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QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS FOR IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL STANDARD IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study examined Quality Assurance Mechanisms for Improved Educational Standard in Public Universities in Rivers State. It was anchored on the System Theory. Three research questions were used with three null hypotheses formulated in line with the objectives of the study. The descriptive survey design was used. Using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique, a sample size of 348 respondents was selected out of 3448 lecturers in the three Public Universities in Rivers State. A self-made Questionnaire titled “Quality Assurance Mechanism for Improved Educational Standards Questionnaire” (QAMIESQ) was validated and used for the study. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the Independent Sample t-test was employed to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The major findings of the study included that: there is a significant difference between the mean score of male and female lecturers on monitoring, evaluation and supervision as quality assurance mechanisms for improved educational standards. The study concluded that the management of monitoring, evaluation and supervision in the assessment of students’ progress should ensure the availability of necessary facilities required for effective instruction delivery and ultimately improve the educational standard. Consequently, the study recommended that Educational institutions should encourage cross-functional collaboration between different departments and stakeholders involved in these processes of pursuing quality. This collaboration can facilitate a holistic approach to quality assurance, allowing for the integration of various perspectives and expertise.

Keywords: Management, Quality Assurance, Improved Educational Standards, Public Universities.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on ensuring that educational institutions in Nigeria consistently deliver high-quality education. Quality assurance mechanisms have emerged as a veritable component in striving for improved educational standards. These mechanisms encompasses a range of processes, policies and protocols designed to monitor, evaluate and enhance the quality of education provided by schools, colleges and universities (Adetunji, 2015). The effective implementation of quality assurance mechanisms can lead to several positive outcomes, including enhanced teaching and learning practices, improved student performance and increased accountability within educational institutions.

Nigeria has made several signs of progress in the development of the tertiary education system using the instrumentality of government policies. However, policies, innovations, and practices seem disconnected or disjointed. Nigeria has one of the most robust education policies, but a major challenge is the implementation of these policies. Federal agencies such as the NUC, Nigeria University Commission, the NCCE, National Board for Technical Education, and TET-Fund are responsible for formulating, funding, monitoring and implementations of tertiary education teaching and research policies (NUC, 2004). These bodies develop the minimum academic standards, accredits degrees and other academic awards. Also, they are responsible for ensuring that quality is maintained within the academic programmes. This is because education has been described as the bedrock of every society, backbone for development and tool for nation building. Therefore, for qualitative education to be achieved in a nation, the principal actors of learning who are the lecturers, learners and the environment must be cooperatively organized. The teacher must be adequate in quality and quantity, the students must be well trained and facilities must be provided as well.

Over the years, there have been a considerable and progressive decline in the records of academic achievement in Nigerian tertiary Educational institutions and several factors has depicted this seeming irredeemable deterioration (Enaohwo, 2004). Among these factors are the indiscriminate ASUU strike resulting in delay in the graduation years of students, lack of supervision and monitoring, yearly production of unemployable graduates, certification of graduates without sufficient skills, graduation of students with little or no entrepreneurial skills plus poor grades, poor infrastructural facilities, inadequate or absence of instructional materials, poor learning environment, poor funding, etc. (Adedipe, 2007). These deficiencies has led to a disconnect between the tertiary institutions and industries leading to graduates being underdeveloped in terms of emerging digital skills, employability skills, entrepreneurship education, vocational and industrial development. Research has even proven that many also lack employability skills that guarantee their employment in the labour market and the quality of training is not sync with the current labour demands in the society. This implies that the quality of education offered to students is not tailored to tackle the current need of the society.

Palander (2013) opined that the by-product of quality education is a justifiable and feasible improved educational standard. Improved educational standards typically refer to an increase in the quality of education that students receive. This can include a number of things, such as: improved student achievement and learning outcomes, higher test scores or graduation rates, more effective and engaging teaching practices, differentiated instruction or personalized learning, greater access to high-quality educational resources, such as technology, textbooks, and learning materials, increased equity and access to education, so that all students have the opportunity to succeed, a focus on 21st century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, and

communication. The Nigerian government through the Ministry of education has developed programs and policies that have the primary objective of bringing about improvement in the standards of education and one of these policies is the National Policy of education (FRN, 2014). Improved educational standards are evident in the performance outcomes of the student within the school, college and University. As an indicator of intellectual education, continuous improvement in the standard of education is the most important prerequisite for individual and societal prosperity.

Ajayi and Adegbesan (2007) argued that quality assurance is related to accountability, which is concerned with maximizing the effectiveness and efficiency of educational systems and services in relation to their contexts, of their missions and their stated objectives. In their view, quality in education can be seen or defined as the level of excellence in performance or the strength of the quality in the contexts, inputs, process transactions and output. Just like in any other sector organization, there are needs for Quality Assurance in Nigerian Schools.

In Education, quality is looked as “Transformation”. This is to say quality assurance is seen within the context of a function, indicating how much value has been added to the knowledge, skills and abilities of the learners regardless of their initial levels of competence (Ugochukwu & Adiele, 2015). To ensure good quality assurance, it is important that the mechanisms are strictly followed. For the education industry to successfully undertake the functions of development, quality human capital is sacrosanct, through the acquisition of appropriate skills and knowledge, there is need for checks and balances and this can be achieved through regular and effective inspection and supervision of our schools (Nwogu, 2014). Succinctly, there must be mechanisms set in motion for assessing the quality performance of school services, programmes and projects by officials of the Ministry of Educations or its agencies that are specially established to fulfil these responsibilities. In essence, there must be ways and means of ensuring quality control and maintenance of standards and this is the place of Quality Assurance mechanisms. The following mechanisms could be considered while trying to assure quality; monitoring, evaluation and inspection.

Monitoring here refers to the systematic process of collecting and analysing data at intervals about on-going projects and using same information to track programme’s progress towards reaching objectives within the school system. The aim is to constantly assess the level of performance with a view of finding out how far set objectives are being met. Ojo (2007) saw monitoring in education as keeping a watchful eye on the input, process, output and the environment of an education system to ensure that things keep going the right direction and according to set standards. For example, monitoring of students’ academic progress from one class to another.

Evaluation involves the process of assessing the effectiveness of a program, policy or intervention in an educational setting. It is a systematic and objectives process that uses various data sources such as student achievement data, surveys, interviews to determine whether the program, policy or intervention is meeting approved standards and intended goals to improve educational outcomes (Ekwe & Abuka, 2014).

Supervision refers to the process of overseeing and supporting the work of teachers and other school staff. It is a collaborative process that involves providing guidance, feedback and support to help teachers improve their practice and to ensure that they are meeting the need of the students (Adetunji, 2015). The goal of supervision is to improve the quality of instruction and ultimately improve student’s outcomes. The importance of these mechanisms to the overall functionality of the school cannot be over-emphasised. It is against this background that the

study will take detailed look at the role of Quality Assurance Mechanisms for improved educational standards in the tertiary institutions within the study area using the indices of monitoring, evaluation and supervision.

Statement of the Problem

In the recent times, attainment of educational goal has been of great concern to educational stakeholders. However, the attainment of educational goals has been observed to be on the decline which is evident in the notable increase in the out- flux of unemployable graduates in the labour market where many lack entrepreneurial, technical or vocational skills to solve their personal and societal needs and therefore cannot compete favourably with the counterparts.. This increasing multifarious problem continues to storm the Nigerian universities without recourse. Surprisingly, policy frameworks for addressing these issues have not been useful and as such the system is handicapped. Hence, quality assurance in the school system paves way for effective management of institutional programmes. The issue of quality in education is measured by conformity or non-conformity of educational institutions to standards which is continuously reviewed from time to time to keep abreast with best global practices and non-compliance to this, is usually evident in student outcomes and how they influence their physical environment upon graduation. This study therefore, seeks to investigate how quality assurance mechanisms such as Monitoring, Evaluation and Supervision can improve the educational standards in public tertiary educational institutions in Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the management of quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standard in Public Universities in Rivers State. Specifically, this study is aimed at the following objectives.

- To investigate how monitoring as quality assurance mechanism is managed for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State.
- To examine how Evaluation as quality assurance mechanism is managed for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State.
- To investigate how Supervision as quality assurance mechanism is managed for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

- To what extent is Monitoring as quality assurance mechanism managed for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State?
- To what extent is Evaluation as quality assurance mechanism managed for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State?
- To what extent is Supervision as quality assurance mechanism managed for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were postulated and statistically tested at .05 level of significance:

- There is no significant difference between the male and female lecturers in their mean ratings on the extent monitoring as quality assurance mechanism is managed for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State.
- There is no significant difference between the male and female lecturers in their mean ratings on the extent evaluation as quality assurance mechanism is managed for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State.
- There is no significant difference between the male and female lecturers in their mean ratings on the extent supervision as quality assurance mechanism is managed for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this study was anchored on the Systems theory, which was first developed by Von Bertalanffy (1937) in his lecture on “The General System Teaching” which later became the General Systems Theory (GST). System theory considers all the elements bordering on the organization as a whole. It is the idea of people being parts of a greater whole that affects their behaviour and experiences. In the view of the system theorists, organizations are considered to be adaptive and vulnerable to changes which occur internally or externally. The systems theory explains the existence of different independent and interrelated parts or units which perform different functions and work collectively to achieve the goals, aspirations and objectives of the whole system.

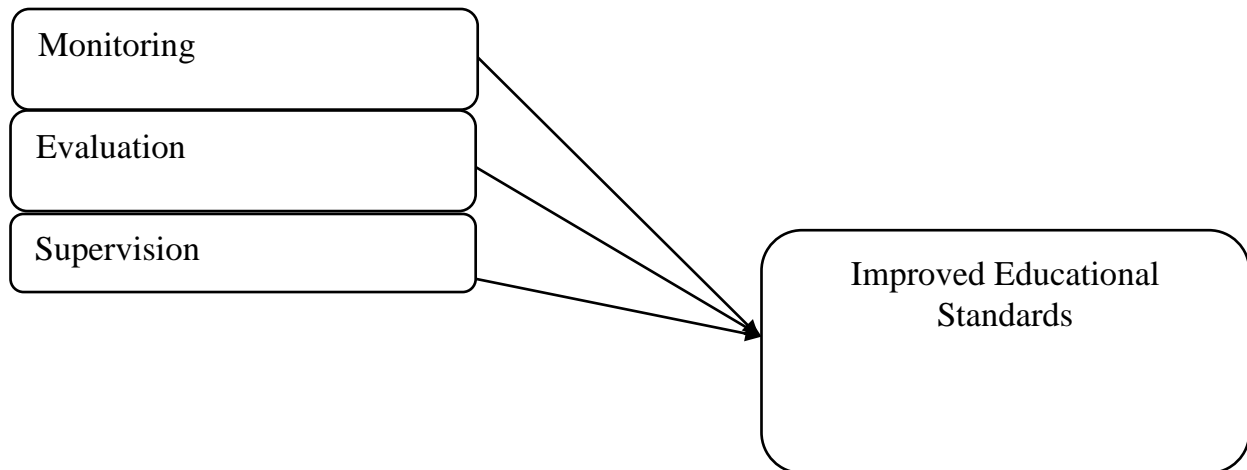
In the view of Peretomode (2012), systems are seen and perceived on the basis of inputs-process-output-environment. Organizations are established with a structural character which plays the important role in determining its inputs, productivity and adaptability within an environment.

Further expositions on systems theory was made by Norbert Wiener in Sharma and Sardana (2008) who stated that the field of cybernetics gave and interpreted organizations as generally having the character model of inputs-process-outputs-feedbacks and enrolment. Organizations as a system is largely dependent upon the effective functioning of its parts called sub- systems. Each system performs series of tasks in a complexity of arrangement such that they produce needed objectives and goals.

In relation to this study, system theory and the study is related because both are concerned with components of a given system working together to achieve one goal. It describes the educational system as a macro system with many complex micro units determined to achieve goals within an environment. Public Universities in Rivers State are systems with various units which are interrelated with specific goals and objectives. In ensuring standards in the tertiary educational institutions, the various sections of university management are obliged to employ strategies pertinent to management in ensuring adequate and proper quality assurance mechanisms in the various Institutions.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Quality Assurance Mechanisms



The figure above shows the nexus between quality assurance mechanisms and improved educational standard. If the listed mechanisms are given due attention, educational institutions will achieve its goals

Management

Management is the process of utilizing physical human and materials resources to achieve specified organizational goals and objectives. The goal of management is optimization of the output and achievement of the organizational goals. Specifically Obi (2004) described the goal of management in education in terms of planning, organizing, staffing, coordinating and directing the affairs of educational institution towards achieving educational objectives. Management is the effective articulation, harmonization and utilization of human, material and financial resources to achieve organizational goals. According to Robert-Okah (2014) it is a process through which available resources are arranged and co-ordinated towards achieving the goals of the educational system.

Concept of Improved Educational Standard

The main role of education is to bring out the latent potentialities, intrinsic qualities and development of the integrated personality for the well-being of the individuals and the society at large (Kapur, 2019). An improved educational standard refers to a higher level of educational quality or effectiveness. This can be measured in terms of a variety of factors, such as student achievement, teacher quality, curriculum quality, and resource availability. In order to improve educational standards, schools and districts often implement changes to their policies, practices, and procedures. These changes may include adopting new curricula, updating teaching methods, and investing in resources such as technology or professional development for teachers. The ultimate goal of these changes is to improve student learning and ensure that all students have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. Some other highlights of an improved educational standard include: Greater access to educational opportunities for all students, regardless of

socioeconomic status or background, an increased focus on individualized instruction, with a greater emphasis on differentiated learning and meeting the needs of each student, an improved climate and culture of learning, with a focus on creating a safe and supportive environment for all students, an increased accountability for educational outcomes, with a focus on measuring and tracking student progress and a commitment to lifelong learning, with a focus on preparing students for success in the 21st century.

Five Key Elements of Improved Educational Standard

- **Curriculum:** This includes the content and materials that are taught in schools, as well as the methods and strategies used to teach them. An improved curriculum should be aligned with state and national standards, and should be designed to meet the needs of all students.
- **Instruction:** This refers to the way in which teachers deliver instruction, including their strategies for engaging students and assessing their learning. Effective instruction requires teachers to have a deep understanding of the content they are teaching, as well as the ability to adapt their instruction to meet the current needs of learners.
- **Resources:** This includes the materials, technology, and facilities that are available to support student learning. Resources should be sufficient to meet the needs of all students, and should be accessible and up-to-date.
- **Assessment:** This refers to the methods used to measure and evaluate student learning, as well as the use of data to inform instructional decisions. Effective assessment should be fair and equitable, and should provide useful feedback to students and teachers.
- **Organization and management:** This refers to the structure and operation of the school system, including the policies and procedures that guide the work of teachers and administrators.

Concept of Quality Assurance

Quality assurance on the other hand, is the systematic process of ensuring that all coordinated actions carried out within a quality system (educational institution) such as instructional and administrative activities fulfil the requirements for quality. It is the angle of *quality management* geared on providing confidence that *quality requirements* must be fulfilled. Madumere-Obike, Okeke and Nwabueze (2013) stated that quality assurance has become a yardstick through which the subjects offered in higher institutions, teaching staff employment, infrastructural facilities, curriculum content and supervision carried out in schools are determined. Therefore, quality assurance helps in the management of educational resources for active productivity. In education, quality assurance is the efficient management, supervision, monitoring, assessment and reviews of the educational resource inputs and curriculum implementation process to produce quality learning outcomes (product value) that meet set standards and expectations of the society. Madumere-Obike et al. (2013) were of the opinion that quality assurance in education enhances the quality of teaching (making teaching and learning more clearer), improves staff skills and knowledge production processes, creates greater chance of continuing success in staff's and students' functional performance as well as bridges the gap between teaching and school administration.

Quality assurance is all about effectiveness, while quality control works towards efficiency in an educational institution. Quality assurance has created an opportunity for an agency to monitor, assess and evaluate the activities and programmes of educational institutions to assure quality as the products (graduates) that would eventually further their education as others may join the labour market after their first degree programme. It is the systematic review of educational programmes to ensure that acceptable standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure are being maintained. Quality assurance could be seen as a continuous process by which an institution can guarantee that standards and quality of its educational provisions are being managed or enhanced.

Quality assurance has been defined as systematic management and assessment procedure adopted by tertiary educational institutions and systems in order to monitor performance against objectives and to ensure achievement of quality outputs and quality improvements (Harman, 2000). Terms like effectiveness, efficiency, equity, equality and quality are often used by educationist to indicate quality interchangeably (Harman, 2000). The International Organization of Standardization (1994) described it as the totality of features and characteristics of a product of service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated needs.

Education and Quality Assurance

To Okai et al. (2019), education is a process of acquiring skills and knowledge through which one subdue his environment and contributes to the development of the society. According to Babalola (2004), quality of education refers to worth of education (with reference to the inputs, the teaching–learning process and the output/outcome), it is measured against set standards and can be viewed as below, exactly or above standard. Quality of outcome and output involves the academic achievement and attainment, value added through education, results of internal and external examinations etc. Other measures for quality may be poor, expected, excellent or exceptional. Quality of input refers to worth of teachers, materials (textbooks), method of delivery (technology) and tasks or curriculum. Quality of process refers to the worth of teaching learning process which involves lesson notes, delivery methods, classroom organisation and control, student–teacher interactions, students’ participation, assessment, evaluation and marking. The need for quality assurance in Nigerian schools cannot be overemphasized in order to ensure quality of teaching and learning. However, the following are the major needs of quality assurance in our education system in Nigeria:

- To serve as indispensable component of quality control strategy in education;
- To ensure and maintain high standard of education at all levels;
- To assist in monitoring and supervision of education;
- To determine the quality of teacher input;
- To determine the number of- classrooms needed based on the average class size to ensure quality control of education.

Concept of Quality Assurance Mechanism

Tertiary institutions across the globe in recent times are setting up workable, realistic and achievable quality assurance mechanisms which enable them to consistently produce high quality and cost effective outputs. According to Enaowho (2004), quality assurance begins with

the selection of inputs (students/resources) into the school set-up for processing in order to realize desirable output/outcomes. To Peretomode (2008), developing quality assurance mechanism although helps tertiary institutions to overcome challenges of ineffective input and processes, it improves the credibility of outputs and certificates awarded. For instance, tertiary institutions are constantly involved in checks and balances to ensure standards and quality are maintained and sustained in such areas as minimum standards, accreditation, grading, credit system, moderation of examination questions and results, external examinership, scholarship awards and general funding of infrastructure. Scholars in analysing the problems of curricula in tertiary education in Nigeria blamed the scope of the curriculum, the appropriateness of the learning experiences provided, adequacy of material and facilities, transfer of the knowledge to real life situations and quality of the outputs from the system.

The above outlined precarious trends have indeed called for an effective implementation of quality assurance measures in order to restore the credibility of degrees and certificates award by tertiary Institutions in Nigeria. Thus, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC, 2007) five core values of universities which include contributing to national development, fostering global competencies among students, inculcating a value system in students, promoting the use of technology and quest for excellence basically is what tertiary educational institutions in the third world must do to improve quality of certification and change the perception of stakeholders in the education sub-sector. The pursuit of excellence across Nigerian educational Institutions must be all inclusive and positively affects the entire development of the institutions.

Internal Quality Assurance : In the opinions of Oladipo and Oni (2009), the policies, mechanisms, processes and certainly the attitudinal changes form a congruent which when effected internally (by the institution) to guarantee compliance with standards, accountability and fitness of purpose will be seen as internal quality assurance. For example, during accreditation (a process under which services and operations of educational institutions or programs are evaluated by an external body or accrediting agency) to determine if applicable standards are met by the National Universities Commission (NUC) in some Nigerian universities, the Academic Planning Department is wholesomely evaluated and monitored through a step by step process while the remaining is done by self- study instruments by Colleges, the Registry, the Bursary and other units. The activities of internal quality assurance involve stages that are meant to appraise the system and likewise its processes to determine the weaknesses and possible remedial measures for possible solutions.

External Quality Assurance: This refers to the monitoring and evaluation for agreement with stipulated rules and standards carried out by statutory agencies from outside the institutions. It scrutinizes the appropriateness of purpose and effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes used by the statutory agency, with an examination of the system's structure, its documentation and the evaluation of quality done by the entity. Also, it examines the compliance of tertiary institutions with requirements of license holders under these regulations, where appropriate; likewise, any conditions or restrictions imposed. It comprises suitable investigatory mechanisms to guarantee financial probity, the legal representative and the persons occupying a leadership position are right and suitable persons to deliver extra on higher education programmes. For example, new universities in Nigeria submit to resource verification exercises and undergo appraisal of their temporary operating license as this is to monitor compliance with

prospects and the possibility of issuing of the permanent operating license. Also, both old and new universities go through periodic accreditation of their programmes by the NUC through selected panels of renowned professors. The exercise creates an all-inclusive evaluation of institutional vision, mission and strategic goals, teaching quality, learning and research, institutional efficiency and effectiveness, institutional resources, institutional control and management among others.

Impacts of Effective Quality assurance Mechanisms

- Effective quality assurance mechanisms ensures the quality of a program management system and demonstrate continuous improvement.
- Facilitates the evolution of programs to maintain their relevance and fitness with the Mission of the educational institution
- Ensures that established policies and procedures for all programs of instruction offered by the college, regarding their development, review and maintenance, are monitored (approved and revised) regularly, and applied consistently across all programs of instruction.
- Gathers, collates and analyzes data and information from stakeholders (e.g. graduates, industry representatives, faculty, students, and professional bodies), program maintenance records (e.g. program review) and program indicators (e.g. graduation rates, retention rates).
- Manages changes to programs and courses to keep them current and relevant with provincial standards and relevant professional body requirements, and to ensure that recommendations arising from previous program reviews have been considered and addressed

Characteristics of Effective Quality Assurance Mechanism

The following should also be seen as characteristics of an effective quality assurance mechanism. They are: Effective quality management system, Periodic audit of the operation of the system and Periodic review of the system to ensure that changing requirements are met. According to Ajayi and Ekundayo (2007), for performance in a school system to be acknowledged as excellent, the following Indicators of quality education must prevail in the school system:

Quality teachers: This refers to the teachers' qualification, pedagogical skills motivation, curriculum offering, internship, number and specialization, etc.

Quality learners: Refers to pupils/students who are ready and highly motivated to learn

Quality teaching: This must be child centered and skill based approaches.

Quality context: It refers to the relevant curriculum adequate and relevant materials for literary numeracy and essential knowledge and skills for life.

Quality learning environment: The school must be child-friendly. There must be policies and practices that discourage humiliation, harassment, violence, corporal punishment, substance

abuse and available of: adequate classrooms, clean portable water supplies and well-kept sanitation facilities.

Monitoring as a Quality Assurance Mechanism for Improved Educational Standards

Monitoring refers to the process of collecting data at intervals about on-going projects programmed within the school system. The aim is to constantly assess the level of performance with a view of finding out how far set objectives are being met. The purpose of a monitoring mechanism is to further the effective implementation of the rules. It will assist each institution in assessing its level of implementation. Monitoring is a systematic routine collection of data during project implementation for the purpose assessment. Monitoring is conducted after a programme has begun and continues throughout the programme implementation period. Monitoring is sometimes referred to as process, performance or formative evaluation. Thus, monitoring is an intermittent regular or irregular series of observations in time, carried out to show the extent of compliance with a formulated standard or degree of deviation from an expected norm. Nabris (2002) in his own view defined monitoring as an on-going activity to track the progress being made by an entity or a phenomenon against a planned task. Nabris (2002) stated that monitoring is aimed at the following:

- Improving efficiency and effectiveness;
- Helping to keep work on track and allows management to know when things are going wrong (regular feedback);
- Enabling organizations to find out if resources available are sufficient and being well used accountably;
- Finding out if capacity available is sufficient and appropriate; and
- Providing useful base for evaluation.

Monitoring is seeing if you are doing what you said you would do and done in a systematic approach to overseeing planning, learning and touching (Aina, 1995). This is part of evaluation that ensures that information is gathered so that judgments can be made and questions answered accordingly. School monitoring helps in providing a consolidated source of information showing the progress of the school. The monitoring of education is one of the major tools of education policy-making. Its purpose is the performance of an analysis: to examine in detail the current situation of education, to suggest alternatives for its improvement, to make informed decisions and to carry out the management ensuring the quality of education and science. The monitoring performed in a systematic and coordinated manner is especially important in helping to identify and solve the problems and in saving funds and time, since it replaces the supervision based on inspections.

Evaluation as a quality assurance mechanism for Improved Educational Standards

Literarily, evaluation is a process measuring performance. In education, the term evaluation involves assessment, appraisal, valuation and estimation of the worth of education inputs, process and outcome for the purpose of making judgement and corrective criticism. It is used to refer to judgements on individual student progress and achievement of learning goals. It covers classroom-based assessments as well as large-scale, external assessments and examinations. The

ultimate objective of evaluation is to enhance student outcomes through the improvement of practices at the different levels of the school system, including teaching methods, school leadership processes, ways to organise learning, and directions of education policy (Mckay & Kember, 2009).

According to Middlehurst (2001), evaluation provide a basis for monitoring how effectively education is being delivered to students and for assessing the performance of systems, schools, school leaders, teachers and students, among others. Middlehurst and Woodhouse (1995) saw evaluation as identifying strengths and weaknesses of systems, schools, school leaders, teachers and students which inform areas for development. In addition, evaluation and assessment can have a diagnostic function such as with school readiness assessments or sampled-based standardised assessments to measure the extent to which student learning objectives are being achieved across the education system. By measuring student outcomes and holding lecturers and schools responsible for results, accountability systems intend to create incentives for improved performance and identify “underperforming” schools and school agents.

Supervision as a Quality Assurance Mechanism

According to Ajayi (1997), supervision is all efforts of designated school officials towards providing leadership to teachers and other educational workers in the improvement of instruction. It involves the stimulation of professional growth and development of teachers, a selection and revision of educational objectives, materials of instruction and method of teaching, and the evaluation of instruction. Supervision is one of the strategies for effective management of teaching manpower for quality education. They stated that supervision of instruction is necessary for the provision of quality education in Nigeria and that supervision is carried out to ensure maintenance of standard, availability of material resources for teaching, a meaningful exchange of ideas between teachers and administrators regarding areas of problems in the pursuit of teaching and learning, coverage of syllabus. With effective supervision, the policies of the Ministry of Education regarding the administration of schools can be properly implemented.

According to Ogun as cited in Eziuzo (2014), supervision is the act of overseeing the activities of teachers and other workers in the school system to ensure that they conform with the general accepted principles of education in order to achieve educational goals. Supervision is a device for improving teachers’ knowledge, attitudes and skills which focus on the teaching and learning processes for the purpose of ensuring the achievement of educational and objectives (Eziuzo, 2014). Asuquo et al. (2018) posited that school administrators are in charge of ensuring that teachers effectively carry out their assigned tasks and students’ learning is effective. The authors further stated that school administrators’ involvement in overseeing teachers’ and students’ activities during teaching and learning contribute to school goal attainment and that the success of any school as regards goal attainment depends on school administrators’ professional responsibilities and application of quality control technique of supervision of teaching and learning.

Asuquo et al. (2018) conducted a study on quality control techniques and secondary school goal attainment in Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State, Nigeria. Instructional supervision and facilities management were used as quality control techniques. It was found that significant relationship existed between instructional supervision, facilities management and secondary school goal attainment. Supervision is an essential part of any educational setup with the sole aim of promoting and developing a conducive and favourable teaching and learning

environment as well as the stimulation, overseeing and appraisal of activities leading to the realisation of instructional goals at a specified quality level.

The word supervision derived its origin from a Latin word “Super-video, meaning “To Oversee”. Supervision is an essential part of any organizational set-up. In education, it is that phase of school administration that sees to the improvement of instruction. Emeterom (2007) saw supervision as a process of bringing about improvement in instruction by working with people who are working with pupils and students. It is a service rendered to teachers which is directed towards controlling the quality of teaching.

Supervision tries to control what is taught, who is taught and the impact of what is taught on the learner. Supervisory mechanism is a combination or integration of a number of processes, procedures and conditions that are consciously designed with the sole aim of enhancing the work effectiveness of teachers

Another essential part of supervision is its role in the monitoring and execution of the curriculum at a zero level defect. Through supervision, inexperienced teachers are assisted to grow and even the experienced ones need to be supervised in order to continue to maintain high standards.

METHODS

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of this study consisted of all the 3448 lecturers from the three (3) tertiary educational institutions in Rivers State (Source: office of the Registrar of each school, 2023).

Table 1: Population Distribution of Academic Staff in Rivers State Universities

S/No.	Name of Institution	Population of Teaching Staff
1	IAUE	424
2	RSU	1589
3	UNIPORT	1435
	TOTAL	3,448

Sample and Sampling Technique: A sample size of three hundred and forty-five (345) respondents representing 10% of the entire population was selected using stratified random sampling technique to ensure an equal chance of selection. The method involved dividing the population of 3448 into strata. This approach employed ensured that each subgroup was proportionately represented in the sample, thus enhancing the generality of the study’s finding to the larger population. Kpee (2015) considered such percentage appropriate to serve as an acceptable sample for a population running into thousands.

Table 2: Sample Size Distribution of Academic Staff in Rivers State Universities

S/No.	Name of Institution	Population of Teaching Staff	Proportion	Sample Size
1	IAUE	424	$\frac{10}{100} \times 424 = 42.4$	42
2	RSU	1589	$\frac{10}{100} \times 1589 = 158.9$	159
3	UNIPORT	1435	$\frac{10}{100} \times 1435 = 143.5$	144
TOTAL		3,448		345

The research instrument was a self-structured questionnaire titled Quality Assurance Mechanisms for Improved Educational Standard Questionnaire (QAMIESQ). The Part ‘A’ of the questionnaire was made up of the demographic data of the respondents while part ‘B’ was made up of structured items centered on the variables of the study. The instrument was patterned based on the modified 4- points Likert response scale. This provided four levels of opinion which are: Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), Very Low Extent (VLE), and weighted mean of $4+3+2+1 = 10/4 = 2.5$.

The degree of reliability of the instrument was established using Pearson Product Coefficient Moment Correlation (PPMC). A test–re–test method was adopted; about 20 copies of the instrument were administered to about 20 lecturers outside the study sample. The total data collected from the response of the selected lecturers were subjected to PPMC. This approach enabled the researcher to establish the internal consistency of the instrument to determine the reliability and index of the instrument which stood at ($r=0.82$).The questionnaires were administered to the respondents by the researcher and some trained research assistants. The respondents were given some time to respond to the questionnaire after which the researcher retrieved the completed copies of the questionnaire. A total of 345 copies of the QAMIESQ were administered to the respondents after giving them brief explanation on how to respond to the items of the instrument. A total of 339 copies of the instrument were retrieved representing 98.3% of the sample. The retrieved copies of the instrument were used for data analysis. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the independent sample t-test was used to test the hypotheses at .05 alpha level of significance.

RESULTS

Table 3: Summary of Frequency Distribution of Respondents based on Gender

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	196	57.8	57.8	57.8
	Female	143	42.2	42.2	100.0
	Total	339	100.0	100.0	

Data in Table 3 above shows that majority of the respondents [F=196(57.8%)] were male lecturers, while the remaining participants [F=143(42.2%)] were female lecturers.

Answer to Research Questions

Research Question One: To what extent is monitoring as quality assurance mechanism managed for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State?

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation on the extent to which monitoring as quality assurance mechanism is managed for improved educational standard

S/N	ITEMS	Male N=196		Female N=143		Mean Set		Remark
		Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.	
1.	Monitoring helps to check students' progress through their records and serves as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standards.	3.03	0.88	2.76	0.67	2.90	0.80	High Extent
2.	Monitoring helps to check staff attendance to classes and serves as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standards.	2.73	1.08	2.78	0.95	2.75	1.02	High Extent
3.	Through monitoring, non-compliance areas can be observed and serves as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standards.	2.96	0.85	2.57	0.84	2.78	0.87	High Extent
4.	Through monitoring, obsolete machines/materials can be identified and replaced to improve efficiency and serves as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standards.	3.17	0.77	2.87	0.54	3.03	0.69	High Extent
5.	Monitoring promotes strict adherence to set educational objectives and serves as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standards.	3.02	0.82	3.10	0.44	3.06	0.67	High Extent
Grand Mean Set & St.D (N=339)		2.98	0.88	2.82	0.69	2.90	0.81	High Extent

Data in Table 4 above shows that the lecturers were of the opinion that items 1 to 5 with their individual mean and corresponding standard deviation should be agreed as the extent to which monitoring served as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standard. Although, 5 out of the 5 items were accepted because their individual mean is greater than the cumulative mean average of 2.50. The grand mean set stood at 2.90(SD=0.81) indicating that the lecturers from the three institutions under study agreed that to a high extent, monitoring served as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State. Though the male lecturers out-performed their female counterparts with grand mean and standard deviation of 2.98(SD=0.88) and 2.82(SD=0.69) respectively.

Research Question Two: To what extent is evaluation a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State?

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation on the extent to which evaluation as quality assurance mechanism is managed for improved educational standard

S/N	ITEMS	Male N=196		Female N=143		Mean Set		Remark
		Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.	
6.	Administration of standardized test to Students in other to measure academic achievement serves as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standards.	3.04	0.82	3.11	0.48	3.07	0.69	High Extent
7.	Seminars and term paper presentations by students' serve as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standards.	3.43	0.94	3.29	0.68	3.36	0.83	High Extent
8.	Administration of appraisal forms and questionnaires to students to elicit feedback serve as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standards.	3.42	0.96	3.41	0.60	3.41	0.81	High Extent
9.	Subjecting students to practical and laboratory experiments serve as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standards.	2.89	0.83	3.14	0.43	3.01	0.69	High Extent
10.	Organizing departmental seminars for lecturers to improve their services serve as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standards.	2.97	0.81	3.14	0.43	3.05	0.66	High Extent
Grand Mean Set & SD (N=339)		3.15	0.87	3.22	0.52	3.18	0.74	High Extent

Similarly, the data in Table 5 above shows that the lecturers were of the opinion that items 6 to 10 with their individual mean and corresponding standard deviation should be agreed as the extent to which evaluation served as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standard. Although, 5 out of the 5 items were accepted because their individual mean is greater than the cumulative mean average of 2.50. The grand mean set stood at 3.18(SD=0.74) indicating that the lecturers agreed that to a high extent, evaluation served as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State. Furthermore, the female lecturers mostly perceived these deviant behaviours with grand mean of 3.22(SD=0.52) compared to their male counterpart [grand mean=3.15; SD=0.87]. Although, all the items are agreed because their individual mean set is greater than the cumulative mean average of 2.50.

Research Question Three: To what extent is supervision serves as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State?

Table 6: Mean and Standard Deviation on the extent to which supervision as quality assurance mechanism is managed for improved educational standard

S/N	ITEMS	Male N=196		Female N=143		Mean Set		Remark
		Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.	
11.	Supervision provides feedback to faculty members on their teaching performance and serves as quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standard.	3.00	0.70	3.06	0.34	3.03	0.56	High Extent
12.	Through supervision, University policies and procedures can be assessed and serves as quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standards.	2.69	0.94	2.96	0.28	2.81	0.72	High Extent
13.	Supervision provides the university the guidance on the use of appropriate technology and serves as quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standard.	3.05	0.81	2.96	0.45	3.01	0.67	High Extent
14.	Supervision ensures that academic programs are meeting accreditation standards and serves as quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standards.	3.10	0.69	2.83	0.60	2.97	0.66	High Extent
15.	Through supervision, the quality of leaning environment and facilities can be evaluated and serves as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standards.	3.18	0.97	2.78	0.63	2.98	0.86	High Extent
Grand Mean Set & St.D (N=339)		3.00	0.82	2.92	0.46	2.96	0.69	High Extent

Again, the data in Table 6 above shows that the lecturers were of the opinion that items 11 to 15 with their individual mean and corresponding standard deviation should be agreed as the extent to which supervision served as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standard. Although, 5 out of the 5 items were accepted because their individual mean is greater than the cumulative mean average of 2.50. The grand mean set stood at 2.96(SD=0.69) indicating that the lecturers agreed that to a high extent, supervision served as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State. Furthermore, the male lecturers mostly perceived these deviant behaviours with grand mean of 3.00(SD=0.82) compared to their female counterpart [grand mean=2.92; SD=0.46]. Although, all the items are agreed because their individual mean set is greater than the cumulative mean average of 2.50.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female lecturers on monitoring as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State.

Table 7: Independent sample t-test of the mean score of male and female lecturers on the extent monitoring as quality assurance mechanism is managed for improved educational standard

Gender	N	Mean	SD	DF	t	p	Decision
Male	196	3.14	0.88	337	3.463	.001	Significant
Female	143	2.83	0.70				Ho ₁ Rejected

From the result presented in Table 7 above, it is revealed that male lecturers had a mean value of 3.14(SD = 0.88), while the female lecturers had a mean value of 2.83(SD = 0.70). This result shows that the male lecturers strongly believe that monitoring served as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State over their female counterpart. Further testing using independent sample t-test yielded a t-value of 3.463 with a corresponding p-value of .001, which is less than the chosen alpha value of .05. Since $p < .05$, the null hypothesis one was therefore rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of male and female lecturers on monitoring as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between the male and female lecturers in their mean ratings on the extent evaluation as quality assurance mechanism is managed for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State.

Table 8: Independent sample t-test of the mean score of male and female lecturers on the extent evaluation as quality assurance mechanism is managed for improved educational standard

Gender	N	Mean	SD	DF	t	p	Decision
Male	196	3.13	0.93	337	4.854	.000	Significant
Female	143	2.68	0.74				Ho ₂ Rejected

From the result presented in Table 8 above, it is revealed that male lecturers had a mean value of 3.13(SD = 0.93), while the female lecturers had a mean value of 2.68(SD=0.74). This result shows that the male lecturers strongly believe that evaluation served as another quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State over their female counterpart. Further testing using independent sample t-test yielded a t-value of 4.854 with a corresponding p-value of .000, which is less than the chosen alpha value of 0.05. Since $p < .05$, the null hypothesis two was therefore rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of male and female lecturers on evaluation as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference between the male and female lecturers in their mean ratings on the extent supervision as quality assurance mechanism is managed for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State.

Table 9: Independent sample t-test of the mean score of male and female lecturers on the extent supervision as quality assurance mechanism is managed for improved educational standard

Gender	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	t	p	Decision
Male	196	3.11	0.74	337	5.002	.000	Significant Ho₂ Rejected
Female	143	2.71	0.70				

From the result presented in Table 9 above, it is revealed that male lecturers had a mean value of 3.11(SD = 0.74), while the female lecturers had a mean value of 2.71(SD=0.70). This result shows that the male lecturers strongly believe that supervision also served as quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State over their female counterpart. Further testing using independent sample t-test yielded a t-value of 5.002 with a corresponding p-value of .000, which is less than the chosen alpha value of .05. Since $p < .05$, the null hypothesis three was therefore rejected. This implies that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of male and female lecturers on supervision as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standard in public Universities in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The extent to which Monitoring as Quality Assurance Mechanism is managed for improved Educational Standard

Research question one and tested hypothesis one were used to verify the above objective. Items 1-5 on the B part of the questionnaire were carefully constructed to answer this question. The results in Table 4, based on a sample size of 339, indicate a high extent of agreement across all items. The mean scores range from 2.57 to 3.17, with an overall grand mean set of 2.90(SD=0.81), suggesting a consensus among respondents that monitoring plays a crucial role in checking students' progress, staff attendance, identifying non-compliance areas, addressing obsolete machines/materials, and promoting strict adherence to set educational objectives. The standard deviations are relatively low (ranging from 0.92 to 0.97), indicating a consistent perception among participants. In summary, the findings highlight the perceived effectiveness of monitoring as a quality assurance mechanism for elevating educational standards in the assessed areas.

Further investigation from Table 7 found out the mean score for male lecturers as 3.14 with a standard deviation of 0.88, while female lecturers have a mean score of 2.83 with a standard deviation of 0.70. The t-test resulted in a significant t-value of 3.463 with 337 degrees of freedom (df), yielding a p-value of 0.001. Consequently, the null hypothesis (Ho1) was rejected, indicating a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of male and female lecturers regarding the effectiveness of monitoring for improving educational standards. This suggests that there is a notable gender-based distinction in how lecturers view the role of monitoring as a quality assurance mechanism, with male lecturers tending to express a more positive perception compared to their female counterparts.

The extent to which Evaluation as Quality Assurance Mechanism is managed for improved Educational Standard

Research question two and tested hypothesis two were used to verify the above objective. Items 6-10 on the B part of the questionnaire were carefully constructed to answer this question. The results in Table 5 indicated a high extent of agreement among respondents. Notably, the mean scores range from 2.89 to 3.43, with an overall grand mean set of 3.11(SD=0.74), suggesting a consensus on the effectiveness of various evaluation methods. These include the administration of standardized tests, seminars, term paper presentations by students, appraisal forms, questionnaires for student feedback, practical and laboratory experiments, and departmental seminars for lecturer development. The standard deviations are relatively low (ranging from 0.89 to 0.99), indicating a consistent perception among participants. In summary, the findings highlight the perceived importance of diverse evaluation approaches as quality assurance mechanisms for elevating educational standards across different dimensions within the academic context.

Further investigation from Table 8 found out the mean score for male lecturers have a mean score of 3.13 with a standard deviation of 0.93, while female lecturers exhibit a mean score of 2.68 with a standard deviation of 0.74. The t-test yields a highly significant t-value of 4.854 with 337 degrees of freedom (df), resulting in a p-value of 0.000. As a consequence, the null hypothesis (Ho2) is rejected, indicating a statistically significant gender-based disparity in how male and female lecturers perceive the role of evaluation as a quality assurance mechanism for improved educational standards. This suggests that male lecturers tend to hold a more positive view of the effectiveness of evaluation methods compared to their female counterparts.

The extent to which Supervision as Quality Assurance Mechanism is managed for improved Educational Standard

Research question three and tested hypothesis three were used to verify the above objective. Items 11-15 on the B part of the questionnaire were carefully constructed to answer this question. The results in Table 6 revealed a high consensus among respondents, with mean scores ranging from 2.69 to 3.18 and an overall grand mean set of 2.96(SD=0.69). The standard deviations are relatively low, varying from 0.80 to 1.01, indicating a consistent perception among participants. The findings highlight the perceived effectiveness of supervision in providing feedback to faculty members on teaching performance, assessing university policies and procedures, guiding the use of appropriate technology, ensuring accreditation standards are met for academic programs, and evaluating the quality of the learning environment and facilities. Overall, the results emphasize the importance of supervision as a multifaceted quality assurance mechanism contributing to improved educational standards across various dimensions within the academic context.

Further investigation from Table 9 revealed notable disparities in viewpoints, as male lecturers exhibit a mean score of 3.11 with a standard deviation of 0.74, while female lecturers display a mean score of 2.71 with a standard deviation of 0.70. The t-test yields a highly significant t-value of 5.002 with 337 degrees of freedom (df), resulting in a p-value of 0.000. Consequently, the null hypothesis (Ho2) is rejected, indicating a statistically significant gender-based distinction in how male and female lecturers perceive the role of supervision as a quality assurance mechanism for enhanced educational standards. This suggests that male lecturers tend

to hold a more positive view regarding the effectiveness of supervision compared to their female counterparts.

This study's finding is in agreement with the finding of Odukoya (2015) that quality assurance is a veritable tool in quality management practices mostly when the stipulations of the curriculum are duly implemented to achieve quality output can be achieved. This present study's finding is equally in accord with the finding of Ojo (2019) that quality is compromised when introduction of strategies that would lead to re-engineering of schools and introduction of effective supervisory management of the educational sector are ignored.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the comprehensive analysis of the data, encompassing monitoring, evaluation, and supervision as quality assurance mechanisms for improved educational standards, has yielded valuable insights. The findings from Table 4 and Table 5 consistently indicate a high extent of agreement among participants, affirming the positive impact of monitoring and evaluation on educational standards. Respondents perceive these mechanisms as effective tools for checking student progress, staff attendance, and promoting adherence to educational objectives, as well as utilizing various evaluation methods. Furthermore, Table 6 highlights the significance of supervision in enhancing educational standards, with respondents emphasizing its role in providing feedback on teaching performance, assessing university policies, guiding technology use, ensuring accreditation standards, and evaluating the quality of learning environments.

Additionally, the gender-based analysis in Table 8 and Table 9 sheds light on intriguing disparities in the perceptions of male and female lecturers. Notably, male lecturers consistently expressed more positive views regarding both evaluation and supervision compared to their female counterparts. This emphasizes the need for further exploration into the underlying factors contributing to these differences and underscores the importance of considering diverse perspectives in shaping policies and practices for quality assurance in higher education. Overall, these results provide a foundation for informed decision-making in educational institutions, encouraging a holistic approach to quality assurance that considers the varied perspectives and experiences of educators.

Recommendations

- Educational institutions should encourage cross-functional collaboration between different departments and stakeholders involved in the process of . This collaboration can facilitate a holistic approach to quality assurance, allowing for the integration of various perspectives and expertise. Departments responsible for monitoring student progress, evaluating academic programs, and supervising teaching performance should work collaboratively to share insights and best practices.
- As highlighted in the analysis, there is a consensus among respondents on the importance of evaluation as a quality assurance mechanism. To leverage this perception for improved educational standards, institutions should invest in comprehensive training programs for faculty members on diverse evaluation techniques. These programs could encompass the effective administration of standardized tests, conducting seminars, utilizing appraisal forms and questionnaires, and implementing practical and laboratory experiments.

- The Quality Assurance Unit that shoulders the responsibility of supervision should work collaboratively with lecturers to ensure the use of appropriate technology in lesson delivery and also ensure that faculties are meeting up with accreditation standards and best practices that will improve the standards of education in Public Universities in Rivers State.

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