

Political Interference and Quality of Education in Public Secondary Schools in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined whether political interference predicts the quality of education in public secondary schools in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigated whether the appointment of school administrators and teachers' recruitment process predict the quality of teachers, learning environment, and students. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised all 89 public secondary schools in the study area, and a census sampling technique was employed to include all the schools. Data were collected using a researcher-developed instrument titled *Political Interference and Quality of Education in Public Secondary Schools Questionnaire (PIQEPSSQ)*. The instrument was validated by experts, while its reliability was established using the Cronbach Alpha method, with coefficients ranging from 0.72 to 0.91. Data collected were analysed using simple linear regression at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that political interference in the appointment of school administrators and teachers' recruitment significantly and negatively predicted the overall quality of education, including the quality of teachers, learning environment, and students. The study concluded that political interference undermines educational quality in public secondary schools. It therefore recommended that the appointment of school administrators and recruitment of teachers should strictly follow merit-based, transparent, and professional procedures devoid of political influence to enhance the quality of education.

Keywords: Political interference; Quality of education; School administrators' appointment; Teachers' recruitment; Public secondary schools.

INTRODUCTION

Quality education remains a fundamental instrument for individual and national development because it equips learners with the knowledge, skills, competencies, and values required for meaningful participation in society. It involves the provision of learning experiences that promote critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, creativity, social responsibility, and effective adaptation to changing societal demands. According to the World Bank (2018), assessing educational quality requires consideration of both quantitative and qualitative indicators, including students' learning outcomes, teaching effectiveness, learning facilities, and the overall educational environment. In Nigeria, quality education is expected to enhance human capital development, promote economic growth, reduce inequality, and prepare citizens for social and technological advancement.

Secondary education occupies a significant position in Nigeria's educational system as it serves as the link between primary and tertiary education.

The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN, 2014) emphasizes that secondary education should provide learners with opportunities to develop useful skills, appreciate cultural values, think independently, and contribute positively to national development. However, achieving these objectives has remained challenging due to persistent issues such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, shortage of qualified teachers, ineffective supervision, unstable educational policies, and political influence in educational administration.

Political interference has increasingly attracted attention as a factor affecting the quality and effectiveness of educational institutions. Political interference refers to the involvement of political actors in educational decision-making processes, including appointments, recruitment, resource allocation, and policy

implementation. Olayisade (2018) observed that political considerations have influenced educational administration in Nigeria, often resulting in the appointment of individuals based on political loyalty rather than competence. Similarly, Ofem (2022) argued that education and politics are closely connected because the establishment, governance, and management of schools are influenced by political decisions. The influence of politics on education is not a recent development. Guda and Mando (2020) noted that since the colonial period, educational planning and management in Nigeria have been shaped by political arrangements. While political involvement can support educational development through policy direction and resource provision, excessive interference may undermine institutional autonomy, weaken governance structures, and affect the quality of educational outcomes. Punch (2016) identified political interference as a situation where politicians influence educational decisions for personal or political interests, resulting in practices such as improper appointments, manipulation of regulations, and unequal distribution of resources.

The consequences of political interference on secondary education include the appointment of unqualified personnel, compromised academic standards, inadequate resource management, and weakened accountability systems. Subedi (2018) explained that politicized educational systems may encourage favouritism, interfere with academic processes, and reduce institutional capacity to maintain quality standards. Furthermore, Apple (2013) noted that political influence can affect curriculum decisions and limit the development of independent and critical thinking among learners.

In Cross River State, particularly within the Calabar Education Zone, concerns have been raised regarding declining educational standards, including poor student outcomes, inadequate learning conditions, and challenges associated with teacher quality and school management. These challenges may be linked to factors such as politically influenced appointments, inadequate monitoring, poor funding, and ineffective educational leadership. Although government has made efforts through the provision of facilities, staff development programmes, and educational reforms, the problem of declining educational quality persists.

The quality of secondary education in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State has continued to attract concern among parents, teachers, and other stakeholders due to perceived decline in educational standards. The situation is reflected in issues such as the recruitment of unqualified teachers, poor learning outcomes, examination malpractice, inadequate instructional facilities, and weak educational management practices. These challenges have raised concerns about the ability of secondary education to achieve its objectives of preparing learners for useful living and higher education.

The researcher observed that some schools compromise academic standards, particularly during external examinations, where examination malpractice practices undermine students' commitment to learning and affect the credibility of educational outcomes. Consequently, some secondary school graduates lack essential skills, including effective communication, problem-solving abilities, and employability competencies, thereby limiting their contribution to society.

These challenges may be associated with factors such as inadequate funding, poor supervision, insufficient learning resources, weak teacher development programmes, unstable educational policies, and political influence in educational administration. Political interference, particularly in the recruitment of teachers, appointment of school administrators, and allocation of resources, may affect merit-based practices and weaken the quality of education.

Despite government efforts through funding, provision of educational facilities, and teacher development initiatives, concerns about declining educational quality persist. Therefore, this study seeks to determine whether political interference predicts the quality of education in public secondary schools in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to examine political interference and quality of education in public secondary school in Calabar Education Zone, Cross River State. Specifically, the study sought to examined whether;

- i. Appointment of school administrators predicts the quality of education in terms of quality of teachers, quality of learning environment and quality of students.
- ii. Teachers' recruitment process predicts the quality of education in terms of quality of teachers, quality of learning environment and quality of students.

Research questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- i. How does appointment of school administrators predict the quality of education in terms of quality of teachers, quality of learning environment and quality of students in public secondary schools in Calabar Education Zone?
- ii. To what extent does teachers recruitment process predicts the quality of education in terms of quality of teachers, quality of learning environment and quality of students?

Statement of hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

- i. Appointment of school administrators does not significantly predict the quality of education in terms of quality of teachers, quality of learning environment and quality of students.
- ii. Teachers' recruitment does not significantly predict the quality of education in terms of quality of teachers, quality of learning environment and quality of students.

Stakeholder Theory by Edward Freeman (1984)

Stakeholder theory, propounded by Freeman (1984), emphasizes that organizations should consider the interests and contributions of all stakeholders who are affected by or can influence organizational decisions and outcomes. The theory argues that organizational success depends on the effective management of relationships among stakeholders, including employees, customers, government, communities, and other relevant groups. Its major assumptions include the existence of multiple stakeholders, interdependence among stakeholders, value creation, ethical responsibility, and the need for long-term relationships. Rather than focusing only on individual interests, organizations should promote cooperation, fairness, and shared responsibility to achieve sustainable outcomes. The relevance of stakeholder theory to this study is based on the understanding that quality education requires the active involvement of key stakeholders such as students, teachers, parents, school administrators, government officials, and the community. The theory highlights the importance of inclusive decision-making, transparency, and collaboration in educational management. In relation to political interference and quality education, the theory suggests that educational decisions should reflect collective interests rather than political considerations. Therefore, effective stakeholder participation can promote accountability and improve the quality of secondary education.

Quality Management Theory by Edward Deming (1950)

Quality Management Theory, associated with Deming (1950), focuses on continuous improvement, effective processes, and the involvement of people in achieving quality outcomes. The theory is based on principles such as customer focus, continuous improvement, prevention of errors, employee involvement, and data-based decision-making. It emphasizes that organizations can achieve sustainable quality when decisions are guided by evidence, proper planning, and continuous evaluation rather than personal opinions or short-term interests. The theory is relevant to this study because educational institutions, like other organizations, require systematic approaches to improve performance and maintain standards. In secondary education, quality management principles encourage school administrators to promote teacher development, effective supervision, proper resource utilization, and evidence-based decision-making. The theory also supports the view that educational decisions should be based on students' learning needs and institutional goals rather than political influence.

Hence, applying quality management principles can contribute to improving the quality of education in public secondary schools.

Empirical Review

Olaifa, Ayinla, and Atanda (2021) investigated the relationship between principals' appointment procedures and quality of education in secondary schools in Kwara State, Nigeria. Using a descriptive research design, the study involved 420 teachers selected through random and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings revealed a significant relationship between principals' appointment procedures and administrative effectiveness, crisis management, and resource management. The study concluded that transparent and merit-based appointment procedures are essential for effective school administration and recommended proper mechanisms to regulate the appointment of school administrators to improve educational quality.

Similarly, Allan, Africanus, and George (2018) examined the influence of political interference on the appointment and administration of public officers in Kibaha Town Council, Tanzania. Using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. The findings showed that political interference negatively affected administrative performance, resulting in poor service delivery, abuse of power, weak commitment, and ineffective management. The study emphasized the need for professionalism and reduced political influence in public sector appointments.

Bekithemba (2020) observed that the appointment of school principals has become increasingly politicized, with political connections sometimes taking precedence over competence and professional qualifications. The study noted that politically influenced appointments often affect school leadership effectiveness, students' performance, and discipline. In the same vein, Oko, Agwu, Eze-Anyim, Eze, and Nulite (2020) examined conflicts between principals and political appointees in the implementation of educational policies in secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The study found that political interference in school administration contributed to poor policy implementation and declining educational quality. The researchers recommended that educational leadership decisions should be guided by professional competence rather than political interests.

Sharon (2015) investigated the processes involved in the appointment of school principals in Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces of South Africa. Using a qualitative case study approach, the study revealed weaknesses in appointment procedures, including stakeholder power struggles and political influence. The study recommended improved leadership training and the adoption of transparent appointment criteria based on qualifications and experience. Similarly, Francis, Enos, and Njihia (2023) examined the influence of principals' appointment types on students' academic performance in secondary schools in Kenya. The study found that effective principal appointments contributed positively to school management and students' learning outcomes, highlighting the importance of selecting competent leaders.

Regarding teacher recruitment, Manning (2014) emphasized that effective recruitment processes are necessary for attracting qualified and competent teachers who can improve teaching and learning outcomes. Ilepe (2017) argued that the politicization of teacher recruitment in Nigeria has weakened merit-based selection and negatively affected educational development. The study stressed that teacher recruitment should be based on competence, qualifications, and professional commitment rather than political considerations.

Israel, Anthony, Chime, and Victor (2021) examined teacher recruitment as a determinant of students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Imo State, Nigeria. Using a descriptive survey design involving 360 principals, the study found that the availability of qualified teachers significantly influences students' academic performance. The study recommended that recruitment agencies should prioritize competent and professionally qualified teachers to improve educational outcomes.

Furthermore, Olaifa, Hammed, Olaide, and Moses (2023) investigated the relationship between teacher recruitment strategies and job performance in public secondary schools in Kwara State, Nigeria. Using a correlational research design, data were collected from 402 respondents and analyzed using Pearson Product Moment

Correlation. The findings revealed a significant relationship between effective recruitment strategies and teacher job performance. The study recommended that teacher recruitment should be transparent, professional, and free from political interference to enhance the quality of education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect data from respondents and examine the extent to which political variables predict the quality of education in public secondary schools in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State without manipulating the variables. The study was carried out in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria, which comprises seven Local Government Areas, namely Akamkpa, Akpabuyo, Bakassi, Biase, Calabar South, Calabar Municipality, and Odukpani. The zone was selected because of concerns regarding the quality of secondary education and the possible influence of political factors on educational administration.

The population of the study consisted of all 89 public secondary schools in Calabar Education Zone, according to information obtained from the Cross River State Secondary Education Board (2024). A census sampling technique was adopted because the population was manageable, and therefore all the 89 public secondary schools constituted the sample for the study. Data were collected using a researcher-developed instrument titled *Political Interference and Quality of Education in Public Secondary Schools Questionnaire (PIQEPSSQ)*. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: Section A measured political interference variables, including appointment of school administrators, teacher recruitment process, allocation of funds, distribution of learning facilities, and posting/transfer of personnel, while Section B measured quality of education in terms of teacher quality, learning environment, and student quality. The instrument contained 48 items structured on a four-point Likert scale.

The instrument was validated by experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation from the University of Calabar to ensure its appropriateness and relevance to the study. Reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha reliability analysis after a pilot test conducted with 50 respondents from Ikom Education Zone, which was outside the study area. The reliability coefficients ranged from 0.72 to 0.91, indicating that the instrument was reliable for data collection. The questionnaire was administered personally by the researcher with the assistance of trained research assistants after obtaining permission from relevant school authorities. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and encouraged to provide honest responses.

The data collected were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using simple linear regression analysis. The study also adhered to ethical research standards by ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation of respondents. The information obtained was used strictly for academic purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General description of research variables

This study examined political interference and the quality of education in public secondary schools in Calabar Education Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria. The independent variable in this study is political interference, whereas the dependent variable is the quality of education. The independent variable is further subdivided into two dimensions: appointment of school administrators and teachers' recruitment process. Similarly, the dependent variable (quality of education) was considered generally and across three specific dimensions – quality of teachers, quality of learning environment and quality of students. A questionnaire with a four-point Likert scale was used to collect data for all the independent and dependent variables of the study. The data collected were statistically analysed, and the responses obtained for each variable are summarised in Table 3.

Mean rating and standard deviations of the independent and dependent variables of the study

Variables	X	SD
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Appointment of school administrators	15.5	2.88
Teachers' recruitment	15.72	3.34
Overall quality of education	18.26	2.17
Quality of teachers	18.41	2.38
Quality of learning facilities	18.81	2.83
Quality of students	17.54	3.26

The mean ratings and standard deviations for both the independent and dependent variables of the study are presented in Table 3. The independent variable, political interference, was assessed across two dimensions: appointment of school administrators ($M = 15.50$, $SD = 2.88$), teachers' recruitment ($M = 15.72$, $SD = 3.34$). For the dependent variable, the overall quality of education received a mean rating of 18.26 ($SD = 2.17$).

Specifically, the quality of teachers was rated at a mean of 18.41 ($SD = 2.38$), the quality of learning facilities had a mean of 18.81 ($SD = 2.83$), and the quality of students was rated at a mean of 17.54 ($SD = 3.26$). These results indicate that, on average, respondents rated the various dimensions of political interference and the quality of education at relatively moderate levels. The standard deviations suggest some variability in the responses, with the allocation of funds showing the highest variability among the political interference dimensions ($SD = 3.73$), and the overall quality of education showing the least variability among the education quality dimensions ($SD = 2.17$).

Presentation of results

The results of this study align with the research questions and hypotheses previously formulated to guide the research. The following sub-sections detail the findings based on each specific hypothesis.

Research question one

How does the appointment of school administrators predict the quality of education in terms of the quality of teachers, the quality of learning environment, and the quality of students in public secondary schools in Calabar Education Zone? Continuous data were obtained for all the variables in the analysis, which included the dependent variables—overall quality of education, quality of teaching, quality of learning facilities, and quality of students—and the predictor variable, appointment of school administrators. A simple linear regression analysis was performed, and the results are presented in Table 4.

The analysis revealed that the appointment of school administrators explained 21.3% of the variance in the overall quality of education ($R^2 = 0.213$). This indicates that while the appointment of school administrators plays a role in determining the overall quality of education, 78.7% of the variance is attributed to other factors not included in this model.

For the quality of teaching, the predictor explained 13.8% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.138$), leaving 86.2% of the variance unexplained by this model. Regarding the quality of learning facilities, 20.3% of the variance was explained by the appointment of school administrators ($R^2 = 0.203$), with 79.7% attributable to other factors. Lastly, the appointment of school administrators accounted for only 6.6% of the variance in the quality of students ($R^2 = 0.066$), indicating that 93.4% of the variance is due to other predictors not included in this model.

Table 4

Model summaries of repeated simple linear regression analysis showing how school administrators' appointments predict the quality of education in secondary schools.

Dependent variable	R	R Square	Adj. R Square	Std. Error
Overall quality of education	0.462	0.213	0.204	1.932
Quality of teacher	0.372	0.138	0.128	2.226
Quality of learning environment	0.45	0.203	0.194	2.543
Quality of students	0.258	0.066	0.056	3.165
Predictor: Appointment of school administrators				

Research question two

How does teachers' recruitment process predict the quality of education in terms of quality of teachers, quality of learning environment, and quality of students in public secondary schools in Calabar education zone?

Continuous data were obtained for all the variables in the analysis, which include the dependent variables, overall quality of education, quality of teacher, quality of learning environment and quality of students and the predictor variables, teachers' recruitment process. A simple linear regression analysis was performed and the results are presented in table 5.

The analysis revealed that, teachers' recruitment process explained 12.3% of the variance in the overall quality of education ($R^2=0.123$). This indicate that while the recruitment process plays a role in determining the overall quality of education 87.7% of the variance is attributed to other factors not included in this model. For quality of teacher, the predictor explained 10.1% of the variance ($R^2=0.101$) leaving 89.9 of the variance unexplained by the model. Regarding the quality of learning facilities, 07.8% of the variance was explained by the recruitment process (R^2 0.078), with 92.2% attributed to other factors. Finally, teachers' recruitment process accounted for only 05.1% of the variance in the quality of students ($R^2=0.051$) indicating that 94.9% of the variance is due to other predictors not included in this model.

Table 5

Model Summaries of repeated simple linear regression analysis showing how teachers recruitment process predict the quality of education in secondary schools

Dependent variable	R	R Square	Adj. R Square	Std. Error
Overall quality of education	0.351	0.123	0.114	2.039
Quality of teaching	0.318	0.101	0.091	2.273
Quality of learning facilities	0.279	0.078	0.067	2.735
Quality of students	0.226	0.051	0.04	3.191

Hypothesis one

The appointment of school administrators does not significantly predict the quality of education in terms of the quality of teachers, the quality of the learning environment, or the quality of the students in Calabar Education Zone. A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to assess whether the appointment of school administrators significantly predicts the quality of education, both generally and across the three dimensions: quality of teachers, quality of learning environment, and quality of students.

The analysis showed that the appointment of school administrators significantly predicted the overall quality of education, $F(1, 88) = 23.864$, $p < .05$. The unstandardized B-value for this relationship was -0.347, and the standardized Beta was -0.462. This indicates that for every unit increase in the appointment of school

administrators, there is a decrease of 0.347 in the overall quality of education, assuming other factors remain constant.

The appointment of school administrators was also found to be a significant predictor of the quality of teachers, $F(1, 88) = 14.11$, $p < .05$. The B-value was -0.307, and the Beta value was -0.372, indicating that a one-unit increase in the appointment of school administrators leads to a decrease of 0.307 in the quality of teachers, holding other factors constant. The appointment of school administrators significantly predicted the quality of the learning environment, $F(1, 88) = 22.403$, $p < .001$. The B-value for this relationship was -0.442, and the Beta was -0.450. This suggests that for each unit increase in the appointment of school administrators, the quality of the learning environment decreases by 0.442, assuming other factors remain constant.

The result from the table shows that the appointment of school administrators was a significant predictor of student quality, $F(1, 88) = 6.26$, $p = .014$. The B-value was -0.291, and the Beta was -0.258, indicating that a one-unit increase in the appointment of school administrators is associated with a decrease of 0.291 in student quality, assuming other factors remain constant. The F-ratios and associated p-values indicate that the appointment of school administrators is a significant predictor of the overall quality of education, as well as the quality of teachers, learning environment, and students. The negative B-values suggest that as political interference in the appointment of school administrators increases, the quality across all dimensions of education tends to decrease. Therefore, the null hypothesis that the appointment of school administrators does not significantly predict the quality of education is rejected. Along these lines, the following regression equations were derived.

$$OQE = 23.632 - 0.347(ASA) + 1.12 \quad (1)$$

$$QT = 23.173 - 0.307(ASA) + 1.29 \quad (2)$$

$$QLE = 25.666 - 0.442(ASA) + 0.09 \quad (3)$$

$$QS = 22.055 - 0.291(ASA) + 1.83 \quad (4)$$

Where:

OQE = Overall quality of education

QT = Quality of teachers

QLE = Quality of learning environment

QS = Quality of students

Simple linear regression analysis showing how the appointment of school administrators predicts the quality of education generally and across three dimensions

Dependent variable	Source	SS	Df	MS	F	p
Overall quality of education	Regression	89.079	1	89.079	23.864*	0
	Residual	328.487	88	3.733		
	Total	417.567	89			
a = 23.632; B = -0.347; Beta = -0.462; t = -4.885; SE = 1.12; p < .05						
Quality of teachers	Regression	69.894	1	69.894	14.11*	0
	Residual	435.895	88	4.953		
	Total	505.789	89			
a = 23.173; B = -0.307; Beta = -0.372; t = -3.756; SE = 1.29; p < .05						
Quality of learning environment	Regression	144.843	1	144.843	22.403*	0
	Residual	568.946	88	6.465		

	Total	713.789	89			
	a = 25.666; B = -0.442; Beta = -0.45; t = -4.733; SE = 0.09; p < .05					
Quality of students	Regression	62.715	1	62.715	6.26*	0.014
	Residual	881.608	88	10.018		
	Total	944.322	89			
	a = 22.055; B = -0.291; Beta = -0.258; t = -2.502; SE = 1.83; p < .05					

*p is significant at .05 level

Hypothesis two

Teachers' recruitment process does not significantly predict the quality of education in terms of quality of teachers, quality of learning environment and quality of students in public secondary school in calabar education zone. A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to assess whether the recruitment of teachers significantly predicts the quality of education both generally and across the three dimensions: quality of teachers, quality of learning environment and quality of students. The results are presented in table 10.

The analysis shows that, teachers recruitment significantly predicted the overall quality of education, $F(1,88) = 12.398$, $p < .05$. The unstandardized B-value for this relationship was -0.227 and the standardized beta was -0.351. This indicates that for every unit increase in the recruitment of teachers, there is a decrease of 0.227 in the overall quality of education, assuming other factors remain constant.

The recruitment of teachers was also found to be a significant predictor of the quality of teachers, $F(1,88) = 9.87$, $p < .05$. The B-value was -0.228 and the beta value was -0.351 indicating that, a one unit increase in the recruitment of teachers leads to a decrease of 0.228 in the quality of teachers, holding other factors constant.

The recruitment of teachers significantly predict the quality of learning environment $F(1,88) = 7.441$, $p < .008$, the B-value was -0.237, and beta value was -0.279, indicating that, a one unit increase in the recruitment of teachers leads to 0.237 decrease in the quality of learning environment assuming other factors remain constant.

Again, the above analysis indicated that, the recruitment of teachers was a significant predictor of students quality $F(1,88) = 4.73$, $p < 0.32$. The B-value was -0.221 and the beta value was 0.226. This indicates that, a one unit increase in the recruitment of teachers is associated with a decrease of 0.221 in students quality, assuming other factors remain constant.

The F-ratios and the related p-values indicate that, the recruitment of teachers is a significant predictor of the overall quality of education, as well as the quality of teachers, learning environment and students. The negative B-values suggest that, as political interference in the recruitment of teachers increases, the quality across all dimensions of education tends to decrease. Hence, the null hypothesis which stated that, teachers recruitment process does not significantly predict the quality of education is rejected and the alternate form is retained.

Simple linear regression analysis showing how teachers' recruitment process predict the quality of education generally and across the three dimension

Dependent variable	Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Overall quality of education	Regression	51.564	1	51.564	12.398*	0.001
	Residual	366.003	88	4.159		
	Total	417.567	89			
	a = 21.844; B -0.228, Beta = -0.351; t = -3.521; SE = 1.04; p < .05					
Quality of teachers	Regression	51.007	1	51.007	9.87*	0.002
	Residual	454.782	88	5.168		
	Total	505.789	89			
	a = 21.98; B = -0.227; Beta = -0.318; t = -3.142; SE = 1.16; p < .05					

Quality of learning environment	Regression	55.648	1	55.648	7.441*	0.008
	Residual	658.141	88	7.479		
	Total	713.789	89			
	a = 22.539; B = -0.237; Beta = -0.279; t = -2.728; SE = 1.397; p < .05					
Quality of students	Regression	48.173	1	48.173	4.73*	0.032
	Residual	896.149	88	10.184		
	Total	944.322	89			
	a = 21.012; B = -0.221; Beta = -0.226; t = -2.175; SE = 1.63; p < .05					

*p is significant at .05 alpha level

$$OQE = 12.398 - 0.228 (ASA) + 1.04$$

$$QT = 9.87 - 0.227 (ASA) + 1.16$$

$$QLE = 7.441 - 0.237 (ASA) + 1.397$$

$$QS = 4.73 - 0.221 (ASA) + 1.73$$

Where:

OQE = Overall quality of education

QT = Quality of teachers

QLE = Quality of learning environment

QS = Quality of students

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings revealed that the appointment of school administrators significantly predicted the quality of education in terms of the quality of teachers, learning environment, and students in public secondary schools in Calabar Education Zone. The rejection of the null hypothesis suggests that politically influenced appointments undermine educational quality, whereas merit-based appointments promote effective school leadership and improved educational outcomes. This finding underscores the importance of due process, competence, and professional qualifications in the selection of school administrators to enhance teaching quality, learning conditions, and students' academic development.

The finding is consistent with previous empirical studies. Olaifa, Ayinla, and Atanda (2021) reported that transparent and merit-based appointment procedures significantly improve administrative effectiveness, crisis management, and resource utilization in secondary schools. Similarly, Bekithemba (2020) observed that politically motivated appointments often result in incompetent leadership, poor learner performance, and indiscipline. Oko, Agwu, Eze-Anyim, Eze, and Nulite (2020) also found that political interference in school administration weakens policy implementation and educational quality, while Njideka, Uchenna, and Melody (2016) emphasized that appointments based on political patronage rather than competence diminish effective school management.

The study further established that teachers' recruitment process significantly predicted the quality of education across the dimensions of teacher quality, learning environment, and student quality. This indicates that recruitment practices influenced by political considerations negatively affect educational standards, whereas transparent and merit-based recruitment ensures that qualified and competent teachers are employed, thereby strengthening instructional effectiveness and students' learning outcomes. The finding reinforces the view that teacher quality remains a critical determinant of educational quality.

This finding agrees with the studies of Ikpe (2017), who attributed declining educational performance to the politicization of teacher recruitment, and Israel, Anthony, Chime, and Victor (2021), who reported that the recruitment of qualified teachers significantly enhances students' academic achievement. Likewise, Olaifa, Hammed, Olaide, and Moses (2023) established a significant relationship between teacher recruitment strategies and teachers' job performance and recommended transparent recruitment procedures free from political interference. Manning (2014) further maintained that effective recruitment enables schools to attract competent teachers capable of improving teaching, learning, and overall educational quality.

Implications of the Findings

- i. The finding implies that merit-based appointment of school administrators is essential for improving the quality of education. Competent and professionally qualified school leaders are more likely to enhance teacher effectiveness, create conducive learning environments, and improve students' academic outcomes. Therefore, educational authorities should ensure that appointments are free from political interference.
- ii. The finding indicates that transparent and merit-based teacher recruitment is crucial for maintaining educational quality. Recruiting qualified and competent teachers enhances instructional effectiveness, improves students' academic performance, and strengthens the learning environment. Therefore, teacher recruitment should be conducted without political influence or favoritism.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusion were reached; appointment of school administrators, teachers' recruitment process, allocation of funds, distributions of learning facilities and posting/transfer of personnel significantly predict the quality of education across all dimensions: (quality of teachers, quality of learning environment and quality of students).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made:

- i. The appointment of school administrators should be devoid from political influence and godfatherism. Only people with the relevance qualifications and experience should be appointed.
- ii. The recruitment and selection process should be done based on merit to ensure effective service delivery.

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