SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR ENSURING QUALITY ASSURANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract
The study investigated the social and economic management strategies for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study and two hypotheses were tested. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study and the population of the study comprised 263 public secondary school principals. The instrument for data collection was a structured validated questionnaire which was subject to a pilot test. Data collected from the pilot test was analysed using Cronbach Alpha. The analysis yielded coefficient values of 0.86 for cluster 1 and 0.82 for cluster 2. The overall reliability coefficient value for the entire questionnaire was determined to be 0.84. Mean, standard deviations and t-test were used to analyze data for the study. Findings of the study revealed that encouraging open and effective communication between teachers, students, parents, and other personnel as well as creating a positive school culture that values respect are some of the social management strategies for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Findings also revealed that ensuring that funding are allocated to areas that have a direct impact on teaching and learning, establishing scholarship programmes to support financially disadvantaged but academically gifted students, actively seeking external funding sources, such as grants and donations, to supplement the school's budget are some of the economic management strategies for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The gender of the respondents did not influence their opinions. Based on these findings, the researchers recommended among others that Principals should prioritise and support open and effective communication among teachers, students, parents, and school workers.

Keywords: Social, Economic, Management, Strategies, Quality Assurance

Introduction

Education has been defined as all efforts made by a given society to accomplish certain objectives that are considered desirable in terms of an individual's own needs as well as the needs of the society where that education is based. The relationship between education and development is well established such that education is a key index of development. According to Osuji and Koko (2018), education is widely recognised as a powerful catalyst for transformation, impacting both individuals and entire societies, and it stands out as a formidable means for rapid socioeconomic progress and the establishment of stable political freedom on a global scale. According to Asiru (2014), education is a catalyst for the growth of individuals, society, and the nation as a whole. According to Dagbo (2014),

education is a crucial tool for social growth, development, and interaction of all aspects in society for economic, social, and political well-being.

Education is the cornerstone of national and economic prosperity in Nigeria. It serves as the foundation for achieving long-term development. This viewpoint is reflected in Nigeria's National Policy on Education. Pre-primary, primary, secondary and postsecondary education are available in Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2013). This study is mostly concerned with secondary education. Secondary school is the stage of education that comes after primary school and before higher education. Its importance arises from its role as a bridge between elementary and secondary education as well as an agency for teaching people for productive lives in society. . Secondary education, according to the FRN, is the education that students get after completing nine years of basic education. Secondary school education is the level of education that students get after finishing elementary school but before proceeding to higher education. According to FRN, the broad goals of secondary education in Nigeria are to prepare individuals for a meaningful life in society and higher study. The realization of the goals of secondary school education is dependent on the level of quality assurance in the secondary school system.

Quality assurance (QA) is the systematic process of assuring and sustaining high quality standards in products, services, or processes. It entails a set of planned activities and methods aimed at preventing flaws, errors, or shortcomings, ultimately leading to the delivery of superior and consistent results. QA plays an important role in numerous industries, including manufacturing, software development, healthcare, and many more, by emphasising the importance of quality at every level of production or service delivery. It often comprises actions like as quality control, testing, auditing, and process improvement to achieve or exceed defined quality objectives and client expectations. Oguntimehin et al. (2018) stated that quality assurance entails systematic monitoring, evaluating, regulating, and reporting of educational programmes and practises to ensure that acceptable standards are attained and maintained. According to Uthman and Mohammed (2018), quality assurance is the process of establishing attainable criteria for the instructional delivery process, organising, teaching, and learning activities, and ensuring that educational objectives are met. This process must be ongoing in order to ensure continual improvement in all elements of education business in a learning institution and to meet the demands and expectations of the institution's clients, learners, and the larger society (Epelle & Kalu, 2018). Quality assurance, according to Nwosu (2013), is the relatively measure of input, process, output, or learning outcome against a nationally accepted minimum standard. This means it is a process in which all of an institution's duties and operations are regarded equally, planned, regulated, and implemented in a methodical and scientific manner (Feldsman, 2017). Quality assurance in secondary schools in Nigeria refers to a systematic and organised method to ensuring that these schools provide a high grade of education and meet certain quality criteria. It includes a variety of metrics and methods targeted at enhancing the overall quality of education, student learning results, and the school environment. These metrics include:

a) Curriculum Development and Implementation: Creating a curriculum that is relevant, up-to-date, and connected with educational standards, as well as ensuring that it is given effectively to students.
b) Teacher Training and Professional Development entails providing teachers with the appropriate training as well as chances for ongoing professional development in order to improve their teaching abilities and knowledge.
c) Assessment and Evaluation: Creating reliable assessment methods to assess student development and the effectiveness of teaching methods, as well as utilising the data to improve.
d) Infrastructure and amenities: Ensuring that schools have enough physical infrastructure, including classrooms, libraries, labs, and other amenities that contribute to a positive learning environment.
e) Establishing excellent school management systems, leadership structures, and governance procedures to ensure efficient operation and accountability.
f) Student Support Services: Provides support services including as counselling, career counselling, and special education to students with a variety of needs.

g) Monitoring and Evaluation: Conducting inspections, reviews, and assessments on a regular basis to discover areas for improvement in the quality of education given.
h) Involving parents, community members, and other stakeholders in the educational process to foster a feeling of ownership and accountability.

Achieving quality assurance in public secondary schools in Nigerian in general and Anambra State in particular is dependent on the principals' ability to adopt effective socio-economic management strategies (Adetoye, 2016). Principals' social management strategies relate to the leadership approaches and techniques used by principals to effectively manage and improve the social aspects of their educational institutions (Ogalo et al., 2014). These strategies are aimed at creating a pleasant and supportive school climate, as well as strengthening relationships with various stakeholders and resolving social and interpersonal difficulties within the school community. According to Mualuko in Ogalo et al, social management strategies include the availability of adequate teaching and learning resources, instructors' continued professional development, the amount of contact hours with students, and a conducive learning environment. Furthermore, other social management strategies include effective communication, conflict resolution, team work, parental engagement, discipline and promoting inclusivity (Abdu-Raheem, 2015).

On the other hand, in order to ensure the smooth functioning of the school while making the best use of the financial resources at their disposal, school principals adopt economic management strategies that include careful financial planning, resource allocation, and budget management (Osuji & Koko, 2018). These strategies are essential to sustaining the school's financial stability and advancing its instructional purpose. Okere and Wike (2022) is the process of reaching a specific goal using the resources at hand. In support of this viewpoint, Eimuhi (2021) suggested that money is essential for school maintenance and everyday school management. Adequate financing and access to instructional resources and facilities improve the quality of teaching and learning. The availability and use of finances is a source of employee motivation and devotion to duty. However, the realization of quality assurance may not only be dependent on the application of socio-economic management strategies of principals. Gender's participation in the implementation of socioeconomic management strategies for quality assurance in Anambra State, Nigeria, is a complicated and varied component of educational leadership. Gender can have an impact on how principals approach and implement these techniques, as well as the consequences and efficacy of their efforts. This therefore demands an empirical investigation. It is against this background that the researchers investigated the social and economic management strategies for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Statement of the Problem

Quality assurance in public secondary schools is critical for students' overall development and future possibilities. The quality of education in public secondary schools in Anambra State, as in many other locations, has been a source of concern. One of the most pressing issues for principals in the state is a lack of resources for public secondary schools. Infrastructure, teaching materials, and human resources are all included. Principals' ability to execute socioeconomic management measures that could improve educational quality is hampered by a lack of resources. The absence of suitable infrastructure and facilities in the state's public secondary schools is a significant concern. Inadequate classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and other key amenities impede learning, making it difficult for principals to ensure a high level standard of education. Students from Anambra State, like many other states, come from families of different socioeconomic background. Some children come from low-income families, which might have an impact on their academic achievement. This seems to affect their ability to attend classes and impact on the quality of secondary schools in the State. The researcher is worried that if this situation continue to persist it would negatively impact on the development of secondary education in Anambra State in particular and Nigeria in general. It is against this backdrop that the researchers investigated the social and economic management strategies for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the social management strategies for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?
2. What are the economic management strategies for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the social management strategies for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the economic management strategies for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Method

The study employed a descriptive survey design as its research methodology. The study population consisted of 263 principals of public secondary schools in Anambra State. In this case, the entire population was included in the study since the population was considered manageable for data collection purposes. To gather data for the study, a structured questionnaire was developed by the researcher. The instrument was titled "Questionnaire on Socio-Economic Management Strategies for Ensuring Quality Assurance in Public Secondary Schools (QSEMSEQAPSS)." The instrument is made up of two parts; Part A and B. Part a contains information relating to principal's gender while Part B contains 20 items based on the two research questions. The questionnaire utilized a 4-point rating scale, which included the following options: Strongly Agree (Strongly Agree), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was validated by three experts in the faculty of education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding coefficient values of 0.86 for cluster 1 and 0.82 for cluster 2. The researcher administered the questionnaire by visiting the respondents in their offices and they were given enough time to fill the instrument before it was retrieved on the spot. Out of the 263 copies of questionnaire administered, 241 copies were returned in good condition and were used for the collection of data for the study. Specifically, mean and standard deviation were employed to analyze the research questions. In analyzing the mean, any questionnaire item that received a mean rating of 2.50 or higher was considered agree. Conversely, item with mean rating less than 2.50 was considered disagree. For the hypotheses, t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. If the p-value is equal to or greater than the alpha value of 0.05, it means that there is no significant difference. The hypothesis was accepted. Consequently, if the p-value is less than the alpha value of 0.05, it means that there is a significant difference, therefore the hypothesis is not accepted.

Results

Research Question One

What are the social management strategies for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1

Respondents' Mean Ratings on the Social Management Strategies for Ensuring Quality Assurance in Public Secondary Schools (N=241)

S/No.	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Encouraging open and effective communication between teachers, students, parents, and other personnel.	3.54	.80	Agree
2.	Creating a positive school culture that values respect.	3.40	.87	Agree
3.	Encouraging students and staff to practise principles such as respect, tolerance, and empathy.	3.21	.85	Agree
4.	Reinforcing positive behaviour while dealing with disciplinary issues quickly and fairly.	3.30	.84	Agree

5.	Promoting peaceful resolutions and ensuring that disputes do not disrupt the learning process.	3.12	.86	Agree
6.	Encouraging teamwork by providing opportunities for professional development.	3.19	.76	Agree
7.	Establishing strong connections by ensuring that parents are actively involved in their children's education.	3.28	.82	Agree
8.	Providing guidance and assistance to students as they overcome academic and emotional problems	3.20	.81	Agree
9.	Creating an environment in which students from diverse backgrounds feel welcomed, appreciated, and respected.	3.00	.80	Agree
10.	Providing opportunities for training, workshops, and conferences to help educators improve their skills and knowledge, which directly adds to better teaching quality.	3.17	.89	Agree
	Cluster Mean	**3.24**		**Agree**

Data in Table 1 revealed that the respondents rated all items (1-10) as agree with mean rating ranging between 3.00 and 3.54 as the social management strategies for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The standard deviation scores ranging between .76 and .89 indicate that the respondents' opinions were related. The cluster mean of 3.24 indicated that encouraging open and effective communication between teachers, students, parents, and other personnel, creating a positive school culture that values respect, reinforcing positive behaviour while dealing with disciplinary issues quickly and fairly, establishing strong connections by ensuring that parents are actively involved in their children's education and encouraging students and staff to practise principles such as respect, tolerance, and empathy are the social management strategies for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question Two

What are the economic management strategies applied by principals for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 2
Respondents' Mean Ratings on the Economic Management Strategies for Ensuring Quality Assurance in Public Secondary Schools (N=241)

S/No.	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Remarks
11.	Ensuring that funding are allocated to areas that have a direct impact on teaching and learning	3.60	.81	Agree
12.	Actively seeking external funding sources, such as grants and donations, to supplement the school's budget	3.51	.77	Agree
13.	Engaging in cost-effective procurement practices, including bulk purchasing	3.46	.88	Agree
14.	Ensuring that fee structures are fair and clear, and that arrears and overdue payments are kept to a minimum.	3.37	.82	Agree
15.	Investigating prospects for public private partnerships to gain access to extra resources and expertise.	3.09	.89	Agree
16.	Ensuring that existing resources, including human resources, are utilized efficiently.	3.11	.80	Agree
17.	Establishing scholarship programmes to support financially disadvantaged but academically gifted students	3.52	.78	Agree
18.	Implementing stringent financial management practises, such as regular audits and open financial reporting.	3.23	.91	Agree
19.	Allocating funds for the continuous professional development of teachers and staff	3.10	.80	Agree
20.	Setting aside money for the repair of the schools infrastructure like classrooms, labs, and libraries.	3.08	.86	Agree
	Cluster Mean	**3.30**		**Agree**

Data in Table 2 revealed that the respondents rated all items (11-20) as agree with mean rating ranging between 3.00 and 3.54 as the economic management strategies applied by principals for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The standard deviation scores ranging between .77 and .91 indicate that the respondents' opinions were related. The cluster

mean of 3.30 indicated that ensuring that funding are allocated to areas that have a direct impact on teaching and learning, establishing scholarship programmes to support financially disadvantaged but academically gifted students, actively seeking external funding sources, such as grants and donations, to supplement the school's budget, engaging in cost-effective procurement practices, including bulk purchasing and ensuring that fee structures are fair and clear, and that arrears and overdue payments are kept to a minimum are the economic management strategies for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the social management strategies for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 3

Summary of t-test Analysis of Mean Ratings of Male and Female Principals on the Social Management Strategies for Ensuring Quality Assurance in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	ά	p-value	Decision
Male Principals	74	3.11	.82				
				239	.05	.15	Not Significant
Female Principals	167	3.28	.87				

Data in Table 3 showed that the p-value of .15 is greater than .05 alpha level of significance. This means that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the social management strategies for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The hypothesis was therefore accepted.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the economic management strategies for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Table 4

Summary of t-test Analysis of Mean Ratings of Male and Female Principals on the Economic Management Strategies for Ensuring Quality Assurance in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	ά	p-value	Decision
Male Principals	74	3.19	.80				
				239	.05	.13	Not Significant
Female Principals	167	3.36	.82				

Data in Table 4 showed that the p-value of .13 is greater than .05 alpha level of significance. This means that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the economic management strategies for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The hypothesis was therefore accepted.

Discussion

The findings of the study showed that encouraging open and effective communication between teachers, students, parents, and other personnel, creating a positive school culture that values respect, reinforcing positive behaviour while dealing with disciplinary issues quickly and fairly, establishing strong connections by ensuring that parents are actively involved in their children's education and encouraging students and staff to practise principles such as respect, tolerance, and empathy are the social management strategies for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The findings of the study are in agreement with Ogalo et al (2014) who reported that fostering a pleasant and encouraging school environment, enhancing connections with key stakeholders, and addressing social and interpersonal issues within the school community. Adetoye (2016) asserted that in order to ensure quality control, it is crucial to develop a respectful school atmosphere. Respectful relationships between students, teachers, and staff establish a feeling of community and motivate everyone to work together to achieve shared objectives. The learning process as a whole may be

considerably impacted by this encouraging environment. According to Onuma and Okpalanze (2017), disseminating information, resolving issues, and fostering an atmosphere of openness among the school community are all made possible by effective communication. Furthermore, there is no statistically significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the social management strategies applied for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The finding of the study showed that principals irrespective of their gender did not differ in their opinion on the social management strategies applied for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Ogalo et al (2014) stated that the ways principals can apply social management strategies is by creating an environment that is supportive of high-quality education and overall development for their students by emphasising open communication, fostering a positive school culture, dealing with behaviour issues effectively, actively involving parents and promoting values like respect and empathy.

The findings of the study revealed that ensuring that funding are allocated to areas that have a direct impact on teaching and learning, establishing scholarship programmes to support financially disadvantaged but academically gifted students, actively seeking external funding sources, such as grants and donations, to supplement the school's budget, engaging in cost-effective procurement practices, including bulk purchasing and ensuring that fee structures are fair and clear and that arrears and overdue payments are kept to a minimum are the economic management strategies for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This finding is in line with Okere and Wike (2022) who stated that process of reaching a specific goal using the resources at hand. To support this point of view, Eimuhi (2021) stated that money is necessary for school maintenance and day-to-day school management. Adequate funding and access to instructional resources and facilities improve teaching and learning quality. The finding of the study further revealed that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female principals on the economic management strategies applied for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The finding of the study showed that principals irrespective of their gender did not differ in their opinion on the economic management strategies applied for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This is in agreement with Osuji and Koko (2018) who reported that school principals employ economic management strategies such as rigorous financial planning, resource allocation, and budget management to maintain the smooth operation of the school while making the best use of the financial resources at their disposal.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that principals apply a mix of social and economic management strategies for ensuring quality assurance in public secondary schools. Principals play a critical role in adopting these measures to foster quality education and overall student development. It is therefore imperative that efforts are made to ensure the continued application of social and economic management strategies for ensuring quality assurance in secondary schools.

Recommendations

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

1. Principals should prioritise and support open and effective communication among teachers, students, parents, and school workers. To increase openness and involvement, regular meetings, feedback systems, and clear routes of communication should be developed.
2. Encouraging and supporting good connections between parents and the school should remain a focus. Principals can accomplish this through holding regular parent-teacher conferences, workshops, and integrating parents in school events.
3. Principals should ensure that funds are spent wisely, with a particular emphasis on areas that have a direct impact on teaching and learning. This entails prioritising classroom resources, educational materials, and teacher training.
4. Principals should actively pursue external financing sources, such as grants and contributions, to complement the school's budget. This can assist bridge funding shortages and provide more resources for school upgrades.

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