



MEASURING ADMINISTRATIVE SKILLS IN PUBLIC TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN CROSS RIVER STATE: IMPLICATION FOR EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Arikpo Godwin Okon¹

¹ *Department of Public administration*

Abstract

Effective governance and service delivery in public tertiary institutions hinge on robust administrative skills, yet their measurement remains underexplored in developing contexts like Nigeria. This study investigates administrative skills among administrators in public tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria, and their implications for governance and service delivery. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, primary data were collected through surveys and interviews with 200 administrators and 50 academic staff across three institutions. Findings reveal that while administrators exhibit moderate proficiency in communication and financial management (mean scores: 3.8 and 3.6), skills in ICT and strategic planning lag (mean scores: 2.9 and 3.1). Demographic analysis shows a predominantly male (65%) and middle-aged (35–50 years) participant pool, with varying experience levels. Key challenges include inadequate training and outdated infrastructure, hindering effective service delivery. The study highlights that strong administrative skills correlate with improved governance outcomes, such as timely service delivery and stakeholder satisfaction. Recommendations include mandatory ICT training, investment in digital infrastructure, and policy reforms to enhance administrative capacity. This research provides a framework for assessing and strengthening administrative competencies, positioning Cross River State's institutions as models for effective governance in Nigeria's higher education sector.

Keywords: Administrative Skills, Public Tertiary Institutions, Governance, Service Delivery.

Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of higher education, effective governance and service delivery in public tertiary institutions are pivotal for fostering academic excellence and societal development. Administrative skills encompassing communication, financial management, ICT proficiency, and strategic planning are the bedrock of institutional efficiency, enabling administrators to navigate complex operational demands. In Cross River State, Nigeria, where tertiary institutions like the University of Calabar and Cross River University of Technology serve as educational hubs, the quality of administrative skills directly influences service delivery outcomes, such as student registration, financial accountability, and stakeholder engagement. This study explores the measurement of these skills and their implications for governance in Cross River State's public tertiary institutions.

Globally, administrative skills are recognized as critical drivers of institutional performance. Rasul and Rogger (2018) highlight that management competencies in public administration significantly enhance service delivery in developing nations. In Nigeria, however, challenges like weak institutional capacity and inadequate training undermine administrative effectiveness (Ikeanyibe, 2016). Arop et al. (2018) emphasize that communication skills are vital for coordinating academic and non-academic functions in tertiary institutions, yet many administrators lack proficiency due to limited professional development. Similarly, ICT skills are increasingly essential in the digital era,



with e-governance initiatives improving service delivery in areas like online registration and fee payment (Okon, 2015).

In Cross River State, studies indicate that administrative inefficiencies, such as delays in student services and poor resource management, stem from skill deficits and infrastructural limitations (Onabe et al., 2024). The National Universities Commission's 2005 survey revealed that only 30% of Nigerian students have adequate access to essential facilities, underscoring the need for skilled administration to optimize resources (Okebukola, 2005). Recent research by Arop et al. (2018) in Cross River State found that effective communication correlates with institutional performance, yet ICT adoption remains low due to poor funding and training. This study addresses these gaps by measuring administrative skills and their impact on governance and service delivery, offering insights into fostering a culture of efficiency and accountability.

Methodology

Research Design

A mixed-methods approach was employed, integrating quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to comprehensively assess administrative skills. The primary data collection method ensured direct insights into administrators' competencies and their impact on governance.

Population and Sample

The study targeted public tertiary institutions in Cross River State: the University of Calabar, Cross River University of Technology, and the Federal College of Education, Obudu. The population included 400 administrators and 200 academic staff. A purposive sampling technique selected 200 administrators and 50 academic staff, ensuring representation across roles and experience levels.

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The demographic profile of participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Category	Administrators (n=200)	Academic Staff (n=50)
Gender	Male	130 (65%)	35 (70%)
	Female	70 (35%)	15 (30%)
Age	25–35	40 (20%)	10 (20%)



	36–50	120 (60%)	25 (50%)
	51+	40 (20%)	15 (30%)
Experience	1–5 Years	60 (30%)	10 (20%)
	6–10 Years	80 (40%)	20 (40%)
	11+ Years	60 (30%)	20 (40%)
Education	Bachelor's	80 (40%)	10 (20%)
	Master's	100 (50%)	30 (60%)
	PhD	20 (10%)	10 (20%)

Data Collection Instruments

- **Questionnaire:** A 30-item questionnaire, titled “Administrative Skills Assessment Questionnaire (ASAQ),” measured skills in communication, financial management, ICT, and strategic planning. It was validated by experts in educational management, with a Cronbach Alpha reliability score of 0.85.
- **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews with 20 administrators and 10 academic staff explored qualitative insights into skill application and challenges.
- **Observation Checklist:** Observations assessed the practical application of skills in administrative processes.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected over four months (April – July 2025). Questionnaires were administered during work hours, achieving a 92% response rate. Interviews, lasting 30–45 minutes, were recorded and transcribed. Observations focused on administrative workflows, such as student registration and financial reporting.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) and t-tests to compare administrator and academic staff perceptions. Qualitative data were thematically analyzed to identify patterns in skill application and barriers.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained, and participant anonymity was ensured through coding. Ethical approval was secured from the institutional review boards of participating institutions.



Results

Quantitative Findings

Table 2

Mean Scores of Administrative Skills

Skill Area	Administrators (Mean, SD)	Academic Staff (Mean, SD)	t-value	p-value
Communication	3.8 (0.7)	3.6 (0.8)	1.56	0.12
Financial Management	3.6 (0.8)	3.5 (0.9)	0.89	0.38
ICT Proficiency	2.9 (0.9)	2.7 (1.0)	1.33	0.19
Strategic Planning	3.1 (0.8)	3.0 (0.9)	0.76	0.45

Administrators rated their skills moderately high, particularly in communication and financial management, but ICT proficiency and strategic planning scored lower. No significant differences were found between administrator and academic staff perceptions ($p > 0.05$).

Table 3

Challenges to Administrative Skills Application

Challenge	Administrators (% Agree)	Academic Staff (% Agree)
Inadequate Training	75%	80%
Outdated Infrastructure	70%	85%
Limited Funding	65%	70%
Resistance to Change	55%	60%

Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis identified three themes:

- **Skill Strengths:** Administrators highlighted communication as a strength, facilitating stakeholder coordination.
- **Skill Gaps:** ICT proficiency was a major weakness, with interviewees noting limited access to training and modern tools.
- **Impact on Governance:** Effective skills were linked to timely service delivery, while gaps caused delays in processes like student registration.



Discussion

The findings align with Rasul and Rogger (2018), who link administrative competencies to improved service delivery. The moderate proficiency in communication and financial management reflects efforts to maintain basic administrative functions, but low ICT skills highlight a critical gap in Nigeria's e-governance initiatives (Okon, 2015). Infrastructure challenges, as noted by Onabe et al. (2024), exacerbate inefficiencies, particularly in digital processes like online registration. The demographic profile indicates a need for targeted training for younger administrators to bridge skill gaps. These results underscore the importance of continuous professional development and infrastructural investment to enhance governance and service delivery.

Conclusion

Administrative skills are pivotal for effective governance and service delivery in Cross River State's public tertiary institutions. While strengths in communication and financial management support basic operations, deficiencies in ICT and strategic planning hinder efficiency. Addressing these gaps through training and infrastructure upgrades can transform institutions into models of excellence, fostering stakeholder satisfaction and academic success.

Recommendations

- **Mandatory ICT Training:** Implement regular workshops to enhance administrators' ICT proficiency.
- **Infrastructure Investment:** Upgrade digital infrastructure to support e-governance initiatives.
- **Policy Reforms:** Develop policies mandating skill assessments and continuous training.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborate with private sectors to fund technology and training programs.
- **Further Research:** Investigate the long-term impact of skill enhancement on institutional performance.

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