

## **Quality Enhancement and Students' Skill Acquisition in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria**

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**Abstract:** This study investigated quality enhancement in Nigerian Universities and students' skills acquisition from University education which is needed for socio-economic development. One research question was posed and two null hypotheses formulated to guide the study. Using stratified random sampling technique, four hundred (400) final year Universal Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) students were selected as sample of the study. This was drawn from population of four thousand, one hundred and sixty-five final year UTME students in University of Calabar, and Cross River State University of science and technology. Data was collected using a 20-item research questionnaire titled "Quality Enhancement and Skill Acquisition Questionnaire" (QESAQ). Data obtained were analyzed using Mean, One-way Analysis of Variance and One Sample t-test. Results obtained revealed that provision of school infrastructure significantly influence students' skill acquisition. It was also discovered that provision of adequate learning materials influence students skill acquisition that will enhance them to be creative, capable to innovate, possess employability skills, problem solving skills, good communication skills, become successful entrepreneurs, maintain high moral standard, etc. and effect the society positively. This will serve to ameliorate the degree of youth restiveness, social vices and other evil acts brought about by unemployment, which is as a result of poor quality outputs from educational system. It was concluded that enhancing quality University education in Nigeria is pertinent to emergence of ideal Nigerian society and great economy. Based on the results and findings from the study, it was recommended that; education should be well funded to enhance meeting up with the required standard of University education that will yield quality outputs for the development of economy and maintenance of social order in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Quality, Quality enhancement, Students skill acquisition, Universities.

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### **Introduction**

One of the desires of every country of the world is to be one of the influential countries, through advancement in technology and a well-developed economy. The economic growth and development is mainly dependent on the level of manpower the country has, which is determined by the quality of education that is given to the citizens. It is on this note that National policy on education FRN [1] states that education in Nigeria is an instrument "par excellence" for effecting national development. University education being the level of education where required skills are acquired to meet the manpower need, is to be given in a qualitative way, by ensuring that human and material resources are made available sufficiently, and utilized effectively to ensure that its goal is optimally actualized. However, enhancing quality in Nigerian Universities becomes pertinent since the overall standard of the society is largely determined by the quality of educational outputs from University education. As stated by National Planning Commission

[2], empowering the Nigerian people towards wealth creation, employment generation, poverty reduction and value re-orientation, is a foremost cardinal point for strategic macroeconomic framework. This reflects in the recent increase in the demand for quality educational programmes in science and technology, entrepreneurship and other disciplines in the country's tertiary institutions. It is in this line that a recent report on undergraduate curriculum reform published by the South African Council on Higher Education [3] states:

Graduates are required for their disciplinary and professional expertise and for creating jobs, and there are key elements of development that cannot be achieved without them. However, the need for more people with advanced knowledge and competencies, as well as an informed understanding of the contemporary world, goes beyond the demands of economic development and technical skills shortages into all key areas of the country's well-being, including social cohesion, cultural growth and the

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maturation of democracy through responsible citizenship.

Meanwhile the need for quality outputs required to meet with the above calls for quality enhancement in Universities and other tertiary institutions. According to Council on Higher Education [4], quality enhancement is conceptually different from quality assurance. In a quality enhancement framework, the focus is on deliberate, continuous, systematic and measurable improvement. Quality assurance processes ensure that required standards are met. Quality enhancement processes raise the standards, creating different benchmarks and new standards to be quality assured. Focusing not only on opportunities for students, quality enhancement also emphasize on outcomes of education. The Scottish Quality Academic Assurance [5] define enhancement as taking deliberate steps to bring about improvement in the effectiveness of the learning experiences of students. It involves measures put in place to ensure that quality is improved upon at all times. That is, Universities deliberate efforts in putting measures or modalities to ensure that quality of her academic programmes, personnel, facilities and learning environment are improved upon on continuous basis. It therefore follows that once quality is initiated, it will be improved upon continuously and sustained consistently in the institution without being laid off.

The aim of the quality enhancement as contained in South African Council on Higher Education Guideline for Quality Enhancement Project [4] is to enhance all aspects of teaching and learning in order to improve student success, which is defined as enhanced student learning with a view to increasing the number of graduates with attributes that are personally, professionally and socially valuable. Dimensions of quality education as noted by United Nations International Children Emergency Fund [6] are thus;

1. Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities;
2. Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities;
3. Content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace;
4. Processes through which trained teachers use child-centered teaching approaches in well-managed schools. Skilful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities;
5. Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society.

Enhancing quality University education will involve adequate provision and utilization of funds for provision of school infrastructure, and adequate provision of learning materials, which will facilitate teaching, learning and academic research. The major outcome of quality enhanced University education will be evidenced in overall societal well-being in the country, since outputs from such educational system will be highly skilled. This will serve them to be innovators, job creators, economic drivers, leaders that maintain peaceful co-habitation as well as societal norms, values, and good moral standard which will assure well-being and economic development in the country.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The major driver of every country's socio-economic development is mostly dependent on the type and quality of education given to the citizenry, which will help them become useful members of the society, self-sustaining, innovators, and well skilled manpower for development of every sector of the economy. The Nigerian educational system over the years has not been able to yield desired result of projecting Nigeria as acclaimed giant of Africa, following non-attainment of expected economic growth and development through education, that is commensurate with that of advanced countries.

These have been attributed to poor quality University education emanating from inadequate funding that impede on adequate financial, material and human resources to improve the standard of University education that will enhance students skill acquisition to enable them to be quality outputs required by the society, to drive the economy and same time maintain high social and economic status quo as well as societal morals and standards.

Despite the efforts of the government, which include recent release of part of University development fund, granting Universities autonomy in generating and utilizing internal generated revenue, and other intervention funds from both Nigerian government and other international agencies, to help develop schools to the standards that enable students high skill acquisition, the problem is still seen in high dimension. This is evidently seen in flooding the labour market with numerous unemployable graduates, low innovations, and high level of security challenge resulting from youth restiveness and terrorism. This study has been directed towards determining whether quality enhanced University education can influence students' skill acquisition, which will enhance them to be quality outputs from educational system that can contribute to actualizing desired economic growth and development and ideal Nigerian society. Therefore, the problem is posed thus: How would quality enhancement influence

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students' skill acquisition in Universities in Cross River State?

### Literature Review

The study of how enhanced quality education will influence students' skill acquisition for socio-economic development of the country has recently attracted scholarly interest. This is because of the indispensable relevance of education to economic development of the country and its social benefits. A society that is positively influenced by quality citizens realized through quality education will mainly experience high level of security, growth and development of economy, as well as improved living standard.

According to Maina, [7], education is said to be qualitative when the input such as students, teachers, finance, facilities and equipment and all these are converted through teaching and learning and produce a desirable output. The output is better equipped to serve themselves and the society. The quality of input in educational system in terms of resources (both human and material resources) influences to a large extent the quality of educational outputs. Sallies [8] developed a quality indicator checklist which shows that the physical environment and facilities in higher educational institutions must be available both in qualitative and quantitative terms, for quality teaching and learning. These include availability of infrastructural development programmes (facility provision), adequacy of the facilities in terms of currency and relevance to purpose; students friendliness and centeredness of the infrastructural facilities; regular maintenance of the facilities and renewal of the dilapidated ones; the infrastructural development must be of international standard to attract foreign students, staff and recognition; and must be environmentally safe and of high sanitary standard

According to Uche, Okoli and Ahunanya [9], the infrastructural development in higher education involves provision of buildings, classrooms, hostels, staff quarters, workshops, laboratories, ICT centers, libraries, health centers and sports facilities. Provision of stimulating learning environment and safety is also a major consideration in infrastructural development. Maintenance, renewal and innovation are other determinants of the quality of the infrastructural development effort of the institutions that will attract the students, staff and foreigners to the institutions. Their study further indicated that environmental beautification and sanitation give the aesthetic impression that guarantees the serenity and good climate for teaching, learning and research activities, healthy and secured lives in the school and its communities. The studies of Brink, cited in Sebake, Mphutlane and Gibberd [10] indicated that a comfortable indoor climate is essential for the

productivity of the learners. He collaborated students' responses regarding indoor climate, thus, "if we are too hot we become lethargic and lose concentration; if we are too cold, our bodies stiffen; if the light is too bright or too dull we get sore eyes and heads. If it is too noisy we can't hear and lose concentration; if our chairs and tables are too big or too small we get pains". A study carried out in Malawi, as reported in Plan Malawi [11] showed that the provision of teachers' blocks and houses resulted in an increase in the punctuality of teachers and pupils.

Adequate provision of learning materials is also one of the major determinants of quality of educational programmes which enhance students' skills acquisition. The study of Oladejo, Olosunde, Ojebisi, and Isola [12] found that using standardized and improvised instructional materials influence students' academic performance. They observed that students taught with standardized and improvised instructional materials performed better than those in conventional instructions. They further observed that improvised instructional material encourage creativity, bring learning home wards and often better suited to the climatic conditions of the local environment which improve and enhance students achievement. Popoola [13] investigated the effect of instructional resources on the academic achievement of students in Ogun State. He found a significant difference in the achievement of the two sets of students; the schools with adequate instructional materials performed better than those with inadequate instructional material.

Teachers use teaching/learning resources such as the chalkboard, texts, computers and other auditory, print and visual media, and maintain an awareness of emerging technological resources. They keep abreast of advances in teaching/learning technologies and how they can be incorporated into instruction and learning. As new technologies prove useful and become available in schools, teachers develop their own and their students' proficiencies in using the technologies purposefully, which may include content presentation, delivery and research applications, as well as word processing, information management and record keeping [14] Research carried out by Zwier [15], showed that various recommendations are made in the evaluation reports to improve the teacher's motivation to work, which will instill students high skill acquisition. These can be clustered in the need for more suitable training, improved housing facilities and the institutionalization of active learning. When the facilities needed for quality educational programmes are put in place in schools, it will enable the teachers to teach well, which will influence the learners to acquire the knowledge of what they are taught, for workable skills required of them when turned out from the University.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find out specifically;

1. The extent that provision of school infrastructure influence students' skill acquisition in Universities in Cross River State.
2. If provision of adequate learning materials influence students skill acquisition in Universities in Cross River State.
3. Whether enhanced quality education can influence students skill acquisition in terms of problem solving skills, good communication skills, employability skills and creativity, for socio-economic development.

### Research Question

The study has attempted to give answer to the question:

1. To what extent does provision of school infrastructure influence students' skill acquisition in Universities?

### Research Hypotheses.

Ho<sub>1</sub>. There is no significant influence of provision of adequate learning materials on students' skill acquisition in Universities in Cross River State.

Ho<sub>2</sub>. Students' skill acquisition in terms of problem solving skills, good communication skills, employability skills and creativity, from enhanced quality education is not significantly high.

### Methodology

Survey research design was adopted for the study since it attempts to study the situation as it exists at present and data were collected from the sample to be representative of the study population. The study was specifically carried out in two (2) Universities in Cross River State, University of Calabar, (UNICAL) which is a Federal University and Cross River State University of science and technology, (CRUTECH) which is a State University. The State is made up of eighteen (18) Local Government Areas and is located at South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria.

The population of the study comprises of three thousand, one hundred and sixty-five (3,165) UME final year students in the two (2) public Universities in the States.

Stratified random sampling technique was used to select four hundred (400) UME final year students from different faculties, 200 from University of Calabar, and 200 from CRUTECH to be the representative of the study elements.

### Research Instrument

The researcher developed and used a 20-item research questionnaire titled "Quality Enhancement and Skill Acquisition Questionnaire (QESAQ)". The research instrument was validated by experts in measurement and evaluation. The reliability was established using test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.80 using Pearson correlation technique.

### Research Procedure

The questionnaire was administered by the researchers to the respondents and they were properly guided on the mode of completion. Four hundred (400) questionnaires were distributed and were all retrieved from the respondents. Using modified 4-point Likert scale, the data was properly coded for analysis.

### DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The data were analyzed using mean, analysis of variance and one sample t-test. Results are shown below.

#### Question one:

To what extent does provision of school infrastructure influence students' skill acquisition in Universities?

Mean was used to rate the responses from students on the provision of school infrastructure, of how it enhance quality teaching, learning and research, which enhance their skill acquisition. Summaries of the result are presented below.

**Table 1: Mean rating of students' responses on influence of school infrastructure provision on academic programme effectiveness to enhance their skill acquisition.**

S/N	Variable	N	X	SD
1	Sufficient Lecture rooms	400	3.43	0.60
2	Modern technological tools	400	3.34	0.47
3	Beautified school environment	400	2.94	0.41
4	Internet facilities	400	3.78	0.41
5	Constant power supply	400	3.62	0.49
6	Good road networks	400	2.60	0.47
7	Good hostel accommodations	400	3.72	0.45
8	Good furniture and fittings	400	3.01	0.58
9	Constant water supply	400	3.00	0.00
10	Good classroom chairs	400	3.40	0.49

Expected Mean = 2.50

From the above table, mean was used to rate responses of students on provision of school infrastructure on their skill acquisition. Their responses shows that quality teaching and learning can be enhanced, by the provision of school infrastructures like; sufficient lecture rooms, which has mean of 3.43, modern technological tools, 3.34, beautified school environment, 2.94, internet facilities, 3.78, constant power supply, 3.62, good road networks, 2.60, good accommodations, 3.72, good office furniture and fittings for lecturers, 3.01, constant water supply, 3.00, and good classroom chairs, 3.40. All these items have the mean responses which are greater than the expected mean of 2.50, and this showed that they are

significant in enhancing quality academic programmes that foster students' skill acquisition.

**Hypothesis one:**

There is no significant influence of provision of adequate learning materials on students' skill acquisition in Universities in Cross River State.

With one way analysis of variance, mean of responses of those that responded to adequate, moderate and inadequate provision of learning materials were compared, in relation to how it influence their skill acquisition. The results are presented in the table below.

**Table 2: One Way Analysis Of Variance of Influence of Provision Of Adequate Learning Materials On Students' Skill Acquisition In Universities.**

Provision of Teaching Materials	N	X̄	SD	
Adequate	91	18.65	0.947	
Moderate	104	12.15	1.147	
Inadequate	205	6.87	1.384	
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F
Between Groups	8950.762	2	4475.381	2927.12
Within Groups	606.988	397	1.529	
<b>Total</b>	<b>9557.750</b>	<b>399</b>		

\*P < .05, df<sub>2,397</sub>; Critical F = 3.02

From the above table, it should be seen that the number of respondents that selected provision of teaching materials in their school as adequate are 91, moderate, 104 and inadequate, 205. The mean scores of the provision of those teaching materials in relation to students skill acquisition are 18.65, 12.15, 6.87 for adequate, moderate and inadequate, respectively. This shows that adequate teaching materials enhance quality instruction. Also at .05 level of significance, under degree of freedom 2 and 397, the calculated F-ratio is 2927.12 and is greater than critical F-ratio of 3.02. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. So, there is

significant influence of provision of adequate learning materials on students' skill acquisition in Universities in Cross River State.

**Hypothesis Two:**

Students' skill acquisition in terms of problem solving skills, good communication skills, employability skills and creativity, for socio-economic development from enhanced quality education is not significantly high. With one sample t-test, the observed mean scores of responses on the subject matter were compared with the expected mean.

**Table 3: One sample t-test analysis of the extent of students' skill acquisition from enhanced quality education.**

N = 400				
Variables	Expected Mean μ	Observed Mean X	SD	t
Become successful Entrepreneurs	5.00	7.25	0.56	80.398
Possess High employability skills	5.00	6.95	0.674	57.904
High rate of innovation	5.00	6.98	0.564	70.158
Improve societal living standard	5.00	6.97	0.813	48.359
Maintain high social status	5.00	7.19	0.734	59.609
Improve the economy	5.00	6.55	0.688	44.958
Improved economic status	5.00	7.00	0.586	68.178
Maintain societal norms and values	5.00	6.51	0.867	34.714
Improved peaceful co-habitation	5.00	6.80	0.745	48.396
Decrease poverty rate	5.00	6.24	0.718	34.383

\*p < .05; df = 399; Critical t = 1.966



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From the above table, it should be seen that the observed mean is greater than the expected mean in the ten (10) items and the calculated t-value higher than the critical t values on the items, which shows that the attributes are most likely to be possessed by students that acquire high level skills from quality enhanced education. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected on all the items. Thus, Students' skill acquisition in terms of problem solving skills, good communication skills, employability skills and creativity, for socio-economic development from enhanced quality education is significantly high. This will be seen in such a way that they will, become successful Entrepreneurs, possess high employability skills, enhance high rate of innovation, improve societal living standard, maintain high social status, improve the economy, improved economic status, maintain societal norms and values, improve peaceful co-habitation in the society, and help bring about decrease in poverty rate.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Summarily, the findings of this study revealed that quality enhanced education significantly influence students skill acquisition in Universities. This means that when adequate infrastructure and learning materials are provided in schools, it has the tendency to facilitate effective teaching and learning. These enable students to acquire skills that enable quality outputs from educational system, who can create jobs, possess employability skills, become good leaders and in totality affect socio-economic development of the country positively.

The result obtained from the research question indicated that provision of sufficient lecture rooms, modern technological tools, beautified school environment, internet facilities, constant power supply, good hostel accommodations, good office furniture and fittings, constant water supply, and good classroom chairs enhance qualitative teaching and learning, which influence students' skill acquisition. This finding suggests that putting infrastructures in place serves to stimulate the learning environment for quality knowledge impartation which enhances quality output from educational system. This finding is in line with the assertion of Sallies [8] who maintained that the physical environment and facilities in higher institutions must require both in qualitative and quantitative terms, for quality teaching and learning, which will enhance students' skill acquisition. Uche, Okoli and Ahunanya [9], from their study also found that environmental beautification and sanitation give the aesthetic impression that guarantees the serenity and good climate for teaching, learning and research activities. The outcome of quality academic activities will give rise to high skill acquisition by the students which will make them to be quality outputs from the educational system.

The result from hypothesis one revealed that there is significant influence of provision of adequate learning materials on students skill acquisition. This finding indicated that when sufficient learning materials are made available for teaching and learning, it will enhance academic programme quality, since lecturers will make use of those materials, like textbooks, internet facilities, for research, which enhance the quality of the lesson content and presentation, laboratory equipment for practical, other ICT gadgets for prompt information dissemination, and so on. This is likely to add value to what the students learn and skill they acquire. This finding supports the assertion of Oladejo *et al* [12] who found that use of standardized and improvised instructional material influence students' academic achievement, which encourage creativity and bring learning homewards.

The findings of the second hypothesis indicated that Students' skill acquisition in terms of problem solving skills, good communication skills, employability skills and creativity, from enhanced quality education is significantly high. This means that the academic programmes with provision of infrastructure and instructional materials will enhance quality education and will result to students' acquisition of high level skills for societal development. With this result, students turned out of quality enhanced University system as educational products has the tendency to contribute meaningfully to their individual well-being and societal development. From the study carried out, it showed that highly skilled graduates are most likely to possess the following attributes for socio-economic development; become successful Entrepreneurs, possess high employability skills, enhance high rate of innovation, improve societal living standard, maintain high social status, improve the economy, improved economic status, maintain societal norms and values, improve peaceful co-habitation in the society and help bring about decrease in poverty rate. The finding suggest that high quality outputs from University education will serve to contribute immensely to overall development of Nigerian society if the needed skills are imparted on them. This finding is in line with the provision in the Guideline for Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project [4]. It is aimed at enhancing all aspects of teaching and learning in order to improve student success, thereby leading to enhanced student learning with a view to increasing the number of graduates with attributes that are personally, professionally and socially valuable. The essential role of University education in equipping citizens to help develop the country requires a continuous, systematic and measurable improvement in University educational system to yield the required outcome.

### CONCLUSION

This work has attempted to discover the nexus between quality enhancement in University education

and students skill acquisition. It was discovered that adequate provision of school infrastructure and learning materials has a significant influence on students' skill acquisition, since they are required for quality academic programmes, in terms of teaching/learning and research. It was also discovered that enhanced quality education is one of the determinants of socio-economic development, since University outputs will be highly skilled to affect the society positively by using their professional skills to effect innovations, creativity, and total socio-economic development.

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that quality enhancement in Nigerian Universities is pertinent to emergence of ideal Nigerian society and great economy, since the outputs from the educational system will be highly skilled for innovations, job creation, leadership, maintenance of good moral standards, norms and values of the society, for the overall economic development of the country.

### RECOMMENDATION

It is therefore recommended that University education in Nigeria should be well funded. This will serve to enhance quality in terms of adequate provision and development of school infrastructure, as well as provision of learning materials qualitatively and quantitatively to enhance academic activities in schools. This will serve to enhance students' skill acquisition, and production of quality outputs from educational system which is essential in driving the socio-economic development in Nigeria and world at large.

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