

Gratification and Educational Quality Assurance among Students of Tertiary Institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract - This study was conducted to find out the impact of gratification and educational quality assurance among students of tertiary institutions in Cross River State of Nigeria. Two (2) hypotheses were formulated to guide the study, and relevant literature was reviewed. A survey research design was adopted, and the study made use of sample of 1050 300-level students drawn from five (5) tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria. Two (2) research instruments namely; gratification/quality assurance questionnaire (GQAQ) and an oral interview with both students and lecturers in the sampled institutions were used. The data analysis technique used was the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tested at 0.05 alpha levels. The result showed that all forms of extortion, euphemistically called “Gratification” ranging from collecting money for sorting, alteration of continuous assessment grades, exams scores, etc occur in tertiary institutions in Nigeria by and large. It was however recommended that quality assurance units in all tertiary institutions should be more pro-active and function in order to address the menace.

Keywords: Gratification, Quality Assurance, and students’ certification.

I. Introduction/Background of the study

Observation over the years shows that our outstanding educational performance has dropped to ignoble depreciation. In times past, according to [13], products of our educational institutions were celebrated all over the world; were greatly sort for in the labour market internationally; easily got placement in the best institutions in the world for further education and demonstrated clear competencies required of them. Today, [13] maintains that the products of the system are not different from those who had no access. The reasons are that:

- Teaching and learning have lost their place.
- Examination grades and class of degrees are purchased.

- Those who sit for examinations earn no scores while those who never did, pass with distinction in most cases.

It is the opinion of the researchers that all these are happening because, teachers/lecturers in the system have failed to address the problems which the educational system faces; which some corrupt teachers/lecturers are part of. Gratification generally is a slippery concept which implies different things to different people, [17]. It is a reward or to repay some one for something done or to give a recompense or a gratuity. [5] Stated that gratification in tertiary institutions is not different from extortion in any form from students such as collecting money for sorting, alteration of students’ scores or marks for purchase of handouts and books, and doctoring of CA scores for students in the tertiary institutions. In other words, gratification in tertiary institutions is more on the negative side than being positive.

[4] Stated that it is always the academically weak students, truants, or those from seemingly rich parental background that have the tendency towards negative gratification of staff of their schools. [5] Categorically stated that teachers/lecturers who lack professional ethics indulge themselves in negative teacher roles including extortion in all forms from students. The negative roles of the teacher/lecturer consist of those roles that induce stress on the learners: when a teacher/lecturer acts as a detective, a policeman and a judge who only detects faults, brings culprits to book, dispenses and executes justice. These he does when he plays the role of a disciplinarian.

[4] Explained that the learners see such authoritarian teachers/lecturers as being unfriendly and so go to any length to make sure they pass courses handled by those lecturers. The researcher also emphasized that a teacher who maintains a democratic or persuasive environment for learning will create more interactions that will promote learning, unlike a teacher who maintains an autocratic or permissive environment, and providing a unidirectional flow of information that discourages initiative and free interactions. This according to

the researcher creates battle or tension in the classroom and allows students no other alternative than to sort out themselves in any form. Students who cut corners in school assessment and come out with good grades never do well practically in the labour market [17].

Quality refers to the standard of a phenomenon when it is compared to other things like it, how good or bad something is. In this context, it is associated with the monitoring and evaluation component of education to see whether the outcome is good and of the intended standard. Quality assurance on the other hand is about consistently meeting product specification or getting things right the first time, and every time. [1] Stated that quality assurance in the higher education system implies that ability of the users of manpower in relation to the quality of skills acquired by their outfits. Quality assurance is a key component of successful internationalization: a mechanism for building institutional reputation in the competitive local and global area and a necessary foundation for consumer protection [9]. [8], describes the scope of quality assurance to include the following dimensions:

- Regulation
- Education
- Curriculum design and content
- Learning experiences
- Outcomes, which includes qualifications, certification, transcripts, security, transferability, recognition etc.

According to [16], higher education is to equip every citizen with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values as to enable him or her derive maximum benefits from his/her membership in the society, live a fulfilling life and contribute to the development and welfare of the community. The relevance of anti-social behaviours in schools, including sorting by students is still on the increase. [13] stated that the quality assurance unit in tertiary institutions was principally set up to regulate or curb the excesses of some teachers/lecturers during scoring/grading of students. Today, the reverse is the case; some staff in quality assurance unit collaborates with colleagues to promote irregularities in the system.

[15], Also stated that, going by the multiplicity of schools in our society today, and the number of students declared as being “worthy in character and learning” as they graduate out of the universities and other tertiary institutions each year, Nigeria should be a well-developed, secure and safe society. But, that is not the case. As far back as in 2005, Edu lamented that;

The public believes that delinquency is increasing, that vandalism and violence in public schools are a serious

problem. In the last decade, cases of cultism, ritual killings, rape and stealing, above all “sorting” have been reported in many schools (P.I).

Most researchers have tried to ask:

- 1) Are the well trained professional teachers/lecturers with knowledge and skills as well as level of competence in the task of teaching and modeling of the children not to be blamed?
- 2) How did the extremely under-achieving students that we as teachers know suddenly leave the institution with first class degree and found their way into the labour market?
- 3) How did these underachievers suddenly become gifted students without the assistance of some staff of the institution?

In response to the above concerns, [12], emphasized that the quality assurance mechanisms in schools need to be revitalized for effective functioning of the entire school system.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Recent research results have indicated a highly disturbing trend of increasing negative students’ gratification and ineffective quality assurance unit in tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

This observed trend has posed serious concern to the various university managements, spirited and committed lecturers, quality assurance Directors and other education Stakeholders. University managements are worried because the reputation and the academic standard of the institution is being brought low. Quality assurance units are worried because the staff are being seen as ineffective. Researchers such as [5] and [3] stated that lack of quality entrants, enrolment explosion, inadequate physical facilities, poor management and inadequate staffing can result in ineffective monitoring/regulation by quality assurance unit thus resulting also in lecturer’s inadequacies or shortcoming during scoring and grading of students.

The NUC and NCCE have severally organized workshops, seminars and conferences focused or aimed at improving the integrity of lecturers as well as creating awareness on the challenges of teachers’ negative roles/gratification/sorting by students. In spite of all these, the problem of negative teacher-gratification among students in tertiary institutions still persist [6],[13], and [18]. It is therefore hoped that this research work will help University Management/Quality assurance units to see the need to prevent sorting by students in any form.

1.2 Objective/Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to determine the influence of gratification and quality assurance among students of tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

The following objectives are formulated to guide the study:

- 1) To determine whether gratification of lecturers has any significant influence on students' certification.
- 2) To determine whether quality assurance has any significant influence on students' academic achievement in tertiary institutions.
- 3) To determine the extent of relationship between gratification and quality assurance among students in tertiary institutions.

1.3 Research hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were tested in this study,

- 1) There is no significant influence of gratification of lecturers by students on their certification.
- 2) There is no significant influence of quality assurance on students' academic achievement in tertiary institutions.

1.4 Justification of the study (with particular reference to Nigeria)

Several empirical research studies have been carried out concerning gratification of lecturers and quality assurance among students in tertiary institutions by various researchers notably; [5], [15], and [18]. The focus of research work by such researchers involved mostly students sorting and quality assurance generally. What is perhaps new is how quality assurance could be strengthened by policy formulation so as to enhance or improve its workability. The research is therefore justified as a pilot study especially in Cross River Tertiary institutions.

Based on this, the research is important for the following reasons:

- It is hoped that the result will help university management as well as the heads of colleges understand the teachers' negative roles perpetuated within their institutions and thus find ways of stopping such.
- It is also envisaged that the quality assurance units in these institutions will see the need to improve so as to curb the excesses of lecturers who show or exhibit these negative tendencies in the scoring and grading of students.
- Also, the result of this research work will enable students realize that the only better way of getting good grades is through hard work.

II. Review of related literature

2.1 Gratification of lecturers and certification of students

The school occupies a strategic position in the society, and plays very significant role in the growth and sustainable development of the society. [5], Stated that the society sets up schools to socialize the young, prepare them to function as good citizens and also prepare manpower for the society. The researcher also stated that the teacher goes into the classroom not only with the presumed level of expertise in his subject area of specialization but also with his peculiar characteristics, including personality that could cause him/her to put up unprofessional behavior or anti-work ethics.

[11], Sees teaching as an act of providing directions, activities, material and guidance that facilitate the learning process, in either formal or informal situations. [4], sees teaching as the "production of a product", where the teacher is the producer, and the learners are the finished products that can be qualified or certified.

[7], Sees the teacher/lecturer as a facilitator of learning, the event manager in the event of teaching-learning process and a foundation layer in the project of building individuals and a nation. He however stated that the classroom events are not battle free and that the success or failure of the teacher/lecturer in teaching-learning process depends on the following:

- Teachers' personality traits/behavior
- Physical & mental health of the teacher
- Leadership styles
- Mastery of the subject area etc.

[13], Described the Nigerian higher education system as having dropped from outstanding educational excellence in the past to an ignoble depreciative state today. According to him, teaching and learning in tertiary institution have lost their place and that examination grades and class of degrees are being purchased.

According to [15], going by the multiplicity of schools in our society today, and the number of students declared as being "worthy in character and learning" as they graduate out of the universities and colleges each year, Nigerian should be a well-developed, secure and safe-society today. But according to her, what we see today represent; cases of cultism, ritual killings, rape, robbery, extreme under-achieving students, above all those who did not go to school very often have certificates.

[13], and Joshua [6] blamed most lecturers in universities and colleges for unprofessional conduct; as students exchange

money for higher examination scores, continuous assessment scores (CA) etc in the name of gratification.

According to these researchers, such negative teacher roles do not only affect the institutional reputation but significantly affects certification of the students.

2.2 Quality assurance and academic achievement in tertiary institutions

[13], Describe quality assurance as the dedicated and unbiased implementation of all agreed policies, strategies and procedures in an institution intended to improve efficiency of the education system or unit as well as the academic achievement of the learners. He emphasized that its success depends on the co-operation of all stake-holders because the whole, acting as one, cannot have conflict to undermine achievement of intended goods.

Similarly, [14] emphasized that quality assurance in any institution if properly organized significantly influences learners' achievements and standards of the institution. He sees quality assurance in education as concerned with excellence, high standards of instruction and achievement, monitoring and improving standards and a set of procedures for checking that goals are set and met.

[10] And [13], stated that there is a positive relationship between quality assurance and academic achievement of learners if effective/functional in the right direction. They emphasized that the purpose of quality assurance in the education sector includes:

- Enhancing quality and standards
- Engendering confidence in those who participate on the worthiness of the programme
- Monitoring learning outcomes through the use of evaluation guidelines etc.

Findings agree with research results of [4], [5]and [15], who stated that quality assurance units in tertiary institutions if properly organized, and made effective and functional has positive correlation with achievement motivation and cognitive abilities of the learners of the institution.

III. Research methodology

3.1 Research design

A survey research design was adopted, this involves collection of data to accurately and objectively describe existing phenomena. Survey research was therefore useful for opinion and attitude studies and the study depended basically on questionnaires and interviews. The design was found to be thus appropriate for this research work.

3.2 Research area

The study area is Cross River State, Nigeria.

The state capital is Calabar. The state has a total landmass of 21.156km² and a population of about 4 million people. The state comprises five (5) major ethnic groups namely; Ejik, Yakurr, Ejagham, Bette and Bekwara.

Educationally, the state has five (5) tertiary institutions, with many public and private primary/secondary schools across the three senatorial zones. Cross River State is also rich in cultural heritage, forest reserve areas found within Boki and Oban in Akamkpa.

The people are engaged in diverse occupations such as farming, business, fishing, etc.

Finally, Cross Riverians are bilingual/multilingual in spoken/written languages ranging from Efik, Ejaham, Bekwara, etc.

3.3 Population of the study

The population comprises all 300-level students in five (5) tertiary institutions in Cross River State; University of Calabar, Cross River State University of Science & Technology, Calabar, College of Health Technology, Calabar, Cross River State College of Education, Akamkpa, and Federal College of Education, Obudu. The estimated population was 15,500 students drawn from five (5) tertiary institutions in Cross River State (Source: field data, 2022).

3.4 Sample and sampling technique

Multi-stage sampling technique was employed for sample selection. First, a non-probability sampling was used (purposive sampling method) since all the five (5) tertiary institutions in the state were to be used. Finally, simple random sampling method was then adopted to select subjects from among the five (5) institutions. This gave a sample size of 1050 students (300-level students).

Table 1: School sample characteristics

S/N	Schools	No of students sampled	Male	Female	Total
1	University of calabar	225	100	125	225
2	Cross River State University of Science & Technology, Calabar	225	100	125	225
3	College of Health Technology, Calabar	200	100	100	200
4	Cross River State College of Education, Akamkpa	200	100	100	200
5	Federal College of Education, Obudu	200	100	100	200
	Total	1050	500	550	1050

3.5 Instrument for data collection

Two (2) research instruments were employed for data collection:

- A questionnaire titled; Gratification/Quality Assurance Questionnaire (GQAQ) and
- An oral interview with a cross section of both students and lecturers.

3.5.1 Validity of the instrument

The instruments were subjected to expert judgments for face and content validity. Also, Cronbach coefficient alpha method was used to analyze data that were trial-tested. The internal consistency of the sub-variables obtained was considered high enough to justify the use of the instruments.

3.6 Statistical analysis technique

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-test statistics were used to analyze data obtained from the field.

IV. Results and discussion

4.1 General description of research variables

This was focused on Gratification and educational quality assurance among students of tertiary institutions in Cross River State. The independent variable of the study was gratification while the dependent variable was educational quality assurance.

The dependent variable was categorized into high and low educational quality assurance.

Table 2 therefore shows the mean scores and standard deviations of all dimensions of dependent variable.

Table 2: Mean scores and standard deviations of the study variables

S/N	Variables	N	\bar{x}	SD
1	Gratification of lecturers by students	1050	14.96	2.52
2	High educational Quality assurance/assessment	1050	13.80	2.01
3	Low educational quality assurance/assessment	1050	12.11	1.98

Presentation of results

Hypothesis I: There is no significant influence of gratification of lecturers by students on their certification. The hypothesis was tested using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test statistics and the result is presented in table 3.

Table 3: One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the influence of gratification of lecturers by students on their (students) certification

Variables	Gratification of lecturers by students	N	\bar{x}	SD	
High educational quality assurance/assessment	High gratification	600	16.08	2.11	
	Low gratification	450	15.81	1.98	
	Total	1050	14.67	2.01	
Low educational quality/assessment	High	650	16.18	2.01	
	Low	400	14.84	2.42	
	Total	1050	14.91	2.28	
Variables	Source of variation	SS	DF	M_s	F
High educational quality assurance/assessment	Between	58.819	2	28.549	5.623*
	Within	5194.414	1047		
	Total	5255.306	1049	4.499	
Low educational quality assurance/assessment	Between	28.267	2	14.131	3.617*
	Within	6009.572	1047		
	Total	7037.937	1049	4.205	

$P < 0.05$, critical f-value = 2.99

The result as presented in table III indicates that the calculated f-value for the influence of gratification of lecturers by students on total quality assurance/assessment (certification) (3.617) is greater than the critical f-value of 2.99 at 0.05 level of significance, with 2 and 1047 df. This implies that gratification of lecturers by students has significant negative impact on educational quality assurance and by extension certification of the students.

Hypothesis II: There is no significant influence of quality assurance on students' academic achievement in tertiary institutions in Cross River State.

Table 4: A-test analysis of influence of quality assurance of students' academic achievement

Type of test	N	\bar{x}	SD	DF	Gratification behavior	Cal. t-value	Critical t-value
Pre-test	1040	101.74	43.05	2	1.21	8.57	2.0
Post-test	1050	110.45	44.65	1047			

Significant at $p < 0.05$ DF, 1047, H_0 rejected.

The result in table IV indicates positive correlation between high levels of quality assurance with low level of all forms of gratification of lecturers by students.

V. Discussion of findings

5.1 Gratification of lecturers (teachers) and students certification

The result of field data analysis revealed that gratification of lecturers by students has significant negative impact on the functionality of quality assurance as well as certification of students.

These findings agrees with empirical research results of [13] and [6] who emphasized that the unprofessional conduct of some teachers/lecturers in our higher institutions of learning have significant negative impacts on the institutional standards and importantly final certification of the learners in such institutions.

5.2 Quality assurance and students cognitive ability

The result of field data analysis also revealed a significant positive correlation between quality assurance in education and student cognitive ability. This implies that students achievement motivation will positively increase if they become aware that all components of quality assurance in their institutions stand for objectivity, focused in their regulatory activities, excellence un-biasness and uncompromising in attitudes etc.

Thus, the findings of this research hypothesis agrees with [4], [5] and [15] who found positive correlation between an effective functional quality assurance unit of an institution and students' cognitive abilities/certification as well as the institutional standards.

VI. Conclusion and recommendation

On the basis of the findings, it was concluded that quality assurance unit in any institution of learning can influence the academic standards and achievement of learners negatively or positively, that if the quality assurance unit is effective and functional it will influence the standards and academic excellence in the institution positively and that the reverse means poor quality education and standards. The research also concludes that gratification of lecturers (teachers) by students is seen as extortion in all forms including; sorting, alteration of students' scores, marks for purchase of handouts/textbooks all in exchange for money/other gifts. All these according to the findings result in faulty certification of most students.

It was recommended among other things that quality assurance must be strengthened in all higher institutions in the country to ensure qualitative educational delivery.

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Citation of this Article:

Agba Linus Agba, Julius Unimke Ushie, "Gratification and Educational Quality Assurance among Students of Tertiary Institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria" Published in *International Research Journal of Innovations in Engineering and Technology - IRJIET*, Volume 7, Issue 4, pp 221-227, April 2023. Article DOI <https://doi.org/10.47001/IRJIET/2023.704033>
