Roles of Academic Administrators in Enhancing Lecturers’ Quality Service Delivery in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State

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ABSTRACT
The study examined the roles of academic administrators in enhancing lecturers’ quality service delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Two (2) research questions and two (2) hypotheses were answered and tested in the study respectively. The study adopted descriptive survey design, with a population of three hundred and ninety-two (392) academic administrators in seven (7) public tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The sample of the study comprised 392 academic administrators from the seven public tertiary institutions using the census technique. The respondents of study responded to a validated 30-item instrument titled “Roles of Academic Administrators in Enhancing Lecturers’ Quality Service Delivery Questionnaire (RAAELQSDQ) designed by the researcher and patterned after four point modified likert rating scale model with a reliability coefficient index of 0.80, obtained using Cronbach Alpha Statistics. 392 copies of the instrument were administered to the respondents only 348 were retrieved which represented 89% retrieval rate. Mean and standard deviation statistics was used to answer the research questions, while z-test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. It was concluded that the success of any institution depends on the quality of its leadership as leaders influence, inspire, motivate and direct the actions of academic and non-academic staff towards achieving the goals and objectives of the institutions. It was recommended that effort should be made by the government, academic administrators and other stakeholders of the tertiary institutions to provide well equipped functional libraries and laboratories, and current reading reference materials and equipment. This will help to improve and enhance the attitude of lecturers to academic work because the teaching experiences of the lecturers can become more meaningful and at the same time interesting; the leadership of tertiary institutions should engage in behaviours that develop school climate that supports academic achievement of students to gain staff commitment, engender high expectations, supervise individual teachers work in schools and entire instructional programme.

Keywords: academic administrators, Quality Service Delivery, tertiary institutions

INTRODUCTION
Tertiary institutions of learning are places for the impartation of desirable knowledge, skills and attitudes that are profitable to students and to society at large. These institutions continuously build on the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes learnt at the lower levels of education to make the citizens live and function as productive members of the society, earning a living and contributing to societal progress. These institutions imbibe what is relevant to the needs of their environment and the people they serve. Thus, the crucial roles that tertiary institutions play in the educational, cultural, political and socio-economic development of nations in the 21st century cannot be over-emphasized.
The Nigerian tertiary educational system has experienced quantitative expansion from one tertiary institution in 1934 to about 570 public and private higher institutions of learning in the country (Abali, 2018). As at the year 2014, Nigeria has recorded the establishment of one hundred and twenty-eight (128) universities, seventy-five (75) polytechnics, sixty-three (63) colleges of education, ninety-nine (99) approved innovation enterprise institutions (IEIs), fifty (50) colleges of health technology and allied institutions, and twenty-seven (27) monotechnics and specialized institutions (Jaja, 2015). Indeed, Nigerians can boast of significant increase in the number of tertiary institutions in the country but the issues facing their effective administration remain unresolved.

The smooth running of higher institutions demands highly organized friendly and approachable administrators who are passionate about making a difference in the education sector. Common roles of administrators are to ensure that the schools, academic and non-academic staff are collaborating towards a common goal while improving standards and opportunities. Together, with proper leadership, the tertiary educational system can meet goals set forth by the governing boards and foster students that are highly educated and prepared to face future challenges. The administrators of tertiary institutions are those in control of the institutions, which includes the management and maintenance of staff, students, school facilities, time and health and safety practices. The adequate management of these variables would improve the institutions’ standards and achievement of set goals and objectives.

The administrative authorities in tertiary institutions are individuals with administrative responsibilities such as the Vice Chancellors, Provosts, Rectors, Deans, Head of Departments and others who establish mechanisms to accomplish institutional policies. With their active participation in the management of educational resources in the system, individuals as well as institutional goals and objectives would be achieved (Chinasa & Ukaigwe, 2017). The administrative heads of the various faculties and departments such as the Deans, the Head of Departments and others are the academic administrators. They ensure that academic activities in the institutions are conducted in line with set standards. All of these can be either centrally based or within faculties, departments or other smaller units.

Within the confines of this study, effective supervision, effective communication, adequate resources provision, and effective leadership are roles of academic administrators that are geared towards enhancing lecturers’ quality service delivery in tertiary institutions. With regard to the current educational policy of the federal government of Nigeria, effective supervision is overseeing the work of teachers with the aim of assisting them to solve their instructional problems so that students can benefit maximally from classroom activities (Igwe, 2005). This can be effected with the involvement of the academic administrator (supervisor) or any other official appointed by interacting with the teachers and students in the classroom/lecture halls regularly to monitor the teaching and learning process. Consequently, Nwagwu (2004) asserts that the supervisor has the responsibility of monitoring and evaluating all staff activities and programmes of their organization. The major reason for this is to ensure dutiful compliance of all staff with established laws and declared goals through quality assurance, maintenance of standards and quality control.

The need for effective communication in a formal organization such as the tertiary educational system cannot be over emphasized. Wilson (1997) points out that communication helps to make meaning out of unclear situation and also helps to reduce the level of uncertainty in an organization. When information is shared properly and using the right medium, it allows all employees in the organization to be abreast of what they are expected to do in the workplace. This is why Ayatse (2005) points out that the essence of communication in an organization is to convey the goals and objectives of the organization to the employees. The members of the organization therefore work towards the actualization of the goals of the organization when the mode of communication used is very effective or appropriate.

The provision of adequate material resources constitutes one of the important educational resources that academic administrators need to provide for academic staff for quality service delivery. Materials resources are important as they help to ease the process of teaching and learning. Material resources such as utilities and equipment provide the enabling environment for academic staff to teach and conduct meaningful research work. When material resources are not provided by the administrators, the academic staffs are either compelled to acquire these facilities from their personal resources or abstain from work
since the environment is not suitable enough. Abdullahi, Yussof and Gwamna (2017) point out that the condition of the ceiling, floor, walls, windows and doors has a great influence on academic staff’s method of instruction delivery. There are academic staffs who find it difficult to go to the lecture halls because the floor, walls, doors, windows and other facilities do not provide the needed comfort. This has compelled most lecturers in tertiary institutions to use their offices for teaching and learning activities.

Effective leadership is a sine-qua-non to quality service delivery in the tertiary educational system in Nigeria. Leadership in any organization implies the action and interaction with persons and things with a view to attaining specific objectives. It is the ability to plan, control, direct and coordinate the activities of school involving both human and material resources for achieving school goals. Hoy and Miskel (2008) aver that leadership is a social influence process that is comprised of both rational and emotional elements.

It is a process of social influence in which one person is able to enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task. Thus, leadership is the single most important factor in the success or failure of institutions (Bass in Hoy & Miskel, 2008) and is the major ingredient in achieving school improvement (Pepple, 2016). The quality delivery of school services depends to a large extent on the leadership quality of the academic administrator. Osiebe in Asiyai (2010) argues that poor leadership of some administrators by not involving staff members in the process of decision making which invariably causes a bridge in communication may affect service delivery.

One of the measures for a higher institution of learning to attain a comparative advantage is to deliver quality services. Increase in the competition among higher institutions which attracts highly qualified staff and students towards achieving high academic profiles is forcing, them to pay more attention to service quality issues (Green, 2014). Service delivery is a set of principles, standards, policies and constraints to be used to guide the designs, development, deployment, operation and retirement of services delivered by a service provider with a view to offering a consistent service experience to a specific user community in a specific business context. Benedict (2014) avers that the capabilities of a service provider are arranged into services that will take an effective leadership strategy to ensure services delivered are of the best quality. To be effective, services possess these attributes communication status, reliability status, responsibility status, accessibility status, competence status, courtesy status, credibility status, understanding the recipient and security.

Benedict (2014) avers that service delivery in tertiary institutions includes among others record management, safety and health, extramural activities, and guidance and counselling. The researcher views service delivery as all the activities pertaining to effective teaching and learning provided by the schools in attaining set standards. Aldridge and Rowley (2001) state that when students perceive that institutions quality and standardized learning environment are facilitated with intellectual faculty as well as appropriate facilities of learning and infrastructure, their interest in the institution will explicitly be retained wherein their motivation reflects both the academic and administrative efficiency of the particular institution. The desire of parents is to bequeath qualitative and functional education to their children. This is in compliance with the axiomatic truth that quality education is the only permanent legacy that parents can pass on to their children to ensure their future success (Abbas, 2016).

According to Plank in Mputhia (2014), it is likely that students base their continued enrolment in tertiary colleges and universities in part, on how well an institution’s programmes and services meet their expectations. When students are dissatisfied with an institution’s services, they are likely to defect to competitive institutions. The aim of every tertiary institution is to be committed to excellence; therefore, this study is to highlight the roles of academic administrators in enhancing lecturers’ quality service delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria.

**Statement of the Problem**

Nigerians have raised the issue that the country’s tertiary educational system has, in the contemporary period experienced quantitative expansion but the issues facing the administration of tertiary institutions in rendering quality service delivery have remain unresolved. Despite the critical position of the tertiary educational system to the development of the Nigerian economy, its potential in enhancing the attainment of the nation’s national goals is frequently thwarted by poor quality service delivery and their attendant
challenges. There has been a lot of debate about the quality of service delivery in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Scholars are in agreement that the quality of tertiary education is falling (Abali, 2018). There is the issue of poor leadership of some university administrators by not involving staff members in the process of decision making which invariably causes a bridge in communication and affect service delivery (Abali & Asodike, 2012).

Okeke in Chuu-Uzomah (2014) asserts that for leadership to make impact on management effectiveness, it ought to be abreact with the strategic mindset and new leadership skills required in the digital age. In addition, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCED, 2008) report on improving school leadership attests that there is a growing concern that the role of school leader designated for the industrial age has not changed enough to deal with the complex challenges schools are facing in the 21st century. This is indeed a great concern that needs be tackled headlong to save the schools from approximate entropy. Thus, the need to take a cursory examination of the role of academic administrators in enhancing lecturers’ quality service delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State and giving empirical explanations to the trend is the bane of this study.

**Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the roles of academic administrators in enhancing lecturers’ quality service delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to examine the:

1. Extent to which academic administrators’ supervision role enhances lecturers’ quality service delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.
2. Extent to which academic administrators’ communication role enhances lecturers’ quality service delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were posed to guide this study:

1. To what extent does academic administrators’ supervisory role enhance lecturers’ quality service delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does academic administrators’ communication role enhance lecturers’ quality service delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

**Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide this study at 0.05 level of significance:

**H₀₁:** There is no significant difference in the mean responses of federal and state tertiary institutions’ academic administrators on the extent their supervisory role enhances lecturers’ quality service delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

**H₀₂:** There is no significant difference in the mean responses of federal and state tertiary institutions’ academic administrators on the extent their communication role enhances lecturers’ quality service delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

**METHODOLOGY**

The researcher adopted the descriptive survey research design with a population of three hundred and ninety two (392) academic administrators in seven (7) public tertiary institutions in Rivers State, namely the Rivers State University (89), the University of Port Harcourt (120), the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (57), Federal College of Education (Technical) Omoku (44), Rivers State College of Health Science and Technology (29), Ken Saro Wiwa Polytechnic (29) and Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic (24). The sample comprised the three hundred and ninety two (392) academic administrators in public tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

The instrument for data collection for this study was a 30-item self-structured questionnaire titled “Role of Academic Administrators in enhancing Lecturers’ Quality Service Delivery Questionnaire (RAAELQSDQ).” The instrument was designed using the four point modified Likert rating scale response pattern of Very High Extent (VHE) = 4 points, High Extent (HE) = 3 points, Low Extent (LE) = 2 points, Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1 point.
The reliability co-efficient was established at 0.80 using Cronbach Alpha Statistics. The 392 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents, only 348 copies were correctly filled and retrieved representing 89% retrieval rate. Data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation statistics to answer the research questions while z-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Decisions were taken based on the mean boundary limits of the four response pattern of VHE, HE, LE and VLE. Any value from 3.50 – 4.00 was regarded as Very High Extent, any value from 2.50 – 3.49 was regarded as High Extent, any value from 1.50 – 2.49 was regarded as Low Extent, and any value from 0.50 – 1.49 was regarded as Very Low Extent. A null hypothesis was accepted if the calculated z-value was less than the critical z-value of 1.96 and rejected if the calculated z-value was greater than the critical z-value of 1.96.

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<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>FEDERAL</th>
<th>STATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Port Harcourt</td>
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<td>120</td>
<td>120</td>
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<td>Federal College of Education</td>
<td>Ignatius Ajuru University of</td>
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<td>44</td>
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<td>Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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RESULTS

Research Question 1
To what extent does academic administrators’ supervisory role enhance lecturers’ quality service delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

Table 1: Response on the Extent to which Academic Administrators’ Supervisory Role Enhances Lecturers’ Quality Service Delivery in Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Questionnaire Items</th>
<th>Federal Academic Administrators N=154</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
<th>State Academic Administrators N = 194</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$X_F$ 0.83</td>
<td></td>
<td>$X_S$ 1.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Lecturers are motivated towards performing their duties optimally in terms of achievement of stated aims and objectives of the school.</td>
<td>3.14 0.83</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
<td>2.87 0.98</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Lecturers are assisted to solve their instructional problems so that students can benefit maximally from classroom activities</td>
<td>3.08 0.88</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
<td>2.71 1.13</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Lecturers are made aware of various resources that can help improve their teaching functions.</td>
<td>3.03 0.98</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
<td>2.65 1.12</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Lecturers are helped to evolve various approaches of teaching to enhance their delivery.</td>
<td>2.99 0.97</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
<td>2.59 1.11</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Lecturers are helped to evolve an ideal classroom for the learning process.</td>
<td>3.03 0.96</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
<td>2.64 1.19</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Lecturers grow professionally as they interact and gain knowledge.</td>
<td>3.10 0.92</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
<td>2.65 1.09</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Lecturers are helped to isolate areas of strength that require further development.</td>
<td>3.12 0.90</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
<td>2.57 1.03</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Lecturers are helped to discover areas of improvisation in order to facilitate good teaching.</td>
<td>3.16 0.86</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
<td>2.95 1.00</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The data on table 1 revealed the responses on the extent to which academic administrators’ supervisory role enhance lecturers’ quality service delivery. Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 with mean values of 3.14, 3.08, 3.03, 2.99, 3.03, 3.10, 3.12, 3.16 and standard deviation values of 0.83, 0.88, 0.98, 0.97, 0.96, 0.92, 0.90, 0.86 for federal academic administrators; and mean values of 2.87, 2.71, 2.65, 2.59, 2.64, 2.65, 2.57, 2.95 and standard deviation values of 0.98, 1.13, 1.12, 1.11, 1.19, 1.09, 1.03, 1.00 for state academic
administrators respectively fell within the range of high extent. Therefore, with a grand mean of 3.08 for federal academic administrators and 2.70 for state academic administrators, it was evident that federal and state tertiary institutions’ academic administrators agreed that their supervisory role to a high extent enhances lecturers’ quality service delivery in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
On the extent to which academic administrators’ supervisory role enhances lecturers’ quality service delivery, the findings of this study revealed that lecturers are motivated towards performing their duties optimally in terms of achievement of stated aims and objectives of the schools; lecturers are assisted to solve their instructional problems so that students benefit maximally from classroom activities; lecturers are made aware of various resources that can help improve their teaching functions, and lecturers are helped to evolve various approaches of teaching to enhance their delivery. These findings agree with the assertion of Olele (2009) that personnel supervision deals with the set of activities which are carried out by the supervisor with the basic aim of sensitizing, mobilizing and motivating staff in the school towards performing their duties optimally in terms of the achievement of the stated aims and objectives of the educational system.

Similarly, Igwe (2005) in supporting the above findings stated that the supervision of instruction is the process of overseeing the work of teachers with the aim of assisting them to solve their instructional problems so that students can benefit maximally from classroom activities. This can be effected by involving the academic administrators or any other official appointed by interacting with staff and students learning process. Okoroma (2007) further averred that supervision helps teachers to identify their problems in the class and seek solutions to them through discussion or interactions and helps to bring to awareness of teachers various resources that can help improve their teaching functions. Such education resources include audiovisual aids like films, maps, charts, records, tapes, radio and television programmes; library resources and instructional materials like clay, paint, crayons, excursions and field trips. Administrators can also help teachers to evolve various approaches and techniques of teaching.

The findings of this study further revealed that lecturers are helped to evolve an ideal classroom climate suitable for the teaching process; lecturers grow professionally as they interact and gain knowledge; lecturers are helped to isolate areas of strength that require further development; and lecturers are helped to discover areas of improvisation in order to facilitate good teaching. In corroborating with these findings, Okoroma (2007) averred that administrators can help teachers to evolve a more ideal classroom climate and environment suitable for the learning process. Oluwuo and Agabi (2014) highlighted that supervision enhances professional growth of the staff since interaction and greater knowledge gained at supervision promote personal growth.

On the extent to which academic administrators’ communication role enhances lecturers’ quality service delivery, the findings of this study revealed that lecturers are able to share ideas regarding the dissemination of instructions within the classroom setting; lecturers are positively motivated and their behaviour positively influenced for quality service delivery; and lecturers are kept abreast with what they are expected to do in the workplace. These findings are in line with Awotua-Efebo’s (2001) assertion that communication is a mutual exchange of ideas, thoughts, opinions, fact and/or emotions. Obasi and Asodike (2007) affirmed that no matter how good a message may be, if it is not properly communicated it is likely to lose its meaning and therefore capable of causing management problem. The academic administrator should therefore develop a good system of communication so that staff and students are motivated and their behaviour positively influenced for quality service delivery.

The findings of the study further revealed that lecturers perform their duty more efficiently and problems solved more quickly; the goals of the school are conveyed to the lecturers who work to actualize them; and lecturers are helped to work as a team and contribute to the success of the institution. In corroboration with these findings, Amele (2018) affirmed that communication is a veritable instrument for the success of any organization or association, which educational institutions are not excluded from. Its role is very pivotal in the achievement of any organizational goals. It may be for the singular reason that the goals of institutions are relayed to members through effective communication. Supporting the
above view, Obasi and Asodike (2007) averred that when communication is effective, work is performed more efficiently and problems solved more quickly. On this note, Wilson (1997) pointed out that when information is shared properly and using the right medium, it allows all employees in the organization to be abreast with what they are expected to do in the workplace. This is why Ayatse (2005) posited that the essence of communication in an organization is to convey the goals and objectives of the organization to the employees. The members of the organization therefore work towards the actualization of the goals of the organization when the mode of communication is very appropriate.

CONCLUSION
Based on the findings of the study, it was therefore concluded that academic administrators have the ability and commitment to enhance lecturers’ quality service delivery. The academic administrators in tertiary institutions therefore need to use the best technique to communicate to all academic staff such that they can improve in their teaching service delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Based on the findings of the study, the following were recommended:
1. Effort should be made by the government, academic administrators and other stakeholders of the tertiary institutions to provide well equipped functional libraries and laboratories, and current reading reference materials and equipment.
2. The leadership of tertiary institutions should engage in behaviours that develop school climate that supports academic achievement of students to gain staff commitment, engender high expectations and supervise individual teachers work in schools and entire instructional programme.
3. In the course of supervision the academic administrators should give appropriate feedback to the lecturers’ on their faults and short coming and also advise on how to improve teaching methodology and curriculum to enhance their service delivery.

REFERENCES


