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**EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE INDICATORS AS CORRELATES OF  
SUSTAINABILITY BEHAVIOUR AMONG PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES UNDERGRADUATES  
IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA.**

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**Abstract**

The research design adopted for the study was ex-post-facto design. This design was used because the independent and dependent variables of the study have already interacted; and no deliberate attempt was made to manipulate the independent variables, a condition that made the study non-experimental. The area of the study was public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The population consists of all students in the public universities while the target population was all the final year undergraduates in the 2019/2020 academic session. A sample of 1113 was selected for the study using Taro-Yamene's (1967) minimum sample size formula, and stratified random sampling technique. A validated self-reporting instrument was used to illicit information from the students. The resulting data was analysed using multiple linear regression analysis, while F-ratio and t-test were used to test for significance of the overall regression models and relative contribution of each independent variable and regression constants in the models, respectively. Findings shown that teacher factor as quality assurance indicators have significant relationship with sustainability behaviour. It was recommended that all stake-holders in education be committed in their respective roles/responsibilities in order to enhance sustainable behaviour of the students in meeting the sustainability needs of the future generations as well as meeting the present needs.

**Key words:** Sustainable behaviour, educational quality assurance indicators, pro-ecological Behaviour.

**1. Introduction**

In September 2015, the world leaders adopted the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and its accompanying sustainable development

goals (SDGs). There are 17 SDGs aim at ending poverty, protect the planet earth and ensure prosperity for all (UN, 2015). The higher education sector quickly keyed into it by taking

responsibility for the realization of these ambitious goals. It has since then provided a link between the SDGs and educational goals and objectives. The spearheading institution has been the international network for quality – assurance agencies in higher education (INQAAHE). The aim is to connect institutions quality assurance framework with the SDGs. A proposal of indicators to embed the SDGs into institution quality assurance was made by INQAAHE (2019); these indicators view sustainable development and SDG as relevant to all aspects of higher education. They seek a whole institution approach to sustainable development interpreting this agenda as relevant to leadership and management; teaching and learning; research and knowledge exchange; the staff and student’s experience; campus management; partnerships and outreach.all (UN, 2015); INQAAHE (2019).

This approach focuses on people-oriented development for sustainability through social development and environmental protection (Hopwood, Mellor & Obrian, 2005). This is commonly tagged “Education for sustainable development (ESD)”. The link between education by extension quality education is in the fact that whatever happens to the entire creation is a function of human behaviour. Human behaviour is learned and therefore can be unlearned/modified. When this modification is done and the change is permanent, then learning has taken place, hence the need for sustainable behaviour.

Education is generally acclaimed as the foundation of all development strides of man. No matter the dimension, with education, people are able to understand the complexities of man as a living entity and be able to relate positively with one another, to understand his environment, how to live peaceably in it, while exploring and exploiting it, trying as much as possible to change it or leave it in the form he met it. Unfortunately, the activities of man seem to be destroying what he inherited, examples are

desertification, environmental degradation which has given rise to is known as climate change, loss of socio-cultural values, amongst others are indications of lack of sustainability behaviour.

It is in view of the dire need to address this issue that the world leaders transform the millennium development goals (MDGs) to sustainable development goals (SDGs) in September, 2015. Nigeria, in its policy on higher education, was quick to embrace these responsibilities by adopting tertiary education as a tool for achieving sustainable education. As a way of ensuring that educational principles, policies and practices, if implemented to the letter, are capable of leading to the achievement of SDGs, the concept of quality assurance (CQA) has been introduced into educational processes globally and in Nigerian educational system. Educational quality assurance (EQA) is a process of monitoring, assessing, evaluating and reporting objectively, based on agreed quality standards, as aspects of school life to ensure that acceptable standards are attained, maintained and improved upon continually. The quality assurance indicators center on the government, the students, the teachers and the education process.

According to Akubuilu and Okorie (2013), the critical areas of quality assurance revolves around quality of human capital, quality of curriculum content, qualification of the education process and quality of products or output. Thus, the empirical connection between such quality assurance indicators and the achievement of SDGs through tertiary education is the thrust of this study.

## 2. Sustainable behaviour

According to Wikipedia, an on line encyclopedia, sustainability behaviour is a means of configuring civilization and human activity so that society, its members, and its economics are able to meet their present needs, express their greatest potential in the present

terms while preserving biodiversity and natural ecosystems, planning for and acting for ability to maintain these ideas for future generations. The key idea here is conservation, while meeting the present needs. Sustainable behaviour may therefore be seen, as a set of actions aimed at protecting the socio-physical resources of the earth (Correl-Verdugo, Frias-Armenta & Garcia-Cadena, 2010). This kind of behaviour is future oriented, because it takes into consideration the needs of the future generations as well as meeting present needs (Bonnes & Bonaiuto, 2002). As used in this study, sustainable behaviour includes pro-ecological, altruistic, frugal and equitable actions (Tapia-Fonllem et al., 2013). Education for sustainable development should therefore be directed towards modeling human behavioural pattern to maximize the benefits of the environment in its present form as well as preserve same for future generation.

### **3. Educational quality assurance indicators**

The review projected education as the bedrock of sustainable development; therefore, importance should be laid on quality education for achieving sustainable development, both within the education sector and outside the sector. To Cross (1979), quality may be defined as conformance to requirement; for McClave, Benson and Sinsich (2001), the quality of goods or services is indicated by the extent to which it satisfies the needs and preferences of their users. To Adegbesun (2011), quality of education is a matter of comparability and competitiveness; some other authorities see quality of education as being equal to quantity of teaching. Mosha, (1986), observe that quality can be measured by 'the extent 'to which training received from an institution enables the recipient to think clearly, independently and analytically to solve a relevant problem in any given environment; amongst others.

Finally, Educational quality indicators and sustainability approach focuses on people-oriented development for sustainability through social development and environmental protection (Coate, 2008; Hopwood, Mellor & Obrian, 2005). This is commonly tagged "Education for sustainable development (ESD)". The link between education and by extension quality education is in the fact that whatever happens to the entire creation is a function of human behaviour. Human behaviour is learned and therefore can be unlearned/modified. When this modification is done and the change is permanent, then learning has taken place, hence the need for sustainable behaviour.

### **4. Statement of the problem**

The quest for sustainable development has of recent become a global problem, which led to transformation of millennium development goals (MDGs) to sustainable development goals (SDGs). This was followed by the 1992 earth summit declaration in which the concept of education for sustainable development (ESD) was introduced. As a follow-up, many universities have incorporated the goals to educate with a global vision for the present and the future, into their traditional functions of educating those who pass through them to imbibe sustainable behaviour.

As a way of ensuring that educational principles, policies and practices, if implemented to the letter, are capable of leading to the achievement of SDGs, the concept of quality assurance (CQA) has been introduced into educational processes globally and in Nigerian educational system. Unfortunately, studies on education for sustainable development, with respect to higher education in Nigeria are very scanty. A good number are theoretical, concentrating on short comings in the use of rigorous conceptual framework and criticizing the descriptive nature of the case study approaches. Very few studies have empirically linked quality assurance

indicators to sustainable development goals. Majority of these few studies were carried out in institutions outside Nigeria. The ones carried out in Nigeria are largely case studies. An empirical link between quality assurance indicators and the attainments of SDGs at tertiary education level, that cuts across tertiary education institutions, with inferential intent, is invaluable; this is the gap this study is set out to fill.

**5. Purpose of the study**

To investigate the relationship between educational quality assurance indicators and sustainable behaviour among Public University undergraduates in Cross River State.

**6. Research Question**

What is the nature of the relationship between educational quality assurance indicators and sustainable behaviour among Public University undergraduates in Cross River State?

**7. Hypothesis**

There is no significant relationship between educational quality assurance indicators and sustainable behaviour among Public University undergraduates in Cross River State?

**8. Methodology**

The study used a survey design and the population comprised the undergraduates of the two public universities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The sample was 1113 students selected using stratified random sampling technique. A 10-item self-reporting instrument tagged “Quality assurance indicators and sustainable development questionnaire (QAISDQ) was design to illicit information from the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: A, B and C. Section A items sought for information about respondents’ biodata. Section B had four sub-sections that measured the quality assurance variables (indicators) while section C, which was designed to measure respondent’s sustainable behaviour, had seven sub-sections. Each of the sub-sections in section B and C had ten (10) items built on a modified four point Likert scale. The questionnaire was administered using research assistants in each faculty while the researchers coordinated the activity.

**9. Results and discussions**

The data for this study were collected from a random sample of 1113 public universities undergraduates in Cross River State, Nigeria. Their demographic description was done using frequency counts and simple percentages. Table 1, is a summary of the results.

**Table 1: Demographic description of study sample**

Demographic variable	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	540	47.6
	Female	594	52.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1134</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Age	Below 18yrs	126	11.1
	18 – 22yrs	180	15.9
	23 – 27yrs	450	39.7
	28 – 32yrs	180	15.9
	33 – 37yrs	108	9.5
	Above 37yrs	90	7.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1134</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Marital status	Single	360	31.7
	Married	486	42.9
	Divorced	180	15.9
	Widowed	108	9.5

	<b>Total</b>	<b>1134</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Religion	Christianity	684	60.3
	Islam	180	15.9
	African tradition	162	14.3
	Some other	108	9.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1134</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Areas of specialization	Arts	108	9.5
	Physical sciences	126	11.1
	Biological science	252	22.2
	Management science	216	19.0
	Agricultural science	108	9.5
	Architectural science	90	7.9
	Medical sciences	54	4.8
	Environmental studies	72	6.3
	Educational studies	108	9.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1134</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The results in Table 1 show that there were 540 (47.6%) males and 694 (52.4%) females in the sample. By age 126 (11.1%) were below 18yrs, 180(15.9%), 18 – 22yrs, 450(39.7%) 23 – 27yrs, 180 (15.9%) 28 – 32yrs 108(9.5%) 33 – 37yrs and 90 (7.9%) above 37yrs. In terms of marital status, 360 (31.7%) were single, 486(42.9%) married, 180(15.9) divorced and 108(9.5%) widowed. With respect to their religion, 684(60.3%) were Christians, 180(15.9%) Muslims, 164(14.3%) were traditional African Religion Worshippers and 108 (9.5) some other religion. In terms of area of studies, 108 (9.5%) were arts, 126(11.1%) physical sciences,

252(22.2%) biological sciences, 216(19.0%) management sciences, 108(9.5) agricultural sciences 90(7.9%) from architectural sciences, 54(4.8%) from medical sciences, 72(6.5%) environmental sciences and 108 (9.5%) Educational studies. Thus, the sample was considered heterogeneous enough for the study.

The descriptive statistics – mean, standard deviation, standard error, minimum, maximum was computed for the 11 study variables; four quality assurance indicators and seven sustainability behaviour sub variables. The results obtained are presented in table 2.

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics and population t-test for the eleven (11) study variables**

Name of study variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	Minimum	Maximum	t-value	p-value
Lesson delivery	29.524	4.773	.142	18	37	31.920*	.000
Knowledge of subject matter	27.746	4.972	.148	15	36	18.599	.000
Access to learning material	29.556	4.434	.132	18	37	34.597	.000
Attitude towards studies	30.079	4.784	.142	20	40	35.754	.000

Pro-ecological behave.	28.222	4.857	.144	18	36	22.341	.000
						*	
Frugality behavior	29.524	4.959	.147	18	37	30.722	.000
						*	
Altruistic behavior	28.143	4.786	.142	18	36	22.114	.000
						*	
Equity behavior	30.111	4.780	.142	20	40	36.007	.000
						*	
Pro-environmental deliberation	30.381	4.615	.137	19	38	39.260	.000
						*	
Affinity to diversity	29.508	4.668	.139	18	37	32.518	.000
						*	
Appreciation of nature	30.333	5.488	.162	20	40	32.724	.000
						*	

**\*significant at .05 level  $p < .05$**

All the 11 study variables were measured using the same number of items (10) and response options (4). This makes their descriptive statistics validly comparable. The mean pro-environmental deliberation ( $\bar{x} = 30.381$ ) was the highest, followed by mean appreciation of nature ( $\bar{x} = 30.333$ ) and mean altruistic behaviour ( $\bar{x} = 28.746$ ). Among the educational quality assurance indicators, mean attitude towards students ( $\bar{x} = 30.079$ ) was the highest, followed by mean access to learning materials ( $\bar{x} = 29.556$ ) and the least was the mean lecturers knowledge of subject matter ( $\bar{x} = 27.746$ ). Among the sustainability behavior variables, the mean pro-environmental deliberation ( $\bar{x} = 30.381$ ) was the highest, followed by mean appreciation of nature ( $\bar{x} = 30.333$ ) and the least was mean altruistic behavior ( $\bar{x} = 28.143$ ). All the observed mean values ( $27.746 \leq \bar{x} \leq 30.381$ ) were seen to be significantly higher than the expected mean ( $\mu = 25.000$ ) as the p-value (.000) associated t-values obtained through the use of one-sample t-test ( $18.599 \leq t \leq 39.260$ ) are all less than .05, the chosen level of significance.

These study variables were measured using the same number of items (10) and response options (4). Therefore, their descriptive statistics can be validly compared. The results showed that the mean attitude towards studies ( $\bar{x} = 30.079$ ) was the highest, followed by mean access to learning materials ( $\bar{x} = 29.556$ ) while the least was mean lecturers' knowledge of subject matter ( $\bar{x} = 27.746$ ). These mean values were all greater than the expected mean ( $\mu = 25.000$ ), though these differences were not tested for significance, the magnitude of the mean difference ( $2.746 \leq MD \leq 5.079$ ) suggests that the difference may be significant.

To find out the nature of the relationship educational quality assurance indicators and the students' sustainability behaviour variables, Pearson product moment correlation coefficient and their associated P-value, were computed for all possible pairs of the 11 study variables. The results are given in table 3. Inter-variable Pearson product moment correlation coefficients and associated p-value were computed. The results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Inter-variables Pearson product moment correlation coefficients and associated p-value**

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	1	.783*	.836*	.920*	.911*	.982*	.676*	.854*	.940*	.736*	.932*
2	.000	1	.861*	.834*	.23*	.737*	.942*	.847*	.761*	.949*	.650*
3	.000	.000	1	.881*	.837*	.786*	.906*	.918*	.819*	.782*	.692*

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4	.000	.000	.000	1	.875*	.887*	.769*	.975*	.878*	.785*	.894*
5	.000	.000	.000	.000	1	.897*	.815*	.850*	.858*	.883*	.849*
6	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	1	.802*	.817*	.908*	.697*	.947*
7	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	1	.830*	.676*	.882*	.498*
8	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	1	.830*	.787*	.815*
9	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	1	.711*	.857*
10	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	1	.623*
11	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	1

**\*significant at .05 level P < .05**

1 = lecturer's lesson delivery

2 = Lecturers' knowledge of subject matter

3 = Students' access to learning materials

4 = Students' attitude towards studies

5 = pro-ecological behavior

6 = Frugality behavior

7 = Altruistic behavior

8 = Equity behavior

9 = pro-environmental deliberation

10 = Affinity to diversity

11 = Appreciation

The results in Table 3 show that all the inter-variable correlation coefficients are positive ( $.498 \leq r \leq .982$ ) and significant ( $p = .000 < .05$ ) specifically, student's pro-ecological behavior has a significant relationship with lecturers' lesson delivery ( $r = .911, p = .000$ ), knowledge of subject matter ( $r = .923, p = .000$ ) students' access to learning materials ( $r = .837, p = .000$ ) and attitude towards studies ( $r = .875, p = .000$ ). The same patterns of relationships are observed for frugality, altruistic, equity behaviour, pro-environment deliberation, affinity to diversity and appreciation of nature. It can be inferred from these results that the four educational quality assurance indicators – lecturers lesson delivery and knowledge of subject matter, students' access to learning materials and attitude towards studies have significant influence on university undergraduates' sustainability behaviour in terms of pro-ecological behavior, frugality, altruistic, equity behaviour, pro-environmental deliberation affinity to diversity and appreciation of nature.

## 10. Discussion

The results of the hypothesis "there is no significant relationship between educational quality assurance indicators and sustainable behaviour among Public University undergraduates" revealed that there is a significant relationship between student's pro-ecological behaviour (frugality, altruistic, equity behaviour, pro-environment deliberation, affinity to diversity and appreciation of nature) and quality assurance indicators – (lecturers' lesson delivery, students' access to learning materials, and attitude towards studies). These findings agree with the results of Hopwood, Mellor & Obrian, (2005), who found that educational quality - (education for sustainability ESD) approach focuses on people-oriented development for sustainability through social development and environmental protection.

Equally the findings are in line with Akubuilu and Okorie (2013), who averred that quality assurance revolves around quality of human capital, quality of curriculum content, qualification of the education process and

quality of products or output. Similarly, the findings as well confirmed the position of Correl-Verdugo, Frias-Armenta & Garcia-Cadena, (2010), that sustainability behaviour may be seen, as a set of actions that are aimed at protecting the socio-physical resources of the earth. This kind of behaviour is future oriented, because it takes into consideration the needs of the future generations as well as meeting the present needs.

The findings of the study once again demonstrated that sustainable behaviour-pro-ecological, altruistic, frugal and equitable actions as identified by Tapia-Fonllem et al., (2013); are an outcome, or manifestation of 'behaviour'- a predisposition to act or not to act, in a behavioural pattern to maximize the benefits of the environment in its present form as well as preserve it.

Finally, the results of the hypothesis of the present study have associated with the studies of Mosha, (1986), who observe that quality can be measured by 'the extent' to which training received from an institution enables the recipient to think clearly, independently and analytically to solve a relevant problem in any given environment. Sustainable behaviour is a learned behaviour and any learned behaviour ought to be permanent, and can be applied in solving a relevant environmental problem whenever need arises.

### 11. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study it was concluded that there is a significant relationship between quality assurance indicator via lecturers' lesson delivery and knowledge of subject matter and the learner factor which is students' access to learning materials and attitude towards studies and sustainability behaviour of undergraduates - frugality, altruistic, equity behaviour, pro-environmental deliberation affinity to diversity and appreciation of nature.

### 12. Recommendations

Based on the results of the study and conclusion reached, it is therefore recommended that all stake-holders in education which include the government and the relevant agencies, the teacher and the students should be committed in their respective responsibilities in order to enhance sustainable behaviour of the students to meet the needs of the future generations as well as meeting their present needs.

As used in this study, sustainable behaviour includes pro-ecological, altruistic, frugal and equitable actions. Education for sustainable development should therefore be directed towards modeling human behavioural pattern to maximize the benefits of the environment in its present form as well as preserve same for future generation.

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