Funding as a Determinant of Quality Assurance for Business Studies Programme in Delta State Central Senatorial District

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Abstract
The paper examined funding as a determinant of quality assurance for business studies programme in Delta State Central Senatorial District junior secondary schools, using an intact population of 244 business studies teachers. One research question and one research hypothesis each were used for the study while the instrument was a validated questionnaire containing twenty-one items. A test retest using Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient yielding a coefficient ‘r’ of 0.87 reliability was carried out using Business Studies teachers in Delta State South Senatorial District. All the 244 copies of the questionnaire and the items were duly completed and retrieved. Data collected were analysed using arithmetic mean (X) and standard deviation (SD) to answer the research question while z-test statistic was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The study found that funding is highly linked to quality assurance of business studies programme because it provides the resources required based on the concepts of input and output. The study also found that funding is needed for capacity building and carrying capacity of business studies programme. The implication is that funding which makes available the resources vital for a successful business studies programme is a good measure of quality assurance index. The paper, therefore, recommended that for quality assurance in business studies to be achieved and sustained in Delta State Central Senatorial District junior senior schools, there should be adequate, timely and sustainable funding.

Introduction
The Nigerian education system consists of primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The secondary level is made up of junior and senior secondary schools respectively. At the junior secondary school, Business Studies, which forms an integral part of the nation’s education delivery system, is offered as a subject with the following components: Shorthand, Typewriting, Commerce, Bookkeeping and Office Practice. Section 5 (24) of the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) provides for the subject. In Sections 41 and 42 of the National Policy on Education (FRN), business studies is a Pre-Technical and Vocational Education aimed at imparting vocational skills, commercial and economic development necessary for self-reliance and fulfilling some of the goals of Technical and Vocational Education. It also prepares students for higher order study such as Business Education in the constituent subjects requiring that minimum standards and/or competencies and skills should be attained by the students, the need for quality assurance through funding. As for funding, it deals with financing (Onojetah, 2011) whereby provision is made for every sphere of human endeavour, including education, that is based on the concepts of input and output that can be monitored and measured. Funding is related to budgeting and vice versa.

Quality assurance in educational issues has become dominant mainstream trends for some time; regulatory requirements relating to it have been incrementally embedded into policies at ‘macro’ (global level), ‘meso’ (national level) and ‘micro’ (institute/school level) (Aiden, Conroy & McNamara, 2006). Quality assurance is finding out what is being done is right and what needs to be changed to ensure that the services provided meet users’ needs and expectations. There is, therefore, quality assurance problem in business studies when the recipients cannot justify their attainment in the case of Nigeria. Uvah (2005) defined quality assurance as the level of achievement or standard against which to pass judgement. Quality assurance is the process for determining quality and it is defined as both fitness for purpose and fitness of purpose. Odejide (2007) explained that while fitness for purpose concerns education missions, fitness of purpose relates to education capacity to satisfy national goals. In this context, quality assurance deals with the totality of education activities and processes; input and output, including the assessment of facilities, resources and capacity development.

Quality assurance can be considered from the point of view of exception (distinctive, embodying excellence and passing a minimum set of standards), value for money (focusing on efficiency and effectiveness, measuring output against input) and transformation (a qualitative change; education is about doing something to the learner). It also deals with concepts like enhancing and empowering. The planned and systematic review process of an educational programme to determine whether acceptable standards of education and infrastructure are being maintained and facilitated are the main thrust of quality assurance (Vroeijenstijn, 1995a; CHEA, 2003). Availability of adequate human and material resources that are premised on funding is the subject of quality assurance (Obojede, 2009).

The nature and purpose of quality assurance are in the form of accountability and improvement approaches. Accountability which is a summative approach is central in quality assurance because it concerns rendering an account of what one is doing in relation to goals that have been set. Vroeijenstijn (1995b) argued that for each academic programme, it is possible to define standards or minimum requirements to be expected from the graduates. Such standards describe statements in either general or specific terms of the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitude to be demonstrated by successful graduates. In this regard, business studies graduates should be able to demonstrate some competencies and skills necessary for effectiveness and efficiency (Ahuanya & Ubabunu, 2006).

Quality assurance is a legitimate expectation that others have regarding services or processes in explicit terms that can be understood by those who have the need or right to understand the account. Accountability is linked to public information and judgements about the fitness and the soundness or level of satisfaction achieved. Quality assurance procedures for accountability purposes are based on criteria already set down by stakeholders; it implies the use of a summative approach. This demands for reports with
clear statements of outcomes, and such reports are published for public information and reaction (Middlehurst & Woodhouse, 1995a). Improvement approaches are formative in nature; they are aimed at promoting future performance rather than making judgements. The criteria and procedures used are intended to improve and strengthen quality.

Drill (2000) stated that quality assurance places attention on enhancing teaching and learning on educational matters. They also help to clarify responsibilities for quality in teaching and learning at the individual, institutional, educational and national levels. By so doing, stakeholders are able to assess education quality as to whether acceptable levels are being recorded and sustained. Besides, Aidan, Conroy & McNamara (2006) observed that the nature of present day education has prompted a paradigm shift in language that adopts and embeds 'business speaks'. Explaining business speaks further, Pring in Aiden, Conroy & McNamara (2006) stated that it identifies certain keywords such as value for money. According to them, this focuses on what Lyotard calls 'performativity' which means applying an economic model with its inherent objectives and goals into an educational system. This is consistent with the input and output model of quality assurance (Tammaro, 2005). The model acknowledges the students as key 'customers' in the education sector (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003). This model is based on performance indicators; it regards resources in terms of funding which ranked second to educational programme design and curriculum/contents.

The link between quality assurance and funding of education as regards the offering of business studies at the junior secondary school level has been established in the studies by Harvey & Green (1993) and Watty (2003). According to them, quality assurance in education should be hinged on value for money as it focuses on efficiency and effectiveness; measuring output against input - a populist notion of quality. The value is said to reflect in performance indicators and resource availability as a result of growing pressure for public accountability (Ewell, 1999). El-Khawas, E., De Pietro Jurand, R. & Holm-Nielsen, L (1998) also noted that some countries in Europe and the US link decision-making on funding (whether in the level of funding or otherwise) to performance indicators that are visible in quality assurance. The OECD Thematic Review by Kis (2005) posited the existence of a correlation between funding and quality assurance in education matters generally. The conclusion by Gasper (2004) that poor funding has negative implications on accreditation in Lagos State Polytechnic is a direct reference to the fact that funding is linked to quality assurance in education.

The study by NUS (2001) revealed that linking funding to quality assurance (performance) no doubt has some advantages and disadvantages. Some authorities argued that funding for quality assurance is important for accountability and incentive for improvement; it is also good for educational research. For example, Middlehurst & Woodhouse (1995b) were emphatic on the need to link funding to quality assurance and vice versa for the purpose of accountability because governments have financial and political stake in education which is vital for national well-being and development. On the other hand, Woodhouse (1999) reported that the general view inside academia is that basing quality assurance review on funding would lead more to problems being concealed than solved. Brennan & Shah (2000), therefore, suggested an inverse relationship between funding and quality assurance.

Irrespective of the debate, there is a link between funding and quality assurance in business studies programme because it agrees with the definition provided by Kisunieni (2004) which stated that “quality assurance comprises the whole state of education policy (in an all-embracing manner), systems and processes which ensure good and high quality learning as part of the processes of vocational education and training”. Suffice it to say that business studies is an aspect of vocational education (FRN, 2004) which demands that students must demonstrate appropriate competencies and skills.

**Statement of the Problem**

Quality assurance in business studies programme presupposes that certain conditions and standards not only exist, but they are maintained. For this reason, there should be adequate funding to provide input such as infrastructure, facilities, carrying capacity, conducive learning environment, recruitment, motivation and capacity building of teaching staff, among others.

The question that arises is: can quality assurance for business studies programme be achieved without the required funding level to provide the desired input? Answer to this question is of great importance failing which the quest for quality assurance in business studies (as it is with other branches of education) will be wishful thinking. The effect is that business studies graduates will continue to be produced at the junior secondary school level contrary to the spirit and letter of the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004). There is also a problem if business studies graduates cannot proceed further, and if they lack the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies, they become dropouts. This has serious implications for national development.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate whether quality assurance for Business Studies programme in Delta State Central Senatorial District junior secondary schools is determined by funding. Specifically, the study assessed the perception of business studies teachers in the geographical coverage of the study on whether funding is a determinant of quality assurance in business studies programme.

**Research Question**

The following research question was raised to guide the study.

To what extent does funding serves as a determinant of quality assurance in business studies programme in Delta State Central Senatorial District junior secondary schools?
Hypothesis
The research hypothesis formulated to guide the study was:

There is no significant difference between the perception of male and female business studies teachers on funding as a determinant of quality assurance in business studies programme in Delta State Central Senatorial District junior secondary schools.

Method
The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study because it studied the opinions, beliefs, preferences and perceptions of individuals (Anyakoha, 2009 and Osuala, 2000). The design justifies its use because the study described and documented the present status of the existence of what was being investigated.

While the population for the study was all Business Studies teachers in government junior secondary schools in Delta State Central Senatorial District totaling 244, the entire population was used as the sample hence, an intact population.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire made up of Section ‘A’ which collected personal data and Section ‘B’ that elicited responses on the questionnaire items. The use of questionnaire for a study of this nature is justified by Anyakoha (2009) because the study pertained to persons. A 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) : 4 points, Agree (A) : 3 points, Disagree (D) : 2 points, and Strongly Disagree (SD) : 1 point, was used in Section ‘B’.

Three Business Education experts (one from Delta State University, Abraka and two from University of Benin, Benin City), face-validated the instrument before it was personally administered by the researcher with the assistance of three trained research assistants. To test for reliability, there was a test retest using Business Studies teachers in Delta South Senatorial District of Delta State. The results of the two tests were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient that yielded a coefficient ‘r’ of 0.87 that was considered adequate for the study. All the copies of the questionnaire administered and the items were completed, retrieved and analysed.

The weighted mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question while Z-test statistics was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Any item with mean score of 2.50 and above was regarded as agreed and any one below it was regarded as disagreed. In testing the hypothesis, where the calculated value was more than the critical table value, the hypothesis was rejected; it was accepted where the calculated value was less than the critical table value.

Result
The table below shows the result of the data collected from the respondents.

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of the Perception of Business Studies Teachers on Funding as Determinant of Quality Assurance for Business Studies Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Funding As A Determinant of Quality Assurance</th>
<th>Male X SD</th>
<th>Female X SD</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Funding can be used to assess the performance level of business studies graduates based on the concepts of input and output approach</td>
<td>2.89 0.86</td>
<td>2.77 0.95</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The use of appropriate strategies for teaching business studies programme can be achieved through sustainable funding</td>
<td>2.82 0.65</td>
<td>2.86 0.87</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Capacity building for quality assurance of business studies programme requires adequate funding</td>
<td>2.93 0.87</td>
<td>2.72 0.94</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Adequate funding will improve the carrying capacity of Junior Secondary Schools where business studies programme is offered</td>
<td>3.17 0.63</td>
<td>2.91 0.95</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Adequate funding of business studies programme is required to ensure ICT compliance for quality assurance</td>
<td>2.85 0.79</td>
<td>2.92 0.87</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Business studies teachers should be motivated through prompt payment of their salaries for quality assurance</td>
<td>2.85 0.75</td>
<td>2.75 0.91</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The entitlements of business studies teachers should be paid promptly to facilitate quality assurance</td>
<td>2.23 0.90</td>
<td>2.42 0.91</td>
<td>Dis-agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Adequate funding should be provided for the regular promotion of business studies teachers to facilitate quality assurance</td>
<td>2.35 0.81</td>
<td>2.46 0.95</td>
<td>Dis-agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Funding levels enable stakeholders to assess quality assurance mechanism of business studies programme delivery</td>
<td>2.88 0.73</td>
<td>2.81 1.00</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Funding is the single most important determinant of quality assurance of business studies Programme</td>
<td>3.04 0.89</td>
<td>2.81 0.93</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The result of quality assurance investigation of business studies programme should be directly linked to funding</td>
<td>3.10 1.36</td>
<td>2.81 0.91</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Linking quality assurance of business studies programme to funding is important for accountability</td>
<td>2.89 0.87</td>
<td>2.75 0.91</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Linking quality assurance of business studies programme to funding will not produce incentive for improvement</td>
<td>2.46 0.92</td>
<td>2.45 0.91</td>
<td>Dis-agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Linking quality in research in business studies programme to funding enhances quality assurance</td>
<td>2.85 0.95</td>
<td>2.74 0.93</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Wrong timing of fund releases for business studies programme could negatively affect quality assurance efforts</td>
<td>2.71 0.92</td>
<td>2.69 1.01</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 16  | The concepts of ‘forward funding’ where fund is
Discussion of Findings

The result of the study shows that there is no significant difference between the perception of male and female business studies teachers on funding being a determinant of quality assurance for business studies programme in the area covered by the study. The finding is consistent with the studies carried out in Europe (El-Khawas et al, 1998; Harvey & Green, 1993; Watty, 2003). Also, Ewell (1999) supports the link between funding and quality assurance. The presentation by Kis (2005) to the OECD Thematic Review of Tertiary Education indicated the existence of a positive correlation between funding and quality assurance in education at all levels, and that funding which provides the resources required for a successful educational programme is a good measure of quality assurance index. There is no way quality assurance in business studies offered in junior secondary schools can be measured without reference to the concepts of input and output that have to be considered in a continuum. Because funding is at the heart of any or every educational business, the Australian National Union of Students (NUS, 2001) had in their study, expressed worry in the trend of underfunding of education libraries considered as a major input in education but provided by funding. If accreditation which is a measure of quality assurance is based on available infrastructure, facilities and human capital, then funding cannot be separated from quality assurance; in this case, business studies programme. The concern of Gasper (2004) on the low level of funding in Lagos State Polytechnic which has negative implications on input vital for accreditation is also a case in point.

The quality of education received by business studies students can be seen in the level of cognitive skills they possess. This agrees with the human capital theory by Adedeji, as cited by Ahunanya & Ubabunu (2006), emphasized that education at all levels increases the eventual productivity and effectiveness of workers.

Conclusion

On a regular basis, quality assurance of education, including business studies in junior secondary schools is measured in order to determine whether acceptable standards are being achieved and maintained. Besides, the Nigerian society as a stakeholder in education matters generally is interested in quality assurance. Successful advancement in further education, especially in skill-related education programmes such as Business Education, Secretarial Education, Computer Education and Office Technology and Management (OTM) could be enhanced by the competencies, skills and knowledge acquired or achieved in business studies at the junior secondary school level. In considering quality assurance,
funding has been considered as an invaluable input that provides all that is needed failing which, the expected result cannot be attained.

Recommendations

To ensure that quality assurance is achieved in junior secondary school business studies programme in Delta State Central Senatorial District, the following recommendations are pertinent.

1. There should be adequate and sustainable funding of business studies programme by government to provide the required resources in terms of infrastructure, instructional facilities and conducive learning environment in accordance with the concepts of input and output.
2. Business Studies teachers should be motivated by promptly paying their salaries.
3. Fund releases for business studies programme should be promptly. 
4. The carrying capacity of junior secondary schools in the area studied should be improved and sustained through adequate funding.
5. To ensure and sustain capacity building for quality assurance of business studies programme, adequate funding should be made available as at when required.

References


National Union of Students (NUS, 2001). Submission to enquiry into the capacity of public universities to meet Australia’s higher education needs. NUS National Office, Carlton, South Victoria.


