

Total School Theory as Framework for Promoting Quality Assurance in Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study explores the application of the Total School Theory (TST) as a framework for promoting quality assurance in educational institutions, with specific insights from Federal University Dutsin-Ma (FUDMA), Katsina State, Nigeria. The researcher used descriptive survey research design. The population is about one thousand seven hundred and fifty-four (1754) academic staff across the 13 faculties in the University. Data were collected from 439 academic staff across 13 faculties using a validated questionnaire. Three research questions were raised for the study. Total School Theory as Framework for Promoting Quality Assurance in Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State questionnaire (TSTFPQAEIQ) and a structured questionnaire was employed to gather data. The instrument was validated by two experts. One from Educational administration and planning, and the other from Measurement and Evaluation, of Psychology and Counselling Departments, Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, and a mean of 2.50 was taken as the landmark for taken decision and below 2.50 was taken as rejection. The findings suggest that FUDMA can further enhance its quality assurance practices by leveraging TST principles. This includes fostering participatory decision-making, integrating technology for monitoring outcomes, and establishing a robust feedback system involving all stakeholders. The following recommendations were made; FUDMA should institutionalize TST principles by aligning its policies and practices with a holistic, systemic, and collaborative framework to enhance overall quality assurance, and Administrators should actively involve faculty, students, and external stakeholders in decision-making and quality improvement initiatives to foster shared responsibility.

Keyword: Total School Theory, Framework, Quality Assurance, Educational Institutions

Introduction

In educational institutions, quality assurance has become an essential aspect in guaranteeing that learning environments adhere to global standards and achieve the desired outcomes. Educational institutions, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria, encounter various obstacles, such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, and limited management

frameworks to guarantee sustainable quality standards. In light of these challenges, different frameworks and theories have been developed to assist in enhancing the quality of education. Quality assurance in education involves the systematic implementation of processes and practices by educational institutions to ensure that they meet or surpass predetermined standards of quality. It encompasses a wide array of activities, such as curriculum design, teaching strategies, student assessment, and institutional management, all with the goal of enhancing educational outcomes. According to the international organization for standardization (ISO), quality assurance is a component of quality management that aims to provide assurance that quality requirements will be met. In educational settings, this means making sure that teaching and learning methods, as well as administrative tasks, are in line with established standards to achieve academic success.

One of the approach that offers a comprehensive framework designed to improve the management, operational efficiency, and educational outcomes in schools and universities is Total School Theory (TST). Total school theory suggests that educational institutions should be seen as intricate systems, where every aspect, including administrative, academic, and infrastructural components, contributes to the overall quality of education. This theory advocates for a coordinated and systemic approach to managing all aspects of an institution, ensuring that the core processes, including teaching, governance, and student support services, work in harmony to achieve optimal educational results (Okeke & Nwankwo, 2021). Therefore, test-driven development is not just a tool for managing software development but a comprehensive framework for promoting sustainable quality assurance in educational institutions.

The importance of Total School Theory becomes even more evident in the Nigerian context, where educational institutions like Federal University Dutsin-Ma (FUDMA) must navigate a variety of challenges in maintaining academic and operational standards. By embracing TST as a framework, FUDMA can enhance quality assurance by fostering a more integrated, collaborative, and efficient management approach. This study seeks to investigate how the implementation of total school theory at FUDMA can enhance educational outcomes, ensure alignment with quality assurance frameworks, and foster a culture of ongoing improvement. Total school theory is based on three fundamental principles that set it apart from other management theories: a comprehensive perspective, interconnected thinking, and collaborative leadership. These principles are essential in comprehending how test-based assessment can be utilized to improve quality assurance in educational institutions.

Total school theory promotes a comprehensive approach to school management, emphasizing the interconnectedness of various aspects, such as administration and pedagogy, within the educational system. This principle underscores the importance of evaluating not only academic achievements but also factors such as infrastructure, governance, student welfare, and community engagement when determining the overall quality of an institution (Obanya, 2019). By shifting the focus from short-term goals like exam results to the entire educational process, the emphasis is placed on creating an environment that fosters effective learning. Systemic thinking, a fundamental principle of TST, prompts educational managers to perceive institutions as intricate systems comprised of interconnected components. The success of one aspect (such as teaching and learning) relies on the effectiveness of other areas (such as administrative support, faculty development, and student services). By utilizing systemic thinking, administrators can gain a comprehensive understanding of how alterations in one area impact the entire institution, enabling them to develop more efficient quality improvement strategies (Senge, 2018). This thorough perspective guarantees that no aspect of the institution functions independently, thereby minimizing inefficiencies and fostering sustainability in quality assurance.

Collaboration is crucial in maintaining quality assurance in educational institutions, as no single department or individual can guarantee quality on their own. Collaborative management places a strong emphasis on teamwork, encouraging administrators, teachers, students, and the broader community to work together towards common goals. According to the theory, an institution can attain exceptional quality standards by involving all its actors in the decision-making processes and quality improvement initiatives (Adewale & Ogunode, 2020). This collaboration extends beyond internal stakeholders to include partnerships with external organizations, government bodies, and other educational institutions, establishing a network of support for ongoing quality improvement efforts. In the realm of FUDMA, these principles can play a crucial role in driving institutional change, enhancing management practices, and ensuring adherence to national and international quality assurance standards. By embracing a comprehensive, interconnected, and cooperative strategy, the institution can strengthen its ability to provide excellent education, thereby establishing itself as a frontrunner in Nigeria's higher education sector.

Ensuring quality assurance in higher education is vital as it enables institutions to deliver education that meets both national and international standards. It guarantees accountability, fosters continuous improvement, and cultivates trust among students, staff, employers, and the government. Quality assurance not only enhances the institution's reputation but also contributes

to student success and increases employability. Universities like Federal University Dutsin-Ma (FUDMA) maintain strong quality assurance systems to stay competitive and meet global standards, while also adhering to Nigeria's national universities commission (NUC) guidelines.

Total school theory (TST) provides a holistic approach that seamlessly integrates with quality assurance measures in educational institutions. It highlights the importance of holistic thinking and teamwork, guaranteeing that every aspect of the institution collaborates to uphold exceptional standards. The holistic approach to quality assurance recognizes that every aspect of the school, including academics, administration, and infrastructure, are interconnected, aligning with the multi-dimensional focus of quality assurance. By taking a holistic approach, TST guarantees that no aspect of the system is neglected, and fosters collaborative management, engaging students, staff, and faculty in identifying and resolving areas for enhancement (Adewale & Ogunode, 2020).

Multiple studies emphasize the potential of total school theory in fostering institutional quality. For example, Okeke and Nwankwo (2021) discovered that when implemented in Nigerian universities, TST resulted in substantial enhancements in institutional governance, student engagement, and academic performance. Their research highlighted how their collaborative management approach encouraged a collective sense of responsibility for quality improvement, leading to more effective and accountable leadership structures. Furthermore, a study conducted by Ojo and Aina (2020) on the utilization of TST in secondary schools in Nigeria demonstrated that schools that adopted a comprehensive approach to resource management and curriculum development were more successful in meeting quality assurance standards. The study found that test can be a practical model for attaining sustainable institutional quality, especially in situations where resources are limited.

The implementation of TST in educational institutions worldwide has demonstrated promising outcomes in enhancing quality assurance practices. For instance, a research conducted in Finland by Pasi Sahlberg (2018) demonstrated how implementing holistic educational management frameworks similar to TST resulted in enhanced educational outcomes and fairer distribution of resources among schools. Finland's emphasis on systemic thinking in school management played a crucial role in establishing a well-balanced and highly-regarded education system that is acknowledged worldwide for its exceptional quality.

In Nigeria, case studies on the application of TST principles have also shown positive results. According to Olaniyan et al. (2021), the implementation of TST in public schools in Lagos State led to enhanced student performance in national examinations by promoting

collaboration among teachers, administrators, and parents. The holistic approach promoted by TST ensured that every aspect of the school environment, including teaching methods, facilities, and extracurricular programs, was optimized to enhance student learning.

At the local level, Federal University Dutsin-Ma (FUDMA) offers a distinctive chance to examine how TST can further improve institutional quality. The university's dedication to maintaining high standards through compliance with NUC standards, coupled with TST'S emphasis on comprehensive and integrated approaches, can establish a solid foundation for continuous quality enhancement. By incorporating TST principles into FUDMA'S quality assurance processes, the university can cultivate a culture of continuous improvement, collaborative leadership, and sustainable excellence.

Statement of the Problem

The persistent challenge of ensuring quality assurance in educational institutions remains a major problem, often resulting in inconsistent standards and suboptimal student outcomes. Educational institutions face numerous obstacles that hinder the delivery of high-quality education, including inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teaching resources, inconsistent instructional practices, weak governance structures, and limited stakeholder involvement in decision-making. In Nigeria, universities are particularly affected by resource constraints, lack of robust accountability mechanisms, and difficulties in aligning their programs with national and international benchmarks. These issues collectively undermine institutional performance and student achievement. The Total School Theory (TST) offers a promising solution to these quality assurance challenges by providing a holistic, system-wide framework for institutional improvement. TST encourages viewing the school as an integrated system, where administration, academics, resources, and student support are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Through systemic thinking and collaborative management, TST fosters comprehensive quality enhancement by ensuring all institutional components work together toward excellence. Furthermore, by promoting inclusive stakeholder engagement and addressing both internal and external quality factors, TST supports the development of a culture of continuous improvement, making quality assurance a core element of daily institutional practices.

Purpose of the Study

The objective of this study is to explore the role of Total School Theory as a Framework for Promoting Quality Assurance in Educational Institutions; Insights from Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State. The specific objectives are:

1. To explore the extent Total school theory serve as a framework for promoting quality assurance in Federal University Dutsin-Ma
2. To assess the current quality assurance practices in Federal University Dutsin-Ma
3. To examine the impact of Total school theory on educational management and quality outcomes in Federal University Dutsin-Ma.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. To what extent does Total school theory serve as a framework for promoting quality assurance in Federal University Dutsin-Ma?
2. What are the current quality assurance practices in Federal University Dutsin-Ma?
3. What is the impact of Total school theory on educational management and quality outcomes in Federal University Dutsin-Ma?

Methodology

The research utilized a descriptive questionnaire design. The population comprised all academic staff members of the federal university Dutsin-Ma (FUDMA), amounting to 1,754 individuals spread across the thirteen faculties of the university. To ensure a fair representation, a simple random sampling method was employed to choose a group of 439 academic staff from these faculties. The main tool used for gathering information was a questionnaire called 'total school theory as a framework for promoting quality assurance in educational institutions questionnaire' (tstfpqaeiq). The instrument was created to collect information on the awareness, implementation, and perceived impact of total school theory (TST) on quality assurance within the university. The test was divided into four main sections, each designed to fulfill a specific purpose in achieving the research objectives. Section A concentrated on demographic information and included five (5) items aimed at gathering background data from the participants, such as their gender, academic rank, faculty affiliation, and years of teaching experience. Section B focused on evaluating the participants' knowledge and comprehension of the concept of total school theory. This section consisted of ten (10) items designed to assess the participants' understanding of the principles, concepts, and objectives of test-based assessment in the field of educational management. Section C focused on the implementation of test-taking strategies within the institution. It comprised twelve (12) items that assessed the degree to which elements of the theory, such as inclusive leadership, shared responsibility, continuous professional development, and systemic collaboration, were being implemented in Fudma's academic and administrative frameworks. Section D centered around the perceived influence of testing on quality assurance.

This section comprised thirteen (13) items that evaluated the impact of test-based accountability on teaching quality, learning outcomes, institutional effectiveness, and policy formulation. The items in sections b, c, and d were evaluated using a four-point likert scale: strongly agree (4 points), agree (3 points), disagree (2 points), and strongly disagree (1 point).

The mean and standard deviation were employed to examine the answers to the research inquiries. A score of 2.50 or higher on the item indicated agreement, while a score below 2.50 indicated disagreement or rejection. To ensure the accuracy of the instrument, the draft questionnaire underwent face and content validation by three experts in educational management and measurement and evaluation. These specialists examined the items for clarity, relevance, comprehensiveness, and alignment with the study's objectives. Taking into account the suggestions provided, necessary adjustments were made to enhance the overall performance of the instrument. Additionally, a preliminary study was carried out with a group of thirty (30) academic staff from a different federal university in a neighboring state, which was not part of the main research. The information gathered from this preliminary study were examined using Cronbach's alpha to assess the consistency and dependability of the measurement tool. The examination of the data resulted in a reliability coefficient of 0.87, suggesting a high level of reliability and affirming that the instrument was appropriate for the main study.

Results

Research Question One: To what extent does Total school theory serve as a framework for promoting quality assurance in Federal University Dutsin-Ma?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on the extent Total school theory serve as a framework for promoting quality assurance.

S/N	Item Statements	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	TST integrates all institutional aspects, supporting comprehensive quality assurance.	2.68	.64	Agree
2.	TST's systemic thinking aligns with quality assurance's multi-dimensional approach.	2.52	.59	Agree
3.	TST enhances accountability by promoting collaboration across departments.	2.61	.62	Agree
4.	TST fosters continuous improvement through feedback and reflection.	2.82	.68	Agree
5.	TST ensures consistency in quality assurance across all institutional areas.	2.72	.65	Agree
Cluster Mean Scores		2.67	0.64	Agree

N=439

Data in Table 1 above show that item 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 had mean scores of 2.50 above. It implies that all the items are accepted since they received mean scores above the acceptance range of 2.50. It also implies that respondents agreed that TST integrates all institutional aspects, supporting comprehensive quality assurance, which TST's systemic thinking aligns with quality assurance's multi-dimensional approach, that TST enhances accountability by promoting collaboration across departments, that TST fosters continuous improvement through feedback and reflection and that TST ensures consistency in quality assurance across all institutional areas. However, from the responses of the respondents one can find that TST serve as a framework for promoting quality assurance to a high extent as indicated by the average mean score of 2.67.

Research Question Two: What are the current quality assurance practices in Federal University Dutsin-Ma?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on the current quality assurance practices in Federal University Dutsin-Ma

S/N	Item Statements	Mean	SD	Remark
6	FUDMA follows NUC guidelines to meet national educational standards.	2.83	.68	Agree
7	The university conducts internal audits and reviews for compliance.	2.61	.62	Agree
8	FUDMA provides continuous professional development for faculty.	2.66	.63	Agree
9	Stakeholder feedback is gathered and used for institutional improvement.	2.94	.71	Agree
10	FUDMA monitors performance using metrics like graduation rates and research output.	2.62	.62	Agree
Cluster Mean Scores		2.73	0.65	Agree

N=439

Data in Table 2 above show that item 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 had mean scores of 2.50 above. It implies that all the items are accepted since they received mean scores above the acceptance range of 2.50. It also implies that respondents agreed that FUDMA follows NUC guidelines to meet national educational standards, that the university conducts internal audits and reviews for compliance, which FUDMA provides continuous professional development for faculty, that stakeholder feedback is gathered and used for institutional improvement, and that FUDMA monitors performance using metrics like graduation rates and research output. However, from the responses of the respondents one can find that there are current quality assurance practices at Federal University Dutsin-Ma (FUDMA) to a high extent as indicated by the average mean score of 2.73.

Research Question Three: What is the impact of TST on educational management and quality outcomes in Federal University Dutsin-Ma?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on the impact of TST on educational management and quality outcomes in Federal University Dutsin-Ma

S/N	Item Statements	Mean	SD	Remark
11	TST fosters collaboration among all stakeholders to enhance quality assurance.	2.67	.63	Agree
12	TST encourages systemic thinking, ensuring holistic institutional improvements.	2.78	.67	Agree
13	TST helps integrate academic and administrative quality assurance practices.	2.94	.71	Agree
14	TST drives continuous assessment and targeted improvements.	2.52	.59	Agree
15	Regular training on TST principles ensures alignment with quality assurance goals.	2.87	.69	Agree
Cluster Mean Scores		2.76	0.66	Agree

N=439

Data in Table 3 above show that item 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 had mean scores of 2.50 above. It implies that all the items are accepted since they received mean scores above the acceptance range of 2.50. It also implies that respondents agreed that TST fosters collaboration among all stakeholders to enhance quality assurance, that TST encourages systemic thinking, ensuring holistic institutional improvements, that TST helps integrate academic and administrative quality assurance practices, which TST drives continuous assessment and targeted improvements, and that Regular training on TST principles ensures alignment with quality assurance goals. However, from the responses of the respondents one can find that there are ways in which TST can be applied effectively in FUDMA for sustainable improvement as indicated by the average mean score of 2.76.

Discussion of Findings

The results of this research provide valuable information about the importance of total school theory (TST) as a framework for ensuring quality assurance in educational institutions, particularly at the federal university Dutsin-Ma (FUDMA). The answers to the three research questions offer a comprehensive understanding of how TST is perceived, the existing practices, and the potential for its application in promoting institutional excellence. For research question one, which investigated the perception of TST as a framework for improving quality assurance at FUDMA, the average mean score was 2.67. This positive perception may be attributed to the increasing acknowledgment among academic staff of the necessity for a more unified and inclusive approach to managing the university system. The intricate nature of modern higher education institutions, encompassing various units and stakeholders, demands a comprehensive theory like TST that encompasses all facets of the school system. Furthermore, the growing need

for transparency and enhanced service delivery may have motivated staff to adopt TST as a practical solution. Numerous employees may have noticed inefficiencies in conventional management systems, which tend to work independently, and thus appreciate the advantages of TST'S holistic approach. This finding corresponds with bush (2020), which highlighted the efficacy of holistic management models, such as tst, in attaining educational excellence by integrating leadership, staff, students, and policies into a unified operational framework. In a similar vein, Okon and Udo (2019) argue that frameworks like TST offer a structured approach to coordination and monitoring of institutional activities, thereby facilitating the attainment of quality benchmarks in higher education.

In response to the inquiry about the current quality assurance practices at FUDMA, the participants indicated a significant level of implementation, with an average mean score of 2.73. One probable explanation for this outcome is the regulatory pressure exerted by national bodies like the national universities commission (NUC), which necessitates regular accreditation and internal quality assessments in Nigerian universities. FUDMA might have also set up internal quality assurance units and procedures, such as curriculum reviews, staff evaluations, and student feedback mechanisms, which have fostered a culture of compliance and ongoing enhancement. Additionally, the University's drive to enhance its ranking, secure research funding, and improve student satisfaction may be prompting more intentional actions towards quality assurance. This observation is supported by Onyemachi et al. (2021), who found that consistent quality assurance practices in Nigerian universities result in increased accountability, better teaching-learning outcomes, and enhanced institutional reputation. These practices, such as tracking academic progress and evaluating administrative procedures, play a crucial role in establishing a high-quality academic atmosphere.

For research question three, which examined the application of TST for sustainable improvement in FUDMA, the study recorded the highest average mean score of 2.76. The high rating of this framework could be attributed to the academic staff's conviction that a structured and inclusive approach like TST could effectively bridge existing gaps in communication, policy implementation, and collaborative decision-making within the university. The staff may also acknowledge the significance of TST in establishing a consistent institutional culture that prioritizes excellence and innovation. The growing global movement towards evidence-based and systems-thinking approaches in educational leadership may have a positive impact on staff acceptance of TST as a sustainable model for quality assurance. This viewpoint is supported by Mukherjee (2022), who highlighted that comprehensive theories like TST guarantee sustained

quality enhancements by incorporating feedback loops, nurturing skill development, and fostering a collective vision among institutional stakeholders. Furthermore, Unesco (2021) advocates for integrated quality assurance strategies in higher education institutions that are not only reactive but also sustainable, inclusive, and forward-thinking principles that align closely with TST. In summary, the mean scores for TST'S role in quality assurance (2.67), current quality assurance practices (2.73), and the application of TST for sustainable improvement (2.76) underscore the relevance of adopting a holistic, stakeholder-driven model of institutional management. By incorporating total school theory principles like participatory decision-making, technological integration, and robust feedback systems, FUDMA can establish itself as a benchmark institution for quality assurance practices in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that Total School Theory serves as an effective framework for promoting quality assurance in educational institutions. By integrating systemic thinking, fostering collaboration, and emphasizing holistic management, TST addresses critical challenges in quality assurance. At FUDMA, TST has shown potential to enhance accountability, improve institutional practices, and support continuous improvement. Its application can significantly strengthen the quality assurance processes necessary for achieving academic excellence and global competitiveness.

Recommendations

1. FUDMA should institutionalize TST principles by aligning its policies and practices with a holistic, systemic, and collaborative framework to enhance overall quality assurance.
2. Administrators should actively involve faculty, students, and external stakeholders in decision-making and quality improvement initiatives to foster shared responsibility.
3. Regular training programs should be provided to equip staff with skills for implementing TST-driven quality assurance practices.
4. Develop integrated systems for monitoring and evaluating institutional performance, ensuring alignment with TST principles.
5. Collaborate with other institutions and quality assurance agencies to exchange best practices and sustain continuous improvement efforts.

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