predict model) is depicted by the following equation $y=32.280, .286_1, .057_2, -.204_3, -.158_4, \text{ and } .050_5x$ where y = student age, Student gender, Student cut off mark, department and Course of study and x is institutional policies and quality assurance.

Data in Table 4 shows Simple linear regression of significant influences of institutional entry requirements of undergraduates in Universities by Poor implementation of quality assurance policies.

Table 4: Simple linear regression of significant influences of institutional entry requirements of undergraduates in Universities by Poor implementation of quality assurance policies

R-value = .707 R-squared = .500			Adj. R-Squared = .499 Standard. Error = .0027		
Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F-value	p-value
Regression	42.500	1	42.500	338.000	.000
Residual	42.500	224	.126		
Total	85.000	225			
Predictor variable	Unstandardized coefficient		Std. coefficient	t-value	p-value
	B Std. Error				
Constant	3.500	.110		31.682	.000
Poor implementation of quality assurance policies	-.500	.027	-.707	-18.385	.000

Significant at .05 level (P<.05)

The results in Table 4 show that an R-value of .707 was obtained, giving an R-squared value of .500. This means that about .05% of the total variations in institutional entry requirements of undergraduates is accounted for by the variation in Poor implementation of quality assurance policies. The P-value (.000) associated with the computed F-value (.000) is less than .05. As such, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that Poor implementation of quality assurance policies significantly influences institutional entry requirements

of undergraduates in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. Poor implementation of quality assurance policies is a positive predictor because of the negative unstandardized beta coefficient .021. The regression constant (3.500) makes significant contribution in the regression model (t=31.682, p=.000).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of this study shows that institutional policies and quality assurance significantly enhances the

correlates of entry requirements of undergraduates in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria and Poor implementation of quality assurance policies significantly influences institutional entry requirements of undergraduates in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. This is in line with Ogunode, Akinlade and Abubakar, (2021) who found out in their study on Quality Assurance in Nigerian Public Higher Institutions, Challenges and a way forward that quality of higher education in Nigeria is falling and this is affecting the social, economic and technological development of the country because the higher institutions are saddled with the responsibilities of manpower development of the country. In order to address this problem, there are various agencies designed to ensure quality assurance in the various higher institutions. These agencies are been confronted with many challenges. This paper is aimed to examine the problems preventing quality assurance programme in Nigerian public higher institutions from achieving their goals. To achieve this, the researchers employed secondary data to justify the various points raised in the paper. Print materials and online publication were sorted and used in the paper. This paper identified; inadequate funding, shortage of academic staff, poor implementation of quality assurance policies, inadequate infrastructural facilities, brain-drain, strike Actions, corruption, weak supervision, poor staff development as problems preventing quality assurance in the Nigerian higher institutions. To ensure quality in the Nigerian higher institutions, the following have been suggested: adequate funding, employment of adequate academic staff, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, fight all forms of corruption practices, implement all agreement reached with the different union groups, motivate academic staff, effective supervision, effective staff development.

Punch, (2021) in Ogunode, Akinlade and Abubakar, (2021) reported that Afe Babalola (SAN), the founder of Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti, has observed that, the quality of education in Nigeria had degenerated to the extent that, many graduates cannot defend their certificates. Babalola, who expressed displeasure at the growing declining standards of education, particularly university education while Guardian newspaper (2019) in Ogunode, Akinlade and Abubakar, (2021) quoted the President and Chief Executive Officer, Postgraduate School of Credit and Financial Management, Chris in 2019 who expressed concern over the quality of Nigerian graduates, saying about 95 percent of them are not employable. He lamented that our present crops of graduates do not meet the need of the reality in the workplace and called for an urgent attention from all concerned to address the trend. It was observed that graduates from Nigerian universities are faced with problem of unemployment upon graduation (John, 2018) in Ogunode, Akinlade and Abubakar, (2021).

Megbo, and Ahaotu, (2015), noted that Nigerian Universities over the years have lagged behind in the performance of its formidable task due to the nature and dynamics of leadership as well as the political and economic environment of these institutions. Ogunode and Ahaotu (2020) observed that the low budgetary provision for the entire educational system also affects other agencies under the ministry that were created for particular functions like planning, inspection and monitoring. Inadequate funding is responsible for many challenges in the Nigerian educational system. The shortage of professional teachers in all the Nigerian institutions is link to poor funding, the infrastructural facilities gap in the system cannot be isolated from the problem of inadequate funding while the ineffective quality assurance and quality control can also be associated with poor funding of the institutions preventing them from be proactive and active in their duties and functions of ensuring quality assurance and quality control. The annual allocation for the educational sector is not adequate enough to provide the needed infrastructural facilities and employ professional teachers that will make it possible to achieve the prescribed students-teachers ratio in all the Nigerian schools.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that institutional policies and quality assurance significantly enhances the correlates of entry requirements of undergraduates in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria and Poor implementation of quality assurance policies does not significantly influences institutional entry requirements of undergraduates in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. Based on the conclusion, it was recommended that universities management should may formulate educational policies the will help in addressing problems of institutional policies and quality assurance in schools such as problem of student under age, Student cut off mark, departmental placement and inappropriate course of study.

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