



EVALUATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SERVICES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION: EMPIRICAL REVIEW

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ABSTRACT: *Administrative support is concerned with the provision of secretarial and administrative services to students, faculty, and other customers of educational institutions. In effect, any assistance provided by administrative staff to students and faculty that benefits the institution's overall well-being constitutes an administrative support service. Despite their complementary role in the teaching and learning process, it appears from the literature that administrative support services receive little attention when it comes to students' evaluation of university services for quality assurance. This article reviews digitally available scholarly research on administrative support services in higher education. The purpose of the review was to justify the inclusion of administrative support in students' evaluations of university services for quality assurance. To do this, the study reviewed scholarly works on administrative support services in higher education. In all, 43 research articles were analyzed in terms of six criteria, namely 1) nature of administrative support in higher education 2) administrative support as service 3) customers of higher education administrative support 4) quality as necessity in administrative support 5) justification for quality assuring administrative support service 6) justification for use of students' to evaluate administrative support services. The study found that administrative support and teaching services have a direct symbiotic relationship. Quality assurance of teaching services without the same being done for administrative support services does not provide a complete picture of the overall service quality and well-being of higher education. Again, the study found that a lot of resources go into the recruitment and maintenance of administrative staff. To ensure efficiency effectiveness and accountability of this staff, there is the need for frequent evaluation. The study recommends periodic student satisfaction surveys to ascertain students' level of satisfaction with administrative support services.*

KEYWORDS: *Quality Assurance; Administrative Support; Higher Education, Students Evaluation.*



INTRODUCTION

Higher education is critical and plays a major role in the socio-economic development of countries the world over. Nations have become competitive in an increasingly globalizing knowledge society through quality higher education. In the field of capacity building and professional development, for instance, higher education is vital and thus plays a key role in the realisation of all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Available research (Bloom, Canning, and Chan 2006) suggests that higher education may promote faster technological catchup and improve a country's ability to maximize its economic output.

Owing to the numerous advantages of higher education and the higher demand placed on it by its stakeholders, African countries have liberalized its establishment. This liberalization has led to a spike in the number of degree awarding institutions (World Bank, 2007). Thus, the need for accountability on the part of higher educational institutions with respect to their propriety, the kind of programmes they run and their fitness for purpose has become imperative. Consequently, education authorities have put in place quality assurance systems to regulate their conduct. "Quality assurance is a planned and systematic review process of an institution or programme to determine whether or not acceptable standards of education, scholarship, and infrastructure are being met, maintained and enhanced" (World Bank, 2007, p. 16). The main purpose of quality assurance in higher education is to assure society that higher education standards are adequate and in an increasingly global market, that they are competitive internationally (Massaro, 2006; Yankson, 2013). It is expected that through quality assurance, society will accept the complete autonomy awarded to higher educational institutions in return for their impassive service. This expectation has informed tertiary institutions to introduce quality assurance systems to provide a measure of accountability to stakeholders.

Quality assurance procedures have since been infused into the decision-making processes cutting across all activities of tertiary institutions. The framework demands that university management demonstrates its commitment in ensuring that all activities of tertiary institutions meet quality assurance standards. It also calls for the need to satisfy the various stakeholders while maintaining academic standards. Quality assurance procedures vary from country to country. However, the most common of them all are accreditation, institutional audits, and academic reviews (Kis, 2005). In all the three approaches, institutional self-assessment which falls under institutional audits is indispensable. It is a process by which an institution assesses its curriculum, services, programmes of study, human and materials resources against some standards. Evidence from higher education institutions (World Bank, 2007) suggests that self-assessment process (at institutional or unit level) has positive impact on the culture of quality within an institution or unit. It fosters social cohesion and teamwork among staff and enhances staff accountability of the results of the process. Through self-assessment, institutions can identify their own strengths and weaknesses, while generating awareness of key performance indicators. Some of the dimensions include staff self-evaluation, staff peer review, students' evaluation of lecturers teaching, Principal/ Head of department evaluation of lecturers' teaching and portfolio assessment. In most universities in Ghana, students' evaluation of lecturers' teaching takes place on regular basis at which times students are called upon to evaluate lecturers who have taught them during the semester. Students of the University of Cape Coast are for instance are required to rate the teaching of their lecturers at the end of every semester (UCC Quality Assurance Policy, 2016). In furtherance of this, every course that is mounted and taught during the semester is covered. The results of these evaluation are often



use for quality assurance and quality improvement of teaching and learning. This exercise according to Bulum and Shannon (2010), goes a long way to provide effective and professional ideas to improve teaching practice of faculty members.

Although, teaching and learning are important aspects of effective university service, they are not the only activities to be taken into consideration. Other services also matter when it comes to the holistic training of students. Administrative support service such as library service, ICT services, counselling general secretariat ship/ administrative support services among others all add up to the overall services that students receive which ultimately count towards their overall training and graduation (Cronin Jr, Brady& Hult, 2000). Welch and Reed (2005) contend that administrative support aims at providing adequate facilities and learning resources to students. In effect, any assistance provided by administrative staff to students and teachers contributes to the overall well-being of the institution. Despite the complementary role administrative support services play in the teaching and learning process, it appears from the literature that they hardly get attention when it comes to students' evaluation of university services. Thus, whereas much concern has been placed on the performance of academic staff, the ability of universities to obtain an optimal level of administrative staff has not been addressed.

This paper reviews digitally available scholarly studies on administrative support services in higher education to provide justification for the inclusion of administrative support in students' evaluations of university services for quality assurance. The following questions were of particular interest while reviewing the articles:

1. What is the nature of administrative support in higher education?
2. Is administrative support a service?
3. Who are the customers of administrative support?
4. Is quality a necessity in administrative support?
5. What is the justification for quality assuring administrative support service?
6. What is the justification for use of students' to evaluate administrative support services?

Understandably, these questions were prioritized in this study with the anticipation that researchers interested in administrative support services may consider doing further research related to these issues. Importantly, such research might help academic institutions to improve the quality of administrative support services.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research is based on the expectation-disconfirmation model of customer satisfaction (Oh, 2009). According to the expectation-disconfirmation hypothesis, consumers' satisfaction with a product or service is determined by subjective (or direct) comparisons between their expectations and perceptions. Under this conception, consumers are explicitly invited to submit their opinions or assessments of the comparisons on a scale ranging from worse than anticipated to better than expected. Subjective disconfirmation is the psychological term used to describe the ensuing impressions. According to the expectation-disconfirmation paradigm,

consumer satisfaction is a direct result of subjective disconfirmation. Thus, the magnitude and direction of disconfirmation influence the degree of pleasure. Customers are assumed to be neither pleased nor unhappy upon confirmation. It has been discovered that both expectations and perceptions impact consumer satisfaction and subjective disconfirmation in a variety of situations.

Taking students as the main customers of a university and administrative services as a service provided, it is expected that students will be given the opportunity to evaluate the administrative services they consume based on their expectations and perceptions. This is because every student who steps into the university system comes with some sort of expectations. Expectations in terms of quality teaching, learning and administrative/secretarial support. These expectations might be hinged on their values and beliefs about university education and perhaps their career goals. After staying in the university for some time, these students might have formed their opinions or perceptions about the services provided by the university base on experience. It is expedient on the part of the university or higher education institution to provide an opportunity for the students to evaluate the services provided by the university and relate that with their expectations; expectations that are hinged on career goals and objectives. A balance between prior expectations, current perceptions will inform the university weather they are meeting the quality expectations of their customers or not. Evaluation must cover all services provided by the university including administrative support service. Figure 1 demonstrates the theoretical framework of the study.

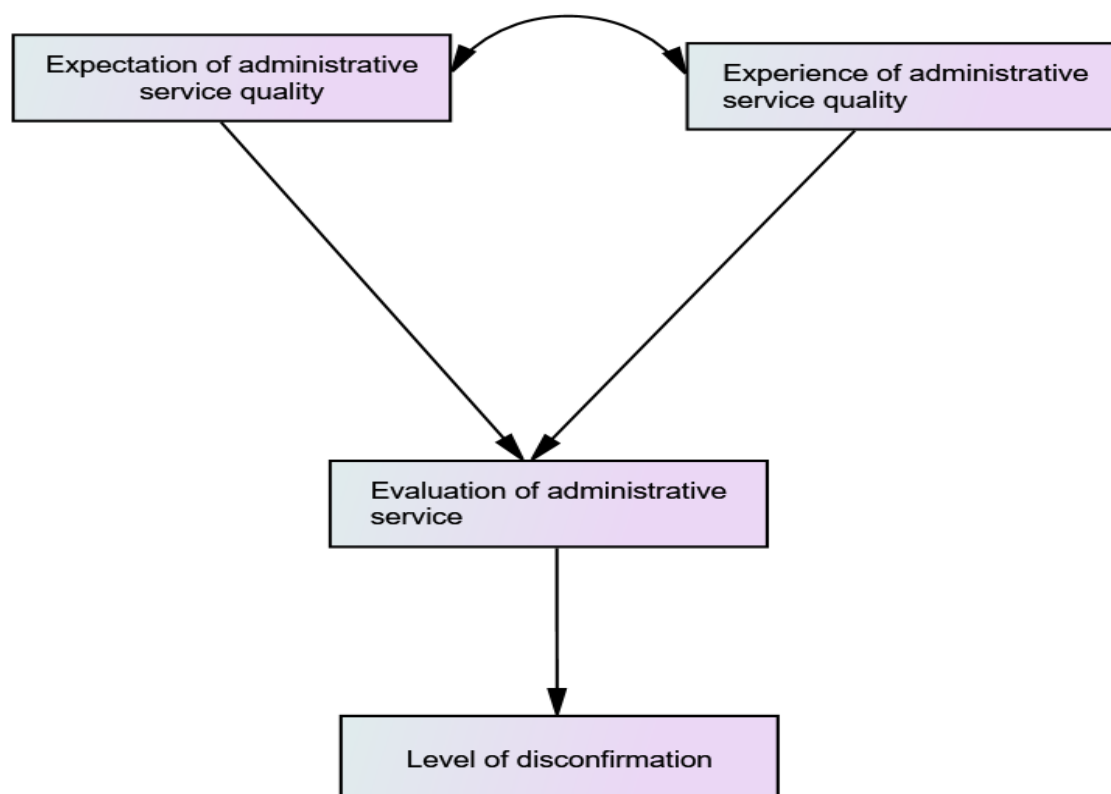


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of Administrative Support Services Evaluation



As seen in in Figure 1, it is theorised that students have prior expectations of university administrative support services before their admission into the university. They begin to experience the service as soon as they enroll. They then compare their expectations with their service experience and form an opinion as to whether the administrative service quality meet their expectations. For university authorities to be able to get students opinions as regards the quality of administrative support services, they must plan and evaluate the administrative support services. The results can then be used for quality improvement.

METHOD

The research approach used in this study was the qualitative research approach (i.e. content analysis of documents through literature review). This approach enabled the researcher to thoroughly scrutinize past related literature and documents relevant to the topic which is not possible in quantitative research. The search was guided by research questions in line with the recommendations of Ark-sey and O'Malley (2005) who contend that researchers need to identify and formulate research questions, identify relevant studies in line with the purpose study, study selection, data collection, summary and synthesis of results and consultation. The research questions on page 4 guided the search.

The researcher searched two electronic data bases – Google and ERIC. ERIC was visited with the two key words – "administrative support" and "higher education" – combined with the Boolean operator, AND; and Google Scholar was searched with all in title: "administrative support in higher education; justification for evaluation for quality assurance." The duration defined for the search was from January 1990 to February 2021. The main purpose of this was to find out what researchers have been saying about the subject matter over the last two decades. The researcher believed that the period was wide enough (two decades) to capture most of the issues relating to administrative support services. The first search yielded 43 articles, and the second showed 32 articles. The intention was not necessarily to lumb the findings together but rather to establish a trend with regard to what researchers have been saying about the evaluation of administrative support services.

The articles retrieved from ERIC were read, paying particular attention to the general overview of administrative support services, quality issues relating to administrative support services, the need to quality assure/evaluate administrative support services, and ways by which administrative support services can be evaluated from the perspectives of students. Upon reading all these articles, 5 were found to be non-relevant: some of them dealt with the administrative services alone without touching on quality issues and their evaluation. Again, the articles were about research carried out at the pre-tertiary level (colleges and secondary school settings).



Criteria for Selection

The criteria for the selection of the articles include:

1. The articles must have related to administrative support services, quality assurance /evaluation of administrative support service, the need to evaluate administrative support service and rationale for using students to evaluate administrative support services.
2. The study must have been conducted within a higher educational establishment
3. The study must have taken place between 1990 and 2021.
4. The subjects of study must have been students, teachers, administrators other workers within the school.

Cumulatively, 43 articles were found relevant and were subsequently reviewed. The content in the articles were coded in relation to the various themes and analysed for trends. The various themes included:

1. Nature of administrative support in higher education
2. Administrative support as service
3. Customers of higher education administrative support
4. Quality as necessity in administrative support
5. Justification for quality assuring administrative support service
6. JUSTIFICATION for use of students' to evaluate administrative support services.

RESULTS

The results of the review are based on the major themes as outlined in the introduction. They are presented as follows:

Overview of university administrative support services

Teaching, research, and administration are the three categories in which university affairs can be classified (Heck, Johnsrud & Rosser, 2000). Heck et al. (2000) found that university administration is the management and execution of university-related activities other than teaching. They argue that academic affairs, general administration, counseling personnel and library affairs, are all examples of university administrative support. The idea of administrative support is to aid in the facilitation of teaching and to assist in the achievement of higher education goals. According to Heck, Johnsrud and Rosser (2000), the main areas of university administrative support are summarized as follows:

1. *Academic Affairs*: Academic issues concerning teaching. Students' admissions, student records management, academic calendar and timetable development, programme development, university objective formulation and design, and student status management are just a few examples.



2. *Student Affairs Administration*: All administrative issues pertaining to learners. For instance, counseling on proper manners, student life routines, residential issues, student association activities, and student self-governance activities, among others.
3. *Administrative issues*: Financial administration, procurement, audit, and administration of academic units (schools, colleges, faculties, and departments) are just a few examples.
4. *Guidance and Counseling*: Administrative issues pertaining to counseling. For instance, consultations in groups, individual consultations, coaching, and tracking.
5. *Library service*: Administrative assistance with book-related devices. For instance, promotion of reading, book acquisition and storage, and so forth.
6. *Personnel/human resources*: Administrative issues in higher education and administrative personnel. For instance, faculty selection, relocation, evaluation, and rewards and sanctions.
7. *Information Communication Technology (ICT) Services*: This concerns the provision of ICT services such as internet service, students' online registration, online teaching service, students' online portal management just to mention a few.

Heck et. al. (2000) found that these administrative units are principally responsible for sustaining, integrating, coordinating, supporting, and supervising the university's teaching, learning and research processes. While administrative support services should not be regarded as a secondary duty to school pursuits, it is critical in ensuring and enabling the institution's fundamental functions to be carried out. It is essential to consider that the administrative function in universities is not a functional monolith, but rather a diverse set of responsibilities and activities ranging from routine secretarial and maintenance tasks to highly skilled specialist and professional activities. University administrators are professionals in their respective fields. Kivistö and Pekkola (2017) divide higher education staff into five categories based on their functions and how those functions directly or indirectly relate to academic work.

Category 1: This category includes a multitude of administrators who work in roles that necessitate a higher standard of professional competence but are not directly linked to school tasks or work. Procurement directors, internal audit staff, legal experts and finance directors are examples. They seem not to have direct ties to the university's three core missions, even if their work contributes to their accomplishment. The expertise of these people is universal within their own professional field, in the sense that it can be applied in organizations other than universities without requiring significant updating.

Staff category 2: Staff who fall into this category include individuals in Academic Planning and Quality Assurance, Academic Affairs, Registrars of schools, Faculties and Departments, and Human Resources. They are highly skilled, and their substantive work is related to the university's core mission in some way.

Category 3: This category consists of staff often referred to as "third space professional staff or para-academic staff" They are often classified as administrative personnel but perform work similar to academic staff. These staff frequently have scholarship backgrounds and collaborate hand in hand with faculty on projects ranging from curriculum development, research applications and research infrastructure. Academics who specialize in administration are also



included in this category (para-academics). Examples include quality assurance professionals, research administrators, research project directors, heads of research centers, academic journal administrators, directors of institutes just to mention a few.

Staff category 4: These are people whose primary responsibility is teaching but who also perform administrative duties. They include heads of academic department, faculty, and school. Provosts of colleges also fall into this category.

Category 5: This is made up of administrative and professional support staff for whom a high standard of expertise and competences are not required. Such roles include highly critical duties such as computations of payroll data and routine cleaning that have no direct connection to the university's core academic mandate.

Category 6: This is made up of lower level support staff. Staff who perform general secretarial work, students service assistants and laboratory technicians fall into this category. Previous scholarly research and professional literature (Heck et al., 2000) have revealed a considerable attention in the aforementioned group of staff who work as administrative support staff but whose task and credentials are complementary to those of academic staff.

Administration as Service

A service may be viewed as a transaction between two parties: a service provider and a service user. Service is distinguished by its intangible nature and inseparability. This means that unlike goods, service cannot be touched, sensed, or tested in many cases and are created and consumed at the same time (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1983; Doherty, Horne & Wootton 2014). When considering administrative work as a service, there are two major classes of users to consider: internal and external. Internal users are students, academic and administrative/professional staff of the university. Prospective students, parents, funding agencies, industry players, public sector organisations with interest in higher education research and teaching and private individuals may be regarded as external consumers of university service. Whatever their status, students are among the most important categories that use university administration services.

Quality as a necessity in higher education administration

The term quality has been defined in different ways by scholars and researchers in the field of quality higher education. Harvey and Green (1993) identify five categories or ways of thinking about quality. This includes

- *Exception:* distinctive, embodies in excellence, passing a minimum set of standards.
- *Perfection:* zero defects, getting things right the first time (focus on process as opposed to inputs and outputs).
- *Fitness for purpose:* relates quality to a purpose, defined by the provider.
- *Value for money:* a focus on efficiency and effectiveness, measuring outputs against inputs. A populist notion of quality (government).



- *Transformation*: a qualitative *change*; education is about doing something to the student as opposed to something for the consumer. Includes concepts of enhancing and empowering; democratization of the process, not just outcomes.

Watty (2003) suggests that the dimension of quality as perfection can be removed, since higher education does not aim to produce defect-free graduates. Lomas (2001) suggests that fitness for purpose and transformation seem to be the two most appropriate definitions of quality, according to small-scale research with a sample of senior managers in higher education institutions. In deed institutions of higher learning are established to fulfill certain purposes as contained in their mission and vision statements. Based on the vision statements, programmes are developed and standards established. Customers of higher education who are mainly students are attracted to demand higher education due to the standards placed, the quality of the programmes and the expectation that there will be total transformation in their lives after they have gone through education. This places accountability responsibility on higher education authorities to maintain standards by ensuring the highest possible quality not only in teaching and learning but all other support services. Thus ensuring quality in higher education administration is fundamental in attracting and maintaining the main customers of higher education who are students.

Evidence for quality assuring administrative support services.

Administrative support services play a complementary role in the overall teaching and learning business in higher education. Literature (Carroll-Barefield (2006) strongly indicates that administrative services are critical components in the accomplishment of the goals of tertiary institutions. According to Visser and Visser (2000), administrative support services are a key but sometimes ignored component of efficient university education. Moore (2003) emphasized the significance of administrative service evaluation for quality assurance, adding that "Learner support is one of the most crucial components of distance education's success". In support of this claim, Heck et. al. (2000) finds that these administrative units are principally responsible for sustaining, integrating, coordinating, supporting, and supervising the university's primary purposes of teaching and learning, research, and public service. They contend that it is vital in assuring and enabling the institution's fundamental functions to be completed. They argue that quality assurance of this most vital university service is therefore crucial.

Dramani (2020) investigated the extent to which classroom teaching and administrative support service influences students' academic achievement. A sample of 472 students drawn from 5 public technical universities in Ghana participated in the study. Students' evaluation of university service questionnaire was used to collect the data. Structural equation modeling technique was used to determine the influence of classroom practices on students' academic achievement. The findings indicate that classroom teaching have insignificant impact on students' academic achievement. However, when administrative support service is included as a mediator variable, the influence of classroom teaching on students' academic achievement becomes significant. The implication of this discovery is that classroom teaching does not take place in a vacuum. It must be complemented by administrative support service to be effective in bringing about the needed change in students. Dorcah (2018) investigated administrative factors influencing quality education in public schools in Kenya. Administrative factors are found to influence teaching and learning positively. This further confirms the argument that academic and administrative support services are complementary. Quality assessment of teaching and learning should be complemented by quality assessment of administrative support



services. This brings to the fore the indispensability of administrative support services in the teaching learning dispensation.

Recent studies (Sieberer-Nagler, 2016; Ibrahim, 2020, Blackman, 2021; Jackson, 2021) have established that teaching service and administrative service are two sides of the same coin. One cannot do without the other. Before teaching and learning take place, the administrator must first of all collate records of students and maintain them in the students' records and information management system. The lecturer or university teacher needs this data to plan his teaching activities and to grade the students. The extent to which students' records are qualitatively and accurately collected and maintained appears to determine the quality of planning and preparations required by teachers for effective teaching and learning. Whereas much concern has been placed on the performance of academic staff, the ability of universities to obtain an optimal level of administrative staff has not been addressed. Thus, if it is imperative to assure the quality of teaching and learning through students' evaluation of lecturers teaching, it is equally valid and important that same is extended to the administrator who takes charge of the records. The librarian job for instance is to ensure that all reference materials are made available for both lecturers. Given that about 50% of students learning in higher education takes place outside the classroom, the librarian's work is vital in ensuring that what the student learns in the classroom is complemented by what he or she can find by way of reference materials to the students. Quality library service in this case is vital. Same goes for information and communication technology services. Thus, efforts should be made through quality assurance of a sort to ensure that library and ICT services in this case are quality and up to the required standard.

Jackson (2000) observed in prior research on student support services in higher education that an emphasis should be put on administrative support service quality assurance to satisfy the demands of students. This move, he asserts, should be oriented on a shift away from the old campus-centric paradigm of quality assurance toward a student-centered one. Jackson (2000) substantiated this idea through demonstrating how the environmental change in the university necessitates the provision of high-quality student-centered support services. According to Leibowitz (1997), if an institution is serious about offering a high-quality training to learners it should demonstrate clear dedication to ensuring the provision of essential high-quality assessment of administrative support services. This calls for the provision of enough financial resources and advocating for any required quality improvements and quality assurance to the institution's current support services.

Blackman (2003) examined the perception of online students regarding to the provision of library services. The study's objective was to investigate if the provision of library services to online students was equivalent to that provided to on-campus students. Study participants comprised one hundred and fourteen students who participated in the online degree program. The findings indicated that respondents did not view library services provided online to be distinct from those available in the campuses. Although the survey's findings were good, the author urged that institutions continue to be proactive in ensuring the quality of administrative services provided to online students, who expect the universities to satisfy some requirements that have to do with their location. On the strength of Blackman (2013) findings and suggestions, it is crucial that periodic evaluation of administrative support services are carried out to ascertain the level of satisfaction among students regarding the administrative support service they consume.



Paneitz (1997) investigated distance education students' impressions of administrative service rendered to them at the college level. His study participants comprised one hundred and eighty-three students. The author found that distance education students accessed support services using a range of delivery methods. These support services identified included on-campus systems, systems that do not require the use of technology, and high-tech systems. The data revealed that sophistication of information communication technology had little impact on students' level of satisfaction with administrative service rendered to them. The researcher stated that information communication technology (ICT) would increasingly be used to give aid to students doing distance education in future. The author advocated that universities focus on improving the quality of these services rather than on the most advanced technological delivery methods. One of the ways by which administrative support services might be supplied is by ensuring that efficient processes and methods are in place to monitor and handle significant problems that impede the delivery of excellent administrative support services. Regular evaluation of administrative support services using higher education's customers (students, faculty, etc.) is critical.

Birnbaum (2003) finds that the nature of administrators work make it mandatory and vital for the service to be regularly evaluated. In contrast to the work of academic staff (e.g., concern for individual productivity, publishing, and teaching excellence), administrators view their duty as serving a common interest (e.g., fair distribution of resources, advancing institutional visibility and public image, and generally improving institutional performance) (Carooll-Barefield, 2006). Among their most treasured virtues is the efficiency with which institutions operate (Birnbaum, 1988, 2003; Etzioni, 2000). According to Birnbaum (2003), administrators are also obligated to assess and respond to external influences (e.g., quickly changing technology, public demand for new programs, and, most significantly, declining state and federal funds), which highlights the vital nature of fundraising. Administrators are likewise concerned with the institution's public image (Leslie, 2003), as it influences the type and amount of support provided by the public. The idea here is that faculty members specialize in a particular field of research and were previously expected to remain focused on that field while administrators ran the institution and focused on cross-disciplinary connections. Thus, given the most crucial role administrators play in the university system as discussed above, it is crucial that a deliberate policy is put in place to constantly evaluate their work to ensure that quality standards are all met. Evaluation of administrative staff and their services will help the institutions to identify their own strengths and weaknesses while generating awareness of key performance indicators. This assessment also empowers the institution and its staff to take ownership of the quality function in their institution without pressure from an external body.

Furthermore, higher education institutions' service delivery is based upon the assumption that there are standards of service effectiveness to be met including administrative support services and that performance can be measured in terms of these standards (Nygaard, 2017). Since service standards must be met, the implication is that there must be regular evaluation of those services. Overall, evaluation purposes address issues such as who is to be evaluated, why the evaluation should be conducted, what should be the focus, who will use the findings, and what decisions will be made (Stufflebeam & Nevo, 1993). Typical purposes include determining competence, enhancing performance, establishing accountability, and making salary adjustment, promotion, reassignment, and dismissal decisions (Glasman and Heck, 1996). Evaluation standards are needed to show quality of overall performance and for evaluating individual performance in relation to the institutional mission. Standards are classified into four



categories: propriety, feasibility, and accuracy (Joint Evaluation, 1988). Standards are designed to guide and influence evaluations. Propriety standards ensure that the evaluation is properly funded and politically viable. Obtaining dependable information about performance requires that the obtained data be logically related to the data (measurement and data collection) (1993).

Research has also found that efficiency and effectiveness of administrative support services make it mandatory for them to be evaluated regularly. Carolyn, George and Renato (2020) have found that administrative staff are critical human capital inputs in tertiary educational institutions. According to the authors, given the substantial investment in recruitment and selection of the staff, efficient and effective use of these staff affects the organisational and financial performance of universities. Thus, the performance must be efficient in input use given the confines of limited resources. Therefore, educational administrators are expected to minimize input resources or maximize educational outputs to ensure the best performance for sustainable development of institutions. One of the ways by which the work of administrators could be efficient and effective is to regularly evaluate their work for quality improvement and quality assurance.

Evaluation of administrative support service is important for understanding the nature and functions of universities (Gornitzka and Larsen, 2004). Measuring the usage capacity of administrative staff provide useful information about operational inefficiency of universities. Casu and Thanassouli (2006) evaluated cost efficiency in central administrative services in UK universities using data envelopment analysis. Their findings revealed that on average the UK universities displayed inefficiencies of 27% in cost expenditure for administrative services indicating that there is considerable scope for savings. Train and Villeno (2018a) revealed that financial efficiency of public universities in Vietnam could potentially improve if administrative decreased by 23%. This change go together with a proportionate decline in other inputs. However, the author did not estimate excess administrative capacity to produce the existing output while being separated form overused of other inputs.

Carolyn et al. (2020) have argued that there has been increasing concern on the distribution of human resources over the different activities within the higher education setting in which administrative costs have been increasing disproportionately. Gorn et al. (2004) suggests that this is caused by excess administrative capacity in universities. Leslies and Rhoades (1995) showed that cost in terms of administrative staff and other related administrative services in universities could be increasing because of revenue growth, government regulatory pressure and organisational complexity depending on the specific aims of institutions financial resources could shift away from instructional and research activities to invest in administrative operations such as institutional support services.

A study of 198 American public and private colleges and universities showed that the costs in instructional spending per student increased by 39% between 1993 and 2017 whereas administrative spending per student rose by 61% within the same period. One of the reasons is attributed to an increase in administrative staff to comply with government regulations. Due to the huge investments in administrative support it is imperative to ensure accountability through regular evaluations for quality assurance. This further enhance public positive perception about administrative work (Brown 2019). Brown (2019) in a research study found that teachers perceptions of administrative support service had a main effect on the professional growth and effective system.



Ways of evaluating administrative support services

Evaluation of administrative support services takes many forms (Heck, Johnsrud & Rosser, 2000). It may include staff peer review, students' evaluation of administrators' service, portfolio assessment and Dean/Head of department evaluation. Whichever form it may take, the results provide an important starting point of clearly understanding the situation as regards the services provided by administrative staff (Glasman & Heck, 1996). Heck et. al. (2000) finds that the objects of evaluating administrative staff may include attitudes, behaviour, decision-making, performance, and effectiveness. Glasman and Heck (1996) noted that it is possible to approach administrators from a variety of different evaluation perspectives (e.g., role-based, outcome-based, standards-based, structure-based). For instance, outcome-based evaluation may place a premium on the products produced or the level of productivity achieved under the administrator's direction. A role-based evaluation approach would place a premium on the administrator's role and how effectively it is carried out.

Whichever object may be the consideration or the perspective it may take, the overriding consideration is the target audience. Since students constitute the main customers of university education, the target for any form of evaluation of administrative support service should be students. The next section looks at the justification for use of students to rate the quality and effectiveness of administrative staff.

Justification for use of students to evaluate administrative support services.

Given that students are the main customers of the university, customer satisfaction is key in the sustainability of the university system (Birnbbaum, 1988, 2003; Etzioni, 2000). Through students' evaluation of administrative support services, universities can gauge the level of satisfaction of students regarding the quality of the services they receive. The results of students' evaluation of administrative support services survey provide universities with the statistical data required to evaluate their defined goals and help them in their quality improvement efforts. Parasuraman, et al. (1985) argues that service quality is a holistic attitude and a long-term overall evaluation and customer satisfaction only occurs at the transaction level. There is a causal relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality (Gao, 2020). Cronin and Taylor (1992) think that service quality will affect customer satisfaction and both satisfaction and service quality will affect behavioural intentions, but satisfaction has a stronger and consistent effect on behavioural intentions than service quality. Cronin et al. (2000) proposed a model on the relationship between service quality and satisfaction and explores the relationship between these two aspects and loyalty. The research results found that service quality has a significant and direct impact on student satisfaction while administrative service quality satisfaction have a direct impact on loyalty. The implication of these research findings is that both customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are significantly impacted by administrative service quality. To be able to help the accountability and holistic quality improvement efforts of high education institutions, it is imperative that avenues be created for the main customers of the universities (the students) to evaluate the administrative services provided periodically.

Numerous other reasons for student evaluations are discussed in the literature. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is evidence that student evaluation is used to provide information for academic staff promotion and to make programmatic decisions (Emery, Kramer, & Tian 2003; Pickford 2013). Additionally, data is used to rank universities; the rankings are then published,



and prospective students and their advisors use them to make informed decisions about universities. For instance, the National Student Survey in the United Kingdom and 'Top Universities,' an international university league table, both use student evaluations as an indicator (Pickford 2013; QS Quacquarelli Symonds Limited 2011). All of these reasons fall under the category of 'high stakes assessment,' as the results of surveys can have significant consequences for a variety of reasons and for a variety of different groups of people.

Interpretative summary of articles reviewed

As indicated earlier, the study reviewed scholarly works on administrative support services in higher education. In all, 25 research articles were analyzed in terms of five criteria, namely 1) nature of administrative support in higher education 2) administrative support as service 3) customers of higher education administrative support 4) quality as necessity in administrative support 4) justification for quality assuring administrative support service 5) justification for use of students' to evaluate administrative support services. Table 1 gives a breakdown of the articles that were reviewed.

Table 1: Interpretative Summary of Articles Reviewed

<i>Nature of Administrative Support in Higher Education</i>	<i>Administrative Support as Service</i>	<i>Customers of Higher Education Administrative Support ways</i>	<i>Justification for Quality Assuring Administrative Support Service</i>	<i>Quality As Necessity In Administrative Support</i>	<i>Justification for Use of Students' to Evaluate Administrative Support Services.</i>
Heck, Johnsrud & Rosser, 2000	Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1983	Heck, Johnsrud & Rosser, 2000).	Caroll-Barefield, 2006.	Harvey & Green, 1993.	Birnbaum, 1988; 2003
Kivistö & Pekkola, 2017	Doherty, Horne & Wootton, 2014	Glasman and Heck, 1996.	Visser & Visser 2000,	Watty, 2003.	Etzioni, 2000
			Moore (2003)	Lomas, 2001.	Parasuraman, et al., 1985.
			Dramani 2020	(Massaro, 2006; Yankson, 2013).	Gao, 2020.
			Dorcah, 2018	World Bank(2017)	Cronin & Taylor 1992.
			Sieberer-Nagler, 2016;	Kis (2005).	Cronin et al., 2000,
			Ibrahim, 2020,	(Cronin Jr, Brady & Hult, 2000).	Emery, Kramer, & Tian 2003;
			Blackman, 2021;	Welch and Reed (2005)	Pickford, 2013
			Jackson, 2021		
			Paneitz (1997)		
			Carolyn et al. (2020)		



			Birnbaum (2003)		
			Gorn et al(2004)		
			Leslies and Rhoades (1995)		
			Train and Vileno(2018)		
			Gornitzka and Larsen (2006)		
			Cau and Thanassouli(2006)		
			Brown (2019).		

CONCLUSION

The current practice most dominant in higher education is that teaching service is evaluated by students at the end of; in some cases, every semester. However, teaching service is not the only service in the university system. Administrative support services play a complementary and significant role in the teaching and learning business of the university. For instance, teaching and learning cannot be effective if the librarian is not effective at ensuring that the relevant reference materials are made available students on time. The same way, in this 21st century where digital teaching and learning is now prevalent in the various campuses, personnel of the ICT department will have to be effective at putting the necessary infrastructure in place to make teaching and learning effective. Additionally, the technician who will have to put in place the necessary teaching and learning resources such as projectors will have to be up and doing to ensure effective teaching and learning. Thus, evaluation of teaching service is meaningless if same is not extended to administrative services provided by the university administrators. Thus quality assurance must be holistic; torching all service areas in the university setting. Results of administrative service evaluation exercise will go a long way to assist universities to improve and assure quality delivery of these administrative support services.

Implication for practice

It is critical to recognize that universities informally examine and improve the effectiveness with which departments and offices provide direct and indirect administrative support to students and faculty. Structured, formal assessment will help universities to be more structured and deliberate in documenting and communicating the value of administrative support services. The primary objective of evaluation of administrative support service might be to self-evaluate and improve services for faculty, staff, and students. Assessment will enable universities to quantify the everyday labour that ensures administrative "services are supplied effectively in order to achieve the institution's strategic goals as well as operational efficiency. Through evaluation of administrative support services, universities will also be able to meet significant expectations as institutions of higher learning held by numerous state, regional, and national organizations. Accountability for public funds has increased over the previous few decades, while expectations have become increasingly output-driven. Evaluation of administrative support services bolsters universities ability to communicate the fruits of their efforts to the



general public and university community. This paper therefore proposes the following to influence practice:

1. Quality Assurance should be accepted as a culture for all the major stakeholders in the higher education ecosystem.
2. There is the need to have well-train professionals who appreciate QA and its related matters to Head and lead Quality Assurance systems.
3. Continues professional training must be regularly plan and implemented for all stakeholders for them to appreciate modern trends in QA and Institutional Effectiveness.
4. Modern tools must be used to obtain information from administrative especially and the results must be well analyzed and used for improvement.

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