

Administrative Strategies for Meeting National Universities Commission Standards for Quality Education Delivery in Public Universities in Rivers State

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Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.	
Citation: Daopuye, E. A., & Osuji, C. U. (2026). Administrative strategies for meeting National Universities Commission standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State. <i>UKR Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences</i> , 2(7), 81-91.	<i>This study examined administrative strategies for meeting National Universities Commission's (NUC) Standards toward quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State. The study was guided by three objectives from which three research questions and three hypotheses were derived. The study adopted an analytic descriptive survey design with a population of 192 management staff of universities and NUC staff. This comprised 91 Management Staff in the three public universities in Rivers State and 101 NUC staff. The entire population of 192 management staff of universities and NUC staff were studied as census without sampling. The instrument for data collection was a self-designed questionnaire titled "Administrative Strategies for Meeting National Universities Commission's (NUC) Standards toward Quality Education Delivery in Public Universities in Questionnaire". The questionnaire was validated by three experts, one expert in Educational Management and two from Measurement and Evaluation in Rivers State University. A test of internal consistency was conducted using Cronbach Alpha method to determine the reliability of the instrument. Reliability coefficients of 0.77, 0.81 and 0.86, were obtained for the various clusters of the instrument. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation statistics while the hypotheses were tested using z-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed among others that administrators' establishment of robust quality assurance mechanisms and provision of adequate infrastructure helps in meeting NUC standards towards quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State to a high extent. Based on the findings of the study it was revealed among others that Vice-chancellors and university management of public universities in Rivers State should establish fully functional, adequately resourced, and institutionally empowered Internal Quality Assurance Units (IQAUs) or Directorates of Academic Planning in each university.</i> Keywords: Administrative Strategies, Quality Education, Quality Assurance, Research Capacity.

Introduction

Education is well recognised as a basic instrument for developing the information, skills, abilities, values and attitudes that individuals need to make a significant contribution to social and national development. It prepares learners with the intellectual, physical, social and professional capabilities needed to be productive participants in an increasingly dynamic and knowledge-driven world (Osuji & Bakpo, 2022). Osuji and Jaja (2021) equally identify education as an effective catalyst for

sustainable national development and emphasise its strategic importance in the promotion of economic development and human capital formation. Universities are increasingly being asked to be accountable within the global higher education context under rigorous accountability frameworks that emphasise quality assurance, academic excellence and institutional effectiveness. Besides their traditional teaching mandate, higher education institutions are expected to produce

competent graduates, generate creative research, advance technology and contribute to socio-economic transformation. The National Universities Commission (NUC) was established in 1974 as the statutory agency responsible for coordinating and regulating the activities of universities in Nigeria. The NUC is responsible for setting minimum academic standards, accrediting academic programmes and ensuring quality assurance in all the universities in Nigeria. Consequently, adherence to the NUC criteria has become a sine qua non for institutional legitimacy, programme quality and educational sustainability. For the public universities in Rivers State—namely the University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University, and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education—adherence to these regulatory criteria extends beyond legislative compliance. It is a strategic need for sustaining academic quality, improving employability of graduates, promoting institutional competitiveness and increasing their contribution to the socio-economic development of Rivers State and Nigeria at large.

Rivers State occupies a unique position in Nigeria's educational landscape. As one of the country's most economically significant oil-producing states, it commands substantial internally generated revenue that theoretically positions its public universities for better resourcing than those in less economically endowed states. Yet, despite this advantage, the three public universities in Rivers State have continued to grapple with quality assurance challenges that mirror, and in some respects exceed, national trends. Accreditation exercises conducted by the NUC have periodically revealed deficiencies in staffing ratios, infrastructure, curriculum implementation, and research output all of which are core benchmarks in the Commission's evaluation framework (NUC, 2022). This paradox resource potential coexisting with persistent quality gaps, points to a fundamental question about administrative strategy: whether the manner in which resources are mobilised, allocated, and deployed is as critical as the quantum of resources available.

It is within this context that administrative strategy becomes a central concern for this study. Administrative strategies refer to the systematic, intentional approaches that university leaders employ to organise institutional resources, align operations with regulatory requirements, and drive continuous improvement in educational delivery. In an environment where the NUC's expectations are increasingly demanding, with the recent replacement of the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) with the more comprehensive Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) in 2022 university administrators can no longer rely on reactive compliance. Instead, proactive, strategically informed administrative

action across multiple dimensions of institutional management is required to achieve and sustain NUC accreditation standards.

One of the most critical administrative strategies for meeting NUC standards is the establishment of robust quality assurance mechanisms. Quality assurance encompasses the systematic processes through which universities monitor, evaluate, and improve their academic programmes and institutional operations to ensure conformity with established standards. Universities that invest in functional internal quality assurance units, conduct regular programme reviews, and maintain comprehensive academic records are significantly better positioned to demonstrate compliance during NUC accreditation exercises. In many public universities in Nigeria, however, quality assurance units exist largely on paper, lacking the institutional authority, personnel, and resources required to drive meaningful quality improvement a gap that administrators must urgently address.

The provision of adequate infrastructure is equally indispensable to NUC compliance and quality education delivery. NUC's accreditation framework evaluates physical facilities as one of its core criteria, encompassing classrooms, laboratories, libraries, information and communication technology infrastructure, and student accommodation. Decades of underfunding have left many Nigerian public universities with severely degraded physical learning environments, a constraint that Nwuke and Nwanguma (2024) found continues to undermine the effective provision and utilisation of physical resources for teaching and learning in public universities in Rivers State. For universities in Rivers State, where rapid student enrolment growth has often outpaced infrastructure development, this represents a critical administrative challenge. Addressing it requires not only capital investment through government subventions and Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) interventions, but also deliberate strategies such as public-private partnerships, sound asset management frameworks, and multi-year infrastructure development plans aligned with NUC guidelines.

Strengthening research and innovation capacity constitutes another essential dimension of administrative strategy. Research output is a central component of NUC's quality standards, and universities are evaluated on the basis of their publication records, postgraduate supervision, grant acquisition, and engagement with industry. Nigerian public universities have consistently underperformed in research output relative to their counterparts in other African countries, a situation attributable largely to chronic underfunding of research, inadequate laboratory

infrastructure, excessive teaching workloads that crowd out scholarly inquiry, and the persistent emigration of qualified academics, the so-called 'Japa' or brain drain phenomenon. University administrators who proactively cultivate research cultures through institutional funding mechanisms, staff incentives, TETFund research grants, and university-industry collaborations can meaningfully improve the research standing of their institutions in ways that satisfy NUC's accreditation requirements.

Taken together, these three administrative strategies; quality assurance, infrastructure provision, and research capacity strengthening support constitute an integrated framework through which public universities in Rivers State can work toward meeting NUC standards and delivering quality education to their students. While each strategy addresses a specific dimension of institutional quality, they are interdependent: weaknesses in one area tend to undermine progress in others, while improvements in one domain create enabling conditions for gains across the system. It is this systemic interdependence that makes administrative strategy, not just resource availability the decisive factor in whether public universities fulfil their mandate of quality education delivery.

Despite the growing body of research on quality assurance in Nigerian higher education, relatively few studies have examined the specific administrative strategies employed by public universities in Rivers State in response to NUC standards, or assessed the effectiveness of these strategies within the distinctive socio-economic and institutional context of the state. This study therefore sought to address this gap by investigating the administrative strategies for meeting NUC standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State, with a view to generating evidence-based insights that can inform policy and administrative practice in the state and beyond.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, the quality of education in public universities across Nigeria has been a significant concern, particularly in Rivers State. The National Universities Commission (NUC) has established a set of standards aimed at ensuring that universities provide quality education that meets both national and international benchmarks. However, despite the regulatory framework provided by the NUC, public universities in Rivers State face substantial challenges in meeting these standards. These challenges include inadequate funding, insufficient infrastructure, outdated curricula, lack of qualified faculty, and poor administrative practices. Consequently, the quality of education delivered to students often falls short of expectations, impacting student learning outcomes and the overall reputation of the institutions.

Practically, there seems to be a growing disparity between the NUC's prescribed standards for quality education and the realities of educational delivery in public universities in Rivers State. Many of these universities struggle to implement effective administrative strategies that align with the NUC's standards, and there is a notable lack of in-depth analysis regarding the specific administrative strategies that could bridge this gap. While there have been studies on educational quality in Nigerian universities, few have focused on the particular administrative mechanisms in Rivers State that can ensure compliance with the NUC's standards.

This study aimed to fill this gap by exploring the administrative strategies employed by public universities in Rivers State to meet NUC's standards for quality education delivery. The focus was on identifying the challenges these institutions face, evaluating the effectiveness of current administrative strategies, and proposing actionable recommendations for improvement. By addressing this gap, the study sought to contribute to the improvement of educational quality in Rivers State's public universities, offering insights into how administrative practices can be optimized to align with national standards.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined administrative strategies for meeting National Universities Commission's (NUC) Standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. find out the extent to which administrators' establishment of robust quality assurance mechanisms helps in meeting National Universities Commission's (NUC) Standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State.
2. determine the extent to which administrators' provision of adequate infrastructure helps in meeting National Universities Commission's (NUC) Standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State.
3. find out the extent to which administrators' strengthening of research capacity helps in meeting National Universities Commission's (NUC) Standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does administrators' establishment of robust quality assurance mechanisms help in

meeting National Universities Commission's (NUC) Standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State?

2. To what extent does administrators' provision of adequate infrastructure help in meeting National Universities Commission's (NUC) Standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State?
3. To what extent does administrators' strengthening of research capacity help in meeting National Universities Commission's (NUC) Standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of university administrators and NUC staff on the extent to which administrators' establishment of robust quality assurance mechanisms helps in meeting National Universities Commission's (NUC) Standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of university administrators and NUC staff on the extent to which administrators' provision of adequate infrastructure helps in meeting National Universities Commission's (NUC) Standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State.
3. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of university administrators and NUC staff on the extent to which administrators' strengthening of research capacity helps in meeting National Universities Commission's (NUC) Standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State.

Methodology

The study used an analytic descriptive survey approach. The population of the study was 192 management staff of universities and NUC staff. This included 91 Management Staff in the three public universities in Rivers State and 101 NUC staff. A census without sampling of all the 192 management personnel of institutions and NUC staff were carried out. The instrument for gathering of data was a self-designed questionnaire tagged "Administrative Strategies

for Meeting National Universities Commission's (NUC) Standards toward Quality Education Delivery in Public Universities in Questionnaire". The instrument was divided into two pieces. Section A dealt with the demographic characteristics of the respondents whilst section B had structured items derived from the research topics guiding the study. The elements of the questionnaire were developed on a four-point summated scale with weights as follows:

VHE	=	Very High Extent	(4 points)
HE	=	High Extent	(3 points)
LE	=	Low Extent	(2 points)
VLE	=	Very Low Extent	(1 point)

The questionnaire was evaluated by three specialists, one in Educational Management and two in Measurement and Evaluation of Rivers State University. Reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach's alpha method of internal consistency. Reliability coefficients of 0.77, 0.81 and 0.86 were obtained for the different clusters of the instrument. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation statistics while the hypotheses were checked using z-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule for the research questions was as follows classification:

Classification	Value	Range
Very High Extent (VHE)	= 4	3.50 – 4.00
High Extent (HE)	= 3	2.50 – 3.49
Low Extent (LE)	= 2	1.50 – 2.49
Very Low Extent (VLE)	= 1	1.00 – 1.49

The null hypotheses were rejected, and the alternate hypotheses accepted if the computed value was greater than the critical value at the significance level of 0.05. On the contrary, the null hypotheses were accepted and the alternate hypotheses rejected if the computed value is less than the critical table value."

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does administrators' establishment of robust quality assurance mechanisms help in meeting National Universities Commission's (NUC) Standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings of University Administrators and NUC Staff on the Extent to Which Administrators' Establishment of Robust Quality Assurance Mechanisms Helps in Meeting NUC Standards for Quality Education Delivery in Public Universities in Rivers State

S/N	Items	Univ. Admins. N=91			NUC Staff N=101		
		Mean	SD	Remark	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Administrators implement regular internal quality audits to assess adherence to NUC standards.	3.24	0.87	High Extent	3.11	0.91	High Extent
2	Administrators establish clear policies and guidelines for maintaining quality in academic programs in line with NUC standards.	3.18	0.83	High Extent	3.06	0.88	High Extent
3	Administrators involve faculty members in the development and review of quality assurance mechanisms.	3.31	0.79	High Extent	3.18	0.84	High Extent
4	Administrators provide ongoing professional development and training for staff to meet NUC quality standards.	3.27	0.85	High Extent	3.14	0.89	High Extent
5	Administrators ensure that the university's infrastructure supports the delivery of quality education as outlined by NUC standards.	3.15	0.92	High Extent	3.02	0.96	High Extent
6	Administrators regularly evaluate student learning outcomes to ensure alignment with NUC's expectations for quality education.	3.22	0.81	High Extent	3.09	0.86	High Extent
7	Administrators ensure the availability of resources (e.g., teaching materials, technology) to support the achievement of NUC quality standards.	3.19	0.88	High Extent	3.07	0.93	High Extent
8	Administrators monitor and assess the effectiveness of existing quality assurance mechanisms in meeting NUC standards.	3.28	0.84	High Extent	3.15	0.89	High Extent
	Grand Mean	3.23		High Extent	3.10		High Extent

The data presented in Table 1 show the mean ratings of university administrators and NUC staff on the extent to which the establishment of robust quality assurance mechanisms helps in meeting NUC standards for quality education delivery. Items 1 to 8 had mean values ranging from 3.15 to 3.31 for university administrators and from 3.02 to 3.18 for NUC staff. The grand mean scores of 3.23 and 3.10 for university administrators and NUC staff respectively both fall within the criterion range of 2.50–3.49, indicating that the establishment of robust quality assurance mechanisms helps in meeting NUC standards

towards quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State to a high extent. University administrators rated the strategy slightly higher than NUC staff, though both groups converged in their overall assessment of the strategy as highly effective.

Research Question 2 To what extent does administrators' provision of adequate infrastructure help in meeting National Universities Commission's (NUC) Standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean Ratings of University Administrators and NUC Staff on the Extent to Which Administrators' Provision of Adequate Infrastructure Helps in Meeting NUC Standards for Quality Education Delivery in Public Universities in Rivers State

S/N	Items	Univ. Admins. N=91			NUC Staff N=101		
		Mean	S.D	Remark	Mean	S.D	Remark
9	Administrators ensure that the university has adequate classroom facilities to meet NUC standards for quality education.	3.17	0.89	High Extent	3.04	0.94	High Extent
10	Administrators provide modern technological resources to support teaching and learning in line with NUC standards.	3.09	0.93	High Extent	2.96	0.98	High Extent
11	Administrators maintain up-to-date library resources and facilities to meet the academic needs of students and staff according to NUC guidelines.	3.21	0.86	High Extent	3.08	0.91	High Extent
12	Administrators ensure that the university's laboratories and practical facilities meet the requirements set by the NUC.	3.14	0.91	High Extent	3.01	0.96	High Extent
13	Administrators invest in the development and maintenance of student accommodation facilities to align with NUC standards.	3.07	0.97	High Extent	2.94	1.02	High Extent
14	Administrators provide sufficient and accessible recreational and welfare facilities for students to enhance the quality of education.	3.12	0.94	High Extent	2.99	0.99	High Extent
15	Administrators allocate adequate budgetary resources for the continuous improvement of university infrastructure to meet NUC quality standards.	3.18	0.88	High Extent	3.05	0.93	High Extent
16	Administrators ensure that the campus environment is conducive to learning and teaching, in accordance with NUC standards.	3.24	0.85	High Extent	3.11	0.90	High Extent
	Grand Mean	3.15		High Extent	3.02		High Extent

Table 2 presents the mean ratings of university administrators and NUC staff on the extent to which administrators' provision of adequate infrastructure helps in meeting NUC standards for quality education delivery. Items 9 to 16 had mean values ranging from 3.07 to 3.24 for university administrators and from 2.94 to 3.11 for NUC staff. The grand mean of 3.15 for university administrators and 3.02 for NUC staff both fall within the high extent criterion range of 2.50–3.49. This indicates that the provision of adequate infrastructure helps in meeting NUC standards towards quality education delivery in public

universities in Rivers State to a high extent. The marginally higher rating from university administrators suggests that those directly responsible for managing institutional facilities have a stronger appreciation of the strategic importance of infrastructure provision in this regard.

Research Question 3: To what extent does administrators' strengthening of research capacity help in meeting National Universities Commission's (NUC) Standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean Ratings of University Administrators and NUC Staff on the Extent to Which Administrators' Strengthening of Research Capacity Helps in Meeting NUC Standards for Quality Education Delivery in Public Universities in Rivers State

S/N	Items	Univ. Admins. N=91			NUC Staff N=101		
		Mean	S.D	Remark	Mean	S.D	Remark
17	Administrators provide adequate funding and resources to support research activities in line with NUC standards.	3.12	0.94	High Extent	2.99	0.99	High Extent
18	Administrators promote collaboration between faculty members and external research institutions to enhance research output in accordance with NUC guidelines.	3.06	0.98	High Extent	2.93	1.03	High Extent
19	Administrators establish mechanisms to support innovation and the commercialisation of research findings, as recommended by NUC standards.	3.08	0.96	High Extent	2.95	1.01	High Extent
20	Administrators encourage faculty members to engage in continuous professional development to improve their research skills and capabilities.	3.15	0.90	High Extent	3.02	0.95	High Extent
21	Administrators ensure that the university has modern research facilities and equipment to support high-quality research in line with NUC standards.	3.04	1.01	High Extent	2.91	1.06	High Extent
22	Administrators create platforms and opportunities for faculty and students to present and publish their research in recognised academic journals.	3.09	0.97	High Extent	2.96	1.02	High Extent
23	Administrators provide incentives and recognition for research excellence and innovation to motivate staff and students.	3.11	0.95	High Extent	2.98	1.00	High Extent
24	Administrators support the development of interdisciplinary research programmes that align with national development goals and NUC's quality education standards.	3.07	0.99	High Extent	2.94	1.04	High Extent
	Grand Mean	3.09		High Extent	2.96		High Extent

The analysed data in Table 3 show the mean ratings of both groups on the extent to which the strengthening of research capacity helps in meeting NUC standards for quality education delivery. Items 17 to 24 had mean values ranging from 3.04 to 3.15 for university administrators and from 2.91 to 3.02 for NUC staff. With grand means of 3.09 and 2.96 for university administrators and NUC staff respectively, the strategy of strengthening research capacity helps in meeting NUC standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State to a high extent. The relatively lower mean scores compared to other

strategies reflect the acknowledged challenges of research funding and infrastructure that constrain research capacity in the public universities under study.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of university administrators and NUC staff on the extent to which administrators' establishment of robust quality assurance mechanisms helps in meeting NUC Standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State.

Table 4: Z-Test Analysis of Difference in Mean Ratings of University Administrators and NUC Staff on the Extent to Which Administrators' Establishment of Robust Quality Assurance Mechanisms Helps in Meeting NUC Standards for Quality Education Delivery

Groups	N	Mean	S.D	z-cal	z-crit	df	Decision
Univ. Admins.	91	3.23	0.85	1.01	1.96	190	Null Accepted
NUC Staff	101	3.10	0.90				

Table 4 shows the z-test result for Hypothesis 1. The calculated z-value of 1.01 is less than the critical z-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance with 190 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted. This means there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of university administrators and NUC staff on the extent to which the establishment of robust quality assurance mechanisms helps in meeting NUC standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State.

Both groups hold a consensual view on the high importance of quality assurance mechanisms as a strategy for NUC compliance.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of university administrators and NUC staff on the extent to which administrators' provision of adequate infrastructure helps in meeting NUC Standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State.

Table 5: Z-Test Analysis of Difference in Mean Ratings of University Administrators and NUC Staff on the Extent to Which Administrators' Provision of Adequate Infrastructure Helps in Meeting NUC Standards for Quality Education Delivery

Groups	N	Mean	S.D	z-cal	z-crit	df	Decision
Univ. Admins.	91	3.15	0.90	0.97	1.96	190	Null Accepted
NUC Staff	101	3.02	0.95				

Table 5 shows that the calculated z-value of 0.97 is less than the critical z-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance with 190 degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of university administrators and NUC staff on the extent to which the provision of adequate infrastructure helps in meeting NUC standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State. Both groups agree to a high extent that infrastructure provision is an

important administrative strategy for meeting NUC accreditation requirements.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of university administrators and NUC staff on the extent to which administrators' strengthening of research capacity helps in meeting NUC Standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State.

Table 6: Z-Test Analysis of Difference in Mean Ratings of University Administrators and NUC Staff on the Extent to Which Administrators' Strengthening of Research Capacity Helps in Meeting NUC Standards for Quality Education Delivery

Groups	N	Mean	S.D	z-cal	z-crit	df	Decision
Univ. Admins.	91	3.09	0.96	0.91	1.96	190	Null Accepted
NUC Staff	101	2.96	1.01				

As shown in Table 6, the calculated z-value of 0.91 is less than the critical z-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance with 190 degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. This indicates that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of university administrators and NUC staff on the extent to which the strengthening of research capacity helps in meeting NUC standards towards quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers

State. Both groups concur that strengthening research capacity is a significant strategy for NUC compliance, even while acknowledging the resource challenges that constrain research performance in public universities.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of research question one revealed that administrators' establishment of robust quality assurance

mechanisms helps in meeting NUC standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State to a high extent (administrators' grand mean = 3.23; NUC staff grand mean = 3.10). This finding is consistent with Imhangbe, Oviawe, Aluede, Obinyan, and Oke (2023), who argued that for quality assurance to yield positive outcomes in Nigerian universities, administrators must prioritise the development of human resources alongside physical and infrastructural investments, and that the combined attention to both dimensions is what determines the probability of achieving and sustaining NUC accreditation standards. Similarly, Mohammed (2023) demonstrated that university administrators' management abilities significantly influence the effectiveness of quality assurance mechanisms, and that the mere existence of quality assurance systems does not guarantee their effectiveness without the commitment and capacity of institutional leadership. Kajo, Audu, and Obinna (2024) further corroborated this finding by establishing that NUC's minimum academic standards and accreditation policies exert a high extent of influence on university management, with a statistically significant Chi-square result confirming that NUC accreditation meaningfully shapes institutional management. The finding from this study aligns with the systems theory adopted, which holds that effective functioning of the whole system depends on the harmonious interaction of all its sub-systems, of which quality assurance is a foundational and integrating component.

The finding for research question two indicated that administrators' provision of adequate infrastructure helps in meeting NUC standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State to a high extent (administrators' grand mean = 3.15; NUC staff grand mean = 3.02). This finding corroborates the work of Ebekozien, Samsurijan, Aigbavboa, Radin Firdaus, Nor Azazi, and Amadi (2023), who confirmed that physical infrastructure significantly influences the quality of educational output in Nigerian higher education institutions, and that insufficient funding has complicated the infrastructure challenge. It also aligns with the findings of Agbor, Onnoghen, Nwachukwu, and Esu (2022), who established a significant positive relationship between the availability of physical facilities and student academic performance, reinforcing the argument that administrators who invest in adequate infrastructure create the enabling conditions for quality learning outcomes and compliance with NUC's accreditation standards. Furthermore, the finding is consistent with Ogunode and Jegede (2021), who identified poor planning and poor maintenance culture as leading causes of infrastructure decay in public universities, and recommended that administrators institute systematic asset management frameworks and multi-year capital

development plans aligned with NUC guidelines as strategies to sustainably address the infrastructure challenge. This is further supported by LongJohn and Wokoma (2026), who found that environmental maintenance practices had a significant positive relationship with educational service delivery in Rivers State public schools, with environmental maintenance making the greater contribution to service delivery outcomes, underscoring the importance of the upkeep dimension of infrastructure provision alongside its initial development.

The finding for research question three showed that administrators' strengthening of research capacity helps in meeting NUC standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State to a high extent (administrators' grand mean = 3.09; NUC staff grand mean = 2.96). This finding is in agreement with the position of Gbemi-Ogunleye (2024), who found that institutional factors, particularly organisational culture and research funding, are positively and significantly correlated with the research productivity of academic staff in Nigerian universities, and that administrators who create development-oriented institutional environments generate measurable improvements in research output that contribute to NUC's research and postgraduate programme accreditation standards. The finding is also consistent with Ibidunni, Salau, Falola, Ayeni, and Obunabor (2023), who reported that total quality management approaches prioritising research and innovation programmes significantly enhance research performance in Nigerian higher education institutions. The slightly lower grand mean values recorded for this strategy relative to others reflect the acknowledged systemic challenges of research underfunding and brain drain documented in the literature, which constrain the full realisation of research capacity in Rivers State public universities.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that the establishment of robust quality assurance mechanisms is a high-extent administrative strategy for meeting NUC standards for quality education delivery in public universities in Rivers State. When administrators invest in functional internal quality assurance units, conduct regular programme reviews, and maintain comprehensive academic records, they create the institutional conditions required for consistent compliance with NUC's accreditation criteria, thereby improving the quality of educational delivery. However, the study also acknowledges that the structural challenges of underfunding, political interference, and inadequate staffing continue to constrain the full realisation of quality

assurance mechanisms in the public universities under study.

The provision of adequate infrastructure is a high-extent administrative strategy for meeting NUC standards in public universities in Rivers State. Adequate classrooms, laboratories, libraries, ICT resources, and student welfare facilities are foundational requirements for NUC accreditation success and quality educational delivery. Administrators who leverage TETFund interventions, public-private partnerships, and corporate social responsibility frameworks to supplement government subventions are better positioned to address the systemic infrastructure deficits that have consistently exposed public universities in the state to adverse accreditation outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Vice-chancellors and university management of public universities in Rivers State should establish fully functional, adequately resourced, and institutionally empowered Internal Quality Assurance Units (IQAUs) or Directorates of Academic Planning in each university. These units should be mandated to conduct regular internal mock accreditation exercises, coordinate periodic programme reviews aligned with CCMAS requirements, and maintain comprehensive data on student learning outcomes and staff qualifications.
- ii. University administrators in Rivers State should develop and implement comprehensive multi-year Infrastructure Development Plans that are explicitly aligned with NUC's accreditation criteria and the National Building Codes. These plans should include dedicated budget allocations for infrastructure maintenance, systematic asset management frameworks, and proactive engagement with TETFund's infrastructure intervention programmes through timely and well-documented project proposals.
- iii. University administrators in Rivers State should formulate and implement comprehensive institutional research policies that establish protected research funding lines, merit-based research incentive structures, and systematic engagement with TETFund research grants and the emerging TETFund-UNDP innovation partnership. Universities should establish dedicated research offices, develop technology transfer and intellectual property frameworks, and actively cultivate international research

collaborations as mechanisms for improving research output, enhancing research infrastructure, and meeting the NUC's research and postgraduate programme accreditation requirements.

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