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## **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN ON STANDARD AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN SECONDARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*The study examined the extent of implementation of the strategic plan on standard and quality assurance in secondary education in Nigeria. One research question guided the study and one hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 1,226 respondents made up of 12 principals and 1,214 teachers from the 12 Federal Government Colleges in South East, Nigeria. Twenty percent of teachers were sampled for the study using simple random sampling while the entire population of principals was used because they were manageable. This amounted to a sample of 254 respondents (242 principals and 12 principals). The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher based on the activities proffered in the strategic plan. The instrument was validated by three experts, two in educational management and policy and one in measurement and evaluation in the faculty of education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The instrument was further subjected to reliability testing through a pilot test on 20 educational planners in Delta State who were not included in the population of the study. The application of Cronbach Alpha reliability method on the obtained data yielded coefficient value of 0.86 for internal consistency. Data collected from the respondents were analyzed with mean, standard deviation and t-test. Finding reveals that the strategic plan on standard and quality assurance in secondary schools in Nigeria have been implemented to a low extent. Finding revealed no significant difference in the*

*mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent the strategic plans on standard and quality assurance in secondary schools have been implemented in South East, Nigeria. Based on the findings, the researchers recommended among others, that government should as a matter of urgency make available funds for the full implementation of the strategic plan. It was also recommended that the federal and state ministries of education should improve on their collaboration with the private sector in the areas of infrastructural development, funding and expertise development.*

**Keywords:** *Implementation, Strategic Plan, Standard, Quality Assurance, Federal Ministry of Education*

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## **Introduction**

Education is the bedrock of growth and development of any nation. It is the process through which man makes effort to better the lot of himself and his environment. According to the Federal Government of Nigeria (FRN, 2013), education is meant to prepare the people for useful living in the society as well as participate in higher education. The National Policy on Education objectives for secondary education sector is to prepare the people for useful living in the society as well as participate in higher education (FRN, 2013). From the stated objectives, secondary education should develop in each Nigerian child the knowledge, interests, ideals, habits, and powers whereby he will find his place and use that place to shape both himself and society towards nobler ends. Abari and Abdulazeez (2016) opined that this type of education helps people to become good workers who effectively combine their hands, heads and hearts. The expectation is that these well-articulated objectives of secondary education can only be achieved if all the issues involved in implementation of policies and programmes at secondary education level are addressed squarely. This means that providing resources, facilities and funds in right quantity and quality and the effective management of these resources are major determinants for the achievement of these broad goals (Ejionueme & Oyoyo, 2015).

Ensuring quality in education is important in the realization of national educational goals. According to Nwite and Okpalanze (2017), the quality of education provided by any country determines the level of its reverence among

other nations. This is because quality in education is defined as a measure for excellence, quality as perfection, quality as value for money, quality as customer satisfaction, quality as fitness for purpose and quality as transformation (Nwite & Okpalanze, 2017). According to Adegbasan (2011), quality in education can be assessed in terms of both its ability to enable students to perform well in standard examinations and its relevance to the needs of students, the community and the whole society. For schools to be successful it has to incorporate effective institutional management in its activities. Adegbasan (2011) opined that quality assurance goes beyond ensuring quality in the school system; it also involves ensuring accountability in the school system. Okebukola (2012) opined that quality assurance is an umbrella concept for a host of activities that are designed to improve the quality of the school system. This means that quality assurance involves all functions of the school including such activities as teaching, caring, and staffing, students, building, facilities and students performance. The Federal Ministry of Education (2012) noted that the need to ensure quality assurance places emphasis of school inspection away from physical enumeration of school facilities to assessment of teaching and learning processes. This process combines critical self-assessment with independent external assessment.

The task of ensuring quality assurance in secondary schools in Nigeria has proved a major problem. This is because there have been uncoordinated efforts from institutional bodies at the federal, state and local government on efforts at ensuring quality assurance resulting in some schools being over-inspected and others either under-inspected or completely ignored. In another vein, funding constraints have always limited the number of schools that could be visited, but poor management of the available funds has been a greater challenge (Ejionueme & Oyoyo, 2015). Federal Ministry of Education (2012) averred that a critical look at the educational institutions reveals low standard and quality of schools and their products. Infrastructural decay, obsolete facilities, poor teacher quality, mass failure in public examinations, cultism, examination malpractice and maladministration, are indicators of the poor state of education in Nigeria. Most secondary schools lack the essential infrastructure to enable them function. They lack adequate support services that enhance teaching and learning (Federal Ministry of Education, 2012; 42).

It is against this backdrop that the Federal Ministry of Education advocated five turn around strategies for improving quality assurance in schools as follows:

- a) policy coordination;
- b) educational input (infrastructure, instructional materials, ICT, etc.);
- c) process issues arising from implementation of educational programmes and services;
- d) benchmarking and setting of educational standards; and
- e) assessment, monitoring, and evaluation issues.

Furthermore, specific actions were outlined to guide the implementation process which includes:

- i. reviewing and strengthening legal framework for educational institutions and regulatory agencies
- ii. undertaking capacity building of school inspectors and supervisors;
- iii. professionalization of education standard and quality assurance practice;
- iv. strengthening partnerships/collaboration among relevant stakeholders;
- v. establish a Quality Assurance Management Information System that links with NEMIS;
- vi. reviewing and enriching the existing school curricular;
- vii. development of instructional materials (such as textbooks, syllabi, etc);
- viii. establishment of a standardized assessment system for monitoring and reporting learning achievement;
- ix. provision and monitoring of Direct Teaching and Laboratory Cost Grant (DTLC);
- x. provision and monitoring of Teaching and Research Equipment Grant;
- xi. establishing and equipping of Guidance and Counseling Units in all schools;
- xii. provision of ICT infrastructure and equipment in all schools;
- xiii. introduction of e-learning to expand access to quality education;
- xiv. implementation of the provisions of the National Information Technology Education Framework; and rehabilitation and development of infrastructural facilities across sectors of education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2012; 42).

These strategies are meant to improve the quality of secondary school system. Sadly, these have not been the case in some secondary schools in Nigeria in general and South East Nigeria in particular. Obi (2019) opined that secondary schools in Nigeria are hampered by inadequate time for supervision, poor power supply, negative attitudes of the staff, large student population, poor record keeping, and inadequate training of the staff as well as poor funding. Obi's study was conducted in state government owned secondary schools. The study was conducted in federal unity schools and the extent to which Obi's assertion is true demands an empirical investigation. It is based on the preceding that the researchers sought the opinion of principals and teachers in federal unity schools on the level to which the strategic plan on ensuring standard and quality assurance in secondary schools in Nigeria have been implemented.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Secondary education is an important level of education in Nigeria. This is because secondary education is that level of education that prepares individuals for useful living and for higher education. It is therefore expected that the management and administration of this level of education is given maximum priority attention. However, this is not the case. A cursory look at secondary schools in South East Nigeria show that it is lacking in terms of provision of the needed human and material resources needed for it to achieve its objectives.

It appears that Public secondary schools in the zone seem not to carry out effective quality assurance measures. Despite the institutionalization of the strategic plan for standard and quality assurance in the school system in Nigeria, secondary schools in Nigeria and South East State in particular seem to be riddled by management inefficiencies which have resulted in poor quality. Public secondary schools in the Zone appear to be faced with challenges relating to poor funding, lack of infrastructural development, inadequate ICT gadgets for teaching and learning and poor commitment of teachers towards teaching. This is quite worrisome, given the fact that the strategic plan for standard and quality assurance in the school system in Nigeria was instituted over seven years ago. This informed the need to determine the extent of implementation of the strategic plan for standard and quality assurance in the school system in Nigeria.

### **Purpose of Study**

The main purpose of the study is to determine the extent of implementation of the federal ministry of education strategic plan on standard and quality assurance in secondary schools in Nigeria.

### **Research Question**

To what extent has the strategic plan on standard and quality assurance been implemented in secondary schools in Nigeria?

### **Hypothesis**

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent the extent of implementation of the strategic plan on standard and quality assurance in secondary schools in Nigeria.

### **Method**

Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in South East, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 12 principals and 1,214 teachers from the 12 Federal Government Colleges in South East, Nigeria. Twenty percent of teachers were sampled for the study using simple random sampling while the entire population of principals was used because they were manageable. This amounted to a sample of 254 respondents (242 principals and 12 principals). The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Questionnaire on Implementation of the Strategic Plan on Standard and Quality Assurance in Secondary Schools (QISPSQASS)”. The instrument was structured on a four-point rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE). The instrument was validated by three experts, two in educational management and policy and one in measurement and evaluation in the faculty of education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The instrument was further subjected to reliability testing through a pilot test on 20 educational planners in Delta State who were not included in the population of the study. The application of Cronbach Alpha reliability method on the obtained data yielded coefficient value of 0.86 for internal consistency. Data collected from the respondents were analyzed with mean, standard deviation and t-test. Out of

the 254 copies of questionnaire administered, 206 were returned and used for data analysis.

The mean value was used to answer the research questions while standard deviation was used to ascertain the homogeneity or otherwise of the respondents' ratings. The item by item analysis was based on the real limits of numbers of Very High Extent (3.50-4.00), High Extent (2.50-3.49), Low Extent (1.50-2.49) and Very Low Extent (1.00- 1.49). For the hypotheses, t-test was used to test all the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Where the calculated t value is less than the critical value of t, it meant that the variable did not significantly affect respondents' mean ratings and the hypothesis was not rejected. Conversely, where the calculated t value was equal to or greater than the critical t value, it meant that the variable has a significant effect on the respondents' mean ratings and the hypothesis was rejected.

## Results

### Research Question

To what extent has the strategic plan on standard and quality assurance been implemented in secondary schools in Nigeria?

**Table 1: Respondents' Mean Ratings on the Extent of Implementation of Strategic Plan on Standard and Quality Assurance in Secondary Schools**

S/No.	Strategies for improving standard and quality assurance	X	SD	Remarks
1.	Reviewing and strengthening legal framework for educational institutions and regulatory agencies	2.01	0.71	Low Extent
2.	Undertaking capacity building of school inspectors and supervisors	2.18	0.78	Low Extent
3.	Strengthening partnerships/collaboration among relevant stakeholders	2.21	0.74	Low Extent
4.	Reviewing and enriching the existing school curricular	2.33	0.81	Low Extent

5.	Development of instructional materials (such as textbooks, syllabi, etc);	2.42	0.72	Low Extent
6.	Establishment of a standardized assessment system for monitoring and reporting learning achievement	1.98	0.82	Low Extent
7.	Provision and monitoring of Direct Teaching and Laboratory Cost Grant (DTLC)	1.80	0.76	Low Extent
8.	Establishing a Guidance and Counseling Units in all schools	3.22	0.75	High Extent
9.	Equipping of Guidance and Counseling Units in all schools	2.05	0.70	Low Extent
10.	Provision of ICT infrastructure and equipment in all schools	2.31	0.72	Low Extent
11.	Introduction of e-learning to expand access to quality education	2.45	0.78	Low Extent
12.	Implementation of the provisions of the National Information Technology Education Framework	2.28	0.74	Low Extent
13.	Rehabilitation and development of infrastructural facilities in secondary schools	2.39	0.71	Low Extent
	<b>Cluster Mean</b>	<b>2.28</b>		<b>Low Extent</b>

Data in Table 1 reveal that principals and teachers in Unity Schools in South East, Nigeria opines that item 8 has been implemented to a high extent with mean rating of 3.22. However, they opine that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 with mean ratings ranging between 1.80 to 2.42 to a low extent. The mean ratings of 2.28 indicate that the strategic plan on standard and quality assurance in secondary schools in Nigeria have been implemented to a low extent.

## Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent the extent of implementation of the strategic plan on standard and quality assurance in secondary schools in Nigeria.

**Table 2: Summary of t-test Analysis of Principals and Teachers on the Extent of Implementation of Strategic Plan on Standard and Quality Assurance in Secondary Schools**

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	$\alpha$	t-cal.	t-crit.	Decision
Principals	10	2.06	0.77					
				204	0.05	0.42	1.96	Not
Significant								
Teachers	196	2.43	0.73					

Data in Table 2 show that the calculated t-value of 0.42 at 204 degree of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance is less than the critical value of 1.96. This shows that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent of implementation of the strategic plan on standard and quality assurance in secondary schools in Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

## Discussion

Findings on the first research question indicate that the strategic plan on standard and quality assurance in secondary schools in Nigeria have been implemented to a low extent. The finding showed that some strategies like reviewing and strengthening legal framework for educational institutions and regulatory agencies, Undertaking capacity building of school inspectors and supervisors, strengthening partnerships/collaboration among relevant stakeholders, reviewing and enriching the existing school curricular, development of instructional materials (such as textbooks, syllabi, etc), establishment of a standardized assessment system for monitoring and reporting learning achievement and provision of ICT infrastructure and equipment in all schools were implemented to a low extent in secondary schools in South East, Nigeria. This findings is in agreement with Obi (2019) opined that secondary

schools in Nigeria are hampered by inadequate time for supervision, poor power supply, negative attitudes of the staff, large student population, poor record keeping, and inadequate training of the staff as well as poor funding. Obi's study was conducted in state government owned secondary schools. This indicates that quality assurance practices have not been given priority attention in secondary schools. In another vein, Yaro, Arshad and Salleh (2015) found that the teachers supported teachers' accountability for the fact that accountability in the teaching profession is very vital and it goes beyond acting according to the stipulation of the law. Adegbesan (2011) decried the state of schools in Nigeria. Adegbesan (2011) opined that many schools lack furniture, in many cases even no doors or windows, and all in such hideous structures.

Findings further revealed no significant difference in the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the extent of implementation of the strategic plan on standard and quality assurance in secondary schools in Nigeria. This shows that principals and teachers in secondary schools are in agreement that the strategic plan on standard and quality assurance in secondary schools in Nigeria has been implemented to a low extent. This is in agreement with the reports of Obi (2019) and Adegbesan (2011) which shows that the quality of secondary schools in Nigeria is poor.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers conclude that the implementation of the strategic plan on standard and quality assurance is poor. This may have resulted in the poor state of secondary education in South East, Nigeria. It is imperative that measures are put in place to expedite the implementation of the strategic plan given its necessity in achievement of the objectives of secondary education in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

The researchers make the following recommendations based on the findings of the study:

1. Government should as a matter of urgency make available funds for the full implementation of the strategic plan.

2. Federal and state ministries of education should regularly organize capacity building programmes like conferences, seminars and workshops for educational inspectors and supervisors where they will be trained on current trends in school inspection and supervision.
3. Federal and state ministries of education should improve on their collaboration with the Private sector in the areas of infrastructural development, funding and expertise development.
4. Government should provide adequate ICT facilities in Schools so as to facilitate increased access to education.

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