

**DEREGULATION OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN PUBLIC
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study examines deregulation of educational services and quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers State. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted the correlational design as the working design. The population comprised 247 principals from the 247 public secondary schools in Rivers State and a sample size of 185 principals drawn with multistage sampling approach representing 75% of principals. The principals responded to a structured validated instrument titled Deregulation of Educational Services Questionnaire (DESQ) and Quality Assurance Questionnaire (QAQ) designed by the researchers and the reliability indexes using cronbach alpha method were 0.77 and 0.74 respectively. Simple regression was used to answer the research questions while t-test associated with simple regression was used to test the null hypotheses. It was concluded that deregulation of facilities and supervision predicted 5.20% and 3.70% of quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers State. The study therefore recommended that the government should deregulate the provision of facilities and supervision to enhance effective teaching and learning in secondary schools in Rivers State.

Keywords: Deregulation, Educational Services and Quality Assurance.

Introduction

Deregulation has to do with the reduction of government powers in allocating resources and production of goods and services. In the economic sense, it involves freedom from governmental control. Deregulation can be defined as the act of phasing out government interference in the administration of a system (Akinwumi, Isuku and Agwaranze, 2005). Deregulation of education therefore refers to a situation whereby government's control in providing and managing schools is highly limited. With reduction in government interference in the activities of secondary schools, quality can be assured. Quality assurance in the education system therefore is a multi-dimensional concept which deals with different functions and activities of the education system. It is also regarded to be a mechanism used to evaluate the efficiency and appropriateness in teaching and learning in secondary schools so as to ensure the delivery of high quality education (Sofowara, 2010). Quality assurance is actually in the

best position to turn around the present state of the Nigerian education system because it serves as a change agent to meet local needs and for global competitiveness after several quantities of mass failure and half-baked products from our various educational institutions.

According to Obioma (2012) Quality assurance in education is an encompassing concept which includes all inputs, processes and actions through which the quality of education is developed, improved and maintained. Education is an essential ingredient for growth and development, eradication of ignorance, superstition and poverty in the community and society at large. Secondary schools need physical facilities and equipment to make learning easy for the teachers and the students. Physical facilities therefore are the material resources that facilitate effective teaching and learning in the school. According to Osuji (2011), the physical appearance and entire state of school facilities are the areas of attention on which parents and friends of any school make their initial judgment about the quality of the school and what happens in them. These physical facilities are known to be those items of education which enhances instructional effectiveness for a skillful teacher so as to achieve a level that far exceeds what is possible when they are not there. Furthermore, Osuji (2011) described the physical facilities as the space interpretation of the school curriculum. The programmes of the school are known through the school site, the buildings, play grounds, the arrangement and design of the buildings. In other words, the school facilities should be well planned to fit into the scope of the curriculum and methods of instruction. Education facilities are necessary for developing the cognitive areas of knowledge, abilities and skills which are the requirements for academic progress.

School facilities are meant to control the environment and facilitate teaching and learning activities in a school and at the same time, protect the physical well-being of the occupants. Secondary schools are being disturbed by lack of financial and physical facilities because the buildings in most of our secondary schools today are unsafe or unsuitable for modern and functional education purposes. These objectives cannot be achieved to its full capacity as a result of poor equipment and infrastructures like poor libraries, poor laboratory, poor teaching environment and unsafe or non-existent accommodation for teachers and students. They also include insufficient classrooms, lockers, seats, offices for teachers, computer laboratory, science laboratory and dormitory for the students that come from far places. In some cases, some of our highly respected members of the community and the educational administrators collude with the contractors to embezzle the money meant for the construction or reconstruction of the physical facilities as is the case in Rivers state. Based on this, the government needs to give room for deregulation of these facilities to make it easy for secondary schools to be well equipped because they can't do it all. No wonder the Federal Government through the National policy on education welcomed the contribution of all stakeholders (Federal, state, local governments, private sectors and voluntary agencies) into funding of education. However, in its wisdom, the policy acknowledged the danger in this deregulation hence aptly stated "Government welcomes the participation of voluntary agencies, communities and private individuals in the establishment and management of post basic education provided the set standards are met" (FRN, 2008:33). This implies that deregulation does not connote complete abdication of responsibilities. The national goals of developing the secondary education system are such that provide satisfactory flow of men and women capable of acquiring the skills necessary to exploit to the fullest the natural resources

of the country. To achieve these goals, it is important to put in place these physical facilities in the right proportion in every secondary school such as buildings to shelter staff and students, laboratory facilities, sports /games facilities needed to develop the mental, social and physical aspects of the child.

There are three major areas of need corresponding to the three domains of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives which include the cognitive, affective and psychomotor (Osuji, 2011). Educational facilities are essential to build up the cognitive areas of knowledge, abilities and skills which are necessities for academic achievement. These facilities are needed to build values, commitment, positive emotions, social-interest in learners and also to develop the hands and muscles of learners. From observation, secondary schools will be easy to run if it is being deregulated so as to ease the provision of physical facilities such as classrooms, lockers, seats, offices for teachers, computer laboratory, science laboratory, library, dormitory and games and sports facilities for quality assurance.

Supervision can be defined as a complex process that has to do with working with teachers and other educators collaboratively to enhance the quality of teaching and learning within the schools and which also promotes the career long development of teachers (Beach and Reinhartz, 2000). There are a lot of institutional and governmental factors that impede efficiency and effectiveness in the Nigerian education system which includes the fact that supervisors are too few for the large number of schools they are expected to visit. There are also issues of inadequate facilities like poor transport facilities and in some cases, non-availability of basic things like paper for writing supervision reports, occupational hazards, administrative burden caused by heavy schedules of duty, poor finances of the inspectorate. All of these do not allow for easy execution of inspection duties, poor promotion prospects of inspectors of education and the more professionally/less professionally experienced dichotomy, which pitch school principals and supervisors against themselves at the expense of quality school supervision and quality assurance.

Other challenges faced by supervisors are poor remuneration, bribery and corruption, negligence of duties and absenteeism. Quality cannot be achieved with the above challenges. Based on this, it is necessary to deregulate school supervision/inspection. Deregulated supervision becomes imperative because, all the while, officials from the inspectorate division of the ministry of education and school principals have practically been involved in supervising schools. For there to be effective participation, government must relax its grip on school supervision and relax on such exercises, apart from handing over such functions to private supervising organizations and agencies. Deregulation of educational supervision also accommodates professionalization of supervision, whose absence could be responsible for the lowering standard of education in Nigeria (Nnabuo, 2003 and Abraham, 2003). Afangideh (2010) further opined that when education is completely deregulated and implementation takes place in this aspect of supervision, all educational stakeholders will take part completely in school supervision. Quality can be assured if deregulated professional supervision is implemented.

Statement of Problem

Educators have for long looked forward to the time when they will join other sectors of the economy in enjoying the benefits of deregulation which is about the most important requirement for the education sector to attain quality. The need for efficient quality assurance

techniques in secondary schools by principals is centered on the assumption that human beings are naturally lazy, dislike work and enjoy pleasures more than work. As such if educational services are deregulated, it may bring about quality assurance. Hence this study investigated if deregulation of educational services and supervision has a significant contribution to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research question was used to guide the study;

1. To what extent does deregulation of facilities contribute to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does deregulation of supervision contribute to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for this study:

Ho1: There is no significant contribution of deregulation of facilities to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Ho2: There is no significant contribution of deregulation of supervision to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Methodology

The design for the study was the correlational design. The population of the study comprised of all the principals from the 247 public secondary schools in Rivers States, from which a sample of 185 principals was drawn using the multistage sampling approach. The principals responded to two structured validated instruments titled deregulation of educational services Questionnaire (DESQ) and quality assurance Questionnaire (QAQ) designed by the researchers and its reliability coefficient was 0.76 using cronbach alpha method. Simple regression was used to answer the research questions while t-test associated with simple regression was used to test the null hypotheses.

Research Question One

To what extent does deregulation of facilities contribute to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Simple regression analysis on the extent deregulation of facilities contributes to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers State?

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard error of the estimate
1	0.228	0.052	0.047	5.539

$0.052 \times 100 = 5.20\%$. This shows that deregulation of facilities contributes only 5.20% to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers State. This simply means that deregulation of school facilities has not contributed significantly to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant contribution of deregulation of facilities to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers state.

Table 2: t-test associated with simple regression analysis on the extent deregulation of facilities contributes to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers state.

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	51.308	4.847		10.586	
Deregulation of facilities	0.474	0.152	0.228	3.130	0.002

Table 2 showed the probability value of 0.002 which is less than the alpha level of 0.05. Hence the hypothesis that there was no significant contribution of deregulation of facilities and quality assurance in secondary schools in Rivers State was rejected.

Research Question Two

To what extent does deregulation of supervision contribute to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 3: Simple regression analysis on the extent deregulation of supervision relates to quality assurance.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard error of the estimate
1	0.192	0.037	0.031	5.584

$0.037 \times 100 = 3.70\%$. This shows that deregulation of supervision contributes 3.70% to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers State. The remaining 96.30% cannot be accounted for by deregulation of supervision. This simply means that deregulation of supervision of public secondary school has not really contributed significantly to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant contribution of deregulation of supervision to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers state.

Table 4: t-test associated with simple regression analysis on the extent deregulation of supervision contributes to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers state.

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	83.599	6.608		12.652	
Deregulation of supervision	-0.407	0.156	-0.192	-2.605	0.010

Table 4 showed the probability value to be 0.010 which is less than the alpha value of 0.05. Hence there was no significant contribution of deregulation of supervision to quality assurance in secondary schools in Rivers State. Based on the above, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Deregulation of facilities and quality assurance

The findings revealed that respondents agreed to the fact that there is no significant contribution of deregulation of facilities to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers State. This is because deregulation of facilities has to do with the relaxation of government control over the provision of school facilities. According to Osuji (2011), the physical appearance and entire state of school facilities are the areas of attention on which parents and friends of any school make their initial judgment about the quality of the school and what happens in them. In support of this, Ezeocha (1990) in Osuji (2011) opined that school facilities are meant to control the environment and facilitate the teaching and learning activities in a school and at the same time, protects the physical well-being of the occupants.

If provision of facilities are deregulated, it brings about increase in the availability and quality of facilities which will in turn enhance the teaching/learning process. Findings from other researchers and from this study have shown that deregulation of facilities has a significant contribution on quality assurance which means that if the government relaxes its control over the provision of school facilities, there will be adequate provision of these facilities which are essential to build up the cognitive areas of knowledge, abilities and skills which are necessities for academic achievement and quality assurance.

Deregulation of Supervision and Quality Assurance

From the findings, respondents agreed to the fact that there is no significant contribution of supervision to quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers State because deregulation involves the process of working together to achieve quality in the school system. Beach and Reinhartz (2000) defined it as a complex process that has to do with working with teachers and other educators collaboratively to enhance the quality of teaching and learning within the schools and which also promotes the career long development of teachers. In line with this, Nnabuo (2003) and Abraham (2003) opined that deregulation of educational supervision accommodates professionalization of supervision, whose absence could be responsible for lowering the standard of education in Nigeria. In support of this, Afangideh (2010) posited that when education is completely deregulated and implementation takes place in this aspect of supervision, all educational stakeholders will take part in school supervision.

Other researchers are of the view that deregulation of supervision has a significant contribution on quality assurance and this is the finding of this study. In other words, it means that quality will be assured if deregulated professional supervision is implemented.

Conclusion

1. From the findings, it was concluded that deregulation of facilities contributed 5.20% to quality assurance and there was no significant contribution between deregulation of facilities and quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. The finding also showed that deregulation of supervision contributed 3.70% to quality assurance in public secondary schools and there was no significant contribution between deregulation of supervision and quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

1. Enlightenment campaigns should be carried out by the media and nongovernmental organizations on the importance of deregulation of educational services to ensure quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. Government at all level should holistically implement the policy of deregulation of educational services to enhance adequate delivery of services for the educational sector in Rivers State.
3. Principals, teachers and students should ensure effective use of deregulated education in order to enhance quality assurance in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

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