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Comparative Relationships Between Monitoring and Evaluation of TEFund Projects on Quality Assurance and Institutional Development among Federal Universities in North-West, Nigeria

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Abstract

Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) interventions are one of the largest public sector investments in Nigeria's tertiary education sector. This study examined the relationship between monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of TETFund projects and quality assurance and institutional development in federal universities in North-West Nigeria. The study used a correlational descriptive survey design. The study obtained 240 respondents from four purposively selected federal universities using stratified random sampling; respondents included administrative officers, directors of academic planning, physical planning engineers, and academic heads of departments. The researcher developed a Monitoring and Evaluation, Quality Assurance, and Institutional Development Survey (MEQAIDS), rated on a four-point scale, and analysed 224 usable responses (93.3%). The study answered the research questions using means and standard deviations, while testing the null hypotheses at the .05 level of significance using Pearson product-moment correlation. The overall rating for M&E was moderately good (M = 2.80), with joint monitoring prior to fund release having the highest rating and digital project tracking and post-occupancy evaluation having the lowest ratings. M&E was also positively and significantly correlated with quality assurance ($r = .682$, $p < .001$) and institutional development ($r = .714$, $p < .001$), accounting for 47% and 51% of the variance in the two, respectively. The study recommends a digital system for tracking milestones, conducting post-occupancy evaluation after project commissioning, providing structured corrective feedback after site assessments, and verifying construction materials after project commissioning.

Keywords: TETFund interventions; monitoring and evaluation; quality assurance; institutional development

Introduction

Proper capital infrastructure, qualified academic personnel, and modern research facilities are imperative in higher education institutions to fulfill their mission of teaching, research, and community service. Many public tertiary institutions in Nigeria have been underfunded for a long time, resulting in poor lecture theatres, inadequate laboratory equipment, and limited library collections. To address these issues, the Federal Government created the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) in 1993, established by the TETFund (Establishment, etc.) Act 2011 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Act 2011 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2011). TETFund is charged with the management and disbursement of tax revenue for education to the public tertiary education institutions. The Nigeria Tax Act 2025 abolished several earmarked taxes and introduced a unified development levy of 4% of assessable profits from 1 January 2026, making it more critical to use intervention funds effectively (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2025). Capital investments face delays, cost overruns, and abandonment when not properly tracked. Nnadi and Omerhi (2024), in their review of TETFund project implementation, describe prudent project management, accountability, and proper monitoring and assessment as mechanisms to prevent project delays, cost and schedule overruns, and abandonment. Monitoring is the continuing collection and review of information on a project's inputs, activities and outputs to establish whether it is proceeding according to plan, while evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed intervention, including its design, implementation and results (Kusek & Rist, 2004; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2002). In a university setting, M&E is the means by which intervention funds are expected to become functional classrooms, laboratories and staff development programmes. The available evidence suggests that these risks are material. Ijigah et al. (2023) analysed 254 TETFund building projects executed in South-West Nigeria between 2003 and 2013 and reported an average cost overrun of 1.62% and an average time overrun of 112.23%. They recommended that stakeholders set accurate cost information and visible estimated project times and use them to monitor project performance. Similarly, Katuka et al. (2025), who assessed TETFund interventions in three North-Central universities, recommended setting up a task force to monitor and supervise the implementation of TETFund projects to ensure efficiency and timely completion.

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Quality assurance is closely linked to this process. In Nigeria, it operates through internal quality mechanisms within universities and external mechanisms led by the National Universities Commission (NUC), which sets minimum academic standards and accredits academic programmes (Akpan, 2014). Because accreditation takes account of facilities such as lecture halls, laboratories and libraries, the physical outcomes of TETFund projects bear directly on quality assurance. In this study, institutional development refers to the expansion of physical facilities, administrative capacity, digital resources and academic staff scholarship. The TETFund studies identified in this article have largely focused on the effect of interventions on infrastructure (Katuka et al., 2025) and on project cost and time performance (Ijigah et al., 2023; Nnadi & Omerhi, 2024). Less attention has been paid to how M&E practices relate to quality assurance and institutional development in federal universities in North-West Nigeria. This study addresses that gap by examining the relationship between M&E of TETFund projects and quality assurance and institutional development in federal universities across the zone.

Statement of the Problem

Public tertiary institutions depend heavily on TETFund interventions for infrastructure, staff training, research grants, and library development. In South-West Nigeria, for example, TETFund building projects have overrun their estimated duration by an average of 112.23% (Ijigah et al., 2023), and when facilities are completed, they are often defective or inadequately equipped, leaving institutions struggling to meet NUC accreditation criteria (Akpan, 2014). Although TETFund and the universities operate internal and external monitoring arrangements, it remains unclear how far these arrangements relate to quality assurance and institutional development in federal universities in North-West Nigeria. This study therefore examined that relationship.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to:

1. Examine the status of monitoring and evaluation practices for TETFund projects in federal universities in the North-West zone.
2. Determine the relationship between monitoring and evaluation of TETFund projects and quality assurance in the universities.
3. Determine the relationship between monitoring and evaluation of TETFund projects and institutional development in the universities.

Research Questions

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. What is the status of monitoring and evaluation practices applied to TETFund projects in federal universities in the North-West zone?
2. What is the level of quality assurance in the universities?
3. What is the level of institutional development in the universities?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance:

$H0_1$: There is no significant relationship between monitoring and evaluation of TETFund projects and quality assurance in federal universities in the North-West zone.

$H0_2$: There is no significant relationship between monitoring and evaluation of TETFund projects and institutional development in federal universities in the North-West zone.

Literature Review

Monitoring and Evaluation in Tertiary Education Interventions

Monitoring can be viewed as a verification process that determines whether project activities are on track with plans, specifications, and budgets. In construction and procurement, it involves checking work against specifications, certifying work stages, and confirming payment for completed work. Evaluation, in addition to monitoring, assesses whether completed projects have achieved their purpose and the desired results (Kusek & Rist, 2004; OECD, 2002). According to the OECD glossary (2002), the primary questions that evaluation answers are: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability; in a university context, these questions are perceived as: was a delivered facility really needed, does it

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work, was it delivered economically, what difference does it make, and can it be sustained? For Kusek and Rist (2004), monitoring and evaluation are components of a results-based system, where indicators and baselines measure progress and inform managers' decisions. In the case of TETFund projects, it means that those practices that are captured in this study (baseline inspections, milestone evaluations, materials verification, joint monitoring, corrective feedback, and digital monitoring and post-occupancy evaluation) can be regarded as a chain; the early checks create expectations, periodic checks determine deviance, materials verification identifies deviance, joint monitoring further clarifies deviance, corrective feedback corrects deviance, and digital tracking and post-completion evaluation ensures that the completed facility meets the user's needs.

Quality Assurance and Institutional Development

According to Akpan (2014), quality assurance refers to a series of actions taken to ensure that the university's inputs, processes, and outputs meet at least minimum standards, thereby giving stakeholders confidence. In Nigeria, the NUC sets minimum standards and accredits programmes, while universities manage internal quality arrangements (Akpan, 2014). Accreditation assesses facilities like lecture halls, laboratories, and libraries, and the completion and condition of TETFund-funded facilities are relevant to QA. Institutional development is the broader process of a university's development and evolution, encompassing physical development, administrative efficiency, digital capacity, and academic staff scholarship.

Empirical Review

Studies of TETFund projects in Nigeria have examined their delivery, cost, and infrastructure impacts. Ijigah et al. (2023) used a mixed-methods design that combined a questionnaire survey of clients, consultants, and contractors (186 usable responses) with records of 254 TETFund building projects in South-West Nigeria. Respondents ranked client satisfaction, construction time predictability, and construction cost predictability as the leading influences on cost and time performance, and the project records showed an average cost overrun of 1.62% and an average time overrun of 112.23%. The authors also found that clients, consultants, and contractors differed in their views on several factors, and they recommended making estimated costs and times visible and using them to monitor project performance. The study shows that time control is the main delivery weakness in the zone studied, although it did not directly measure monitoring and evaluation practices. Katuka et al. (2025) surveyed staff and management at three universities in North-Central Nigeria (342 returned questionnaires) and found that TETFund intervened in the construction and renovation of classrooms and lecture theatres, staff offices, research centres, and laboratories, among other facilities. Using a criterion mean of 2.50, as in the present study, they reported a cumulative mean of 3.19 for the perceived impact of the interventions on infrastructure, and a chi-square test showed the impact to be significant. They recommended a task force to monitor and supervise TETFund projects and called for a maintenance culture in the universities. Their study establishes that interventions are visible on campuses, but it did not test whether monitoring practices relate to quality assurance or institutional development. In South-East Nigeria, Nnadi, Omerhi and Boniface (2024) examined the completion rates of TETFund projects in five state universities and emphasised the importance of timely completion for university infrastructure; they suggested that university management enforce stricter rules for project quality. Nnadi and Omerhi (2024) examined the influence of cost on TETFund project implementation in the same zone and concluded that successful implementation depends on effective cost management, transparent financial practices, and continuous monitoring. These studies concentrate on state universities and on cost and time as explanatory factors, and they should be read with caution because the reported statistical analyses are brief. In their study of monitoring and evaluation practices in urban development projects undertaken by the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) in Abuja, Oluchukwu and Pillah (2025) noted that monitoring and evaluation were valuable instruments for completing public projects on time, outside TETFund. They suggested incorporating M&E in public agencies, training officials in M&E, and using professional staff with M&E expertise. They also recommended practices similar to the poor ones observed in this study, such as reduced use of digital tracking and post-occupancy evaluation.

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on two theories: General Systems Theory (von Bertalanffy, 1968) and Theory of Change (Weiss, 1995). In the context of Systems Theory, organisations are considered as wholes consisting of interrelated parts that interact with

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the environment. A university can be regarded as a system that takes input (intervention grants from TETFund), processes them through its management system (procurement, construction, monitoring, and quality evaluation), and generates output (qualified graduates, expanded facilities, and accredited programmes). Weak monitoring hampers this operation and can lead to poor facilities. Theory of Change provides a logical pathway that a change in intervention results in an intermediate change and ultimately a long-term impact. Applied here, project monitoring enables construction to meet specifications; quality building enables institutions to meet accreditation requirements; and these institutions are instrumental in institutional development.

Research Methodology

The research used a correlational descriptive survey design. The target population included administrative officers, academic planning directors, physical planning engineers, and academic heads of departments directly involved in project execution, facility use, and quality assurance. The researcher adopted a multi-stage sampling technique in which four federal universities (Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; Bayero University, Kano; Federal University Dutse; and Federal University Gusau) were purposively selected, and 240 respondents were selected using stratified random sampling. The sample size of 224 was sufficient for the correlational analyses employed: With 224 cases, a two-tailed test at the .05 level has 80% power to detect a population correlation of approximately r = .19, smaller than the medium effect (r = .30) specified by Cohen (1988). The researcher developed the Monitoring and Evaluation, Quality Assurance, and Institutional Development Survey (MEQAIDS) to collect data, with the five sections being scored on a four-point scale from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1). Two professors of Educational Administration and Planning and a professor of Measurement and Evaluation validated the instrument, and the researcher tested its reliability through a pilot study with 30 administrative officers from Kaduna State University. The researcher distributed the 240 questionnaires using research assistants and through direct institutional visits, with electronic reminders. 224 of these were completed and retrieved, giving a 93.3% response rate. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the data. Means and standard deviations were reported for responses to the research questions, and a criterion mean of 2.50 was used to define agreement (mean ≥ 2.50) or disagreement (mean < 2.50). The null hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance by using the Pearson product-moment correlation.

Presentation of Results

Research Question One: What is the status of monitoring and evaluation practices applied to TETFund projects in federal universities in the North-West Zone?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses on the Status of Monitoring and Evaluation Practices

S/N	Item statement	M	SD	Decision
1	Baseline site inspections precede contractor mobilisation.	3.12	0.74	Agreed
2	Internal technical committees conduct regular milestone evaluations.	2.98	0.81	Agreed
3	Structural materials undergo laboratory verification before installation.	2.84	0.89	Agreed
4	TETFund joint-monitoring teams inspect projects before tranche releases.	3.46	0.62	Agreed
5	Clear corrective feedback follows periodic project site assessments.	2.68	0.92	Agreed
6	Digital project-tracking tools are used for schedule management.	2.18	0.96	Disagreed
7	Post-occupancy evaluations determine whether delivered spaces suit users.	2.31	0.88	Disagreed
	Cluster mean	**2.80**	**0.83**	**Agreed**

Note. N = 224. Criterion mean = 2.50. The cluster SD is the mean of the item standard deviations.

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Table 1 shows a cluster mean of 2.80 (SD = 0.83). The highest mean score (M = 3.46, SD = 0.62) was given to Item 4, Joint-monitoring inspections prior to the release of fund tranches have been well established. The lowest means were for items 6 (M = 2.18, SD = 0.96) and 7 (M = 2.31, SD = 0.88), which respondents disagreed with (ranging from 'somewhat disagree' to 'strongly disagree'), indicating limited use of digital project-tracking tools and post-occupancy evaluation.

Research Question Two: What is the level of quality assurance in the universities?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Ratings on Quality Assurance

S/N	Quality assurance parameter	M	SD	Decision
8	Newly constructed lecture halls satisfy NUC floor space criteria.	3.24	0.68	Agreed
9	Procured laboratory apparatus complies with professional curriculum requirements.	3.18	0.72	Agreed
10	Quality checks prevent early structural defects in delivered buildings.	2.91	0.85	Agreed
11	Departmental accreditation successes are associated with completed interventions.	3.38	0.64	Agreed
12	The organization enforces environmental safety and accessibility benchmarks.	2.75	0.91	Agreed
	Cluster mean	**3.09**	**0.76**	**Agreed**

Note. N = 224. Criterion mean = 2.50. The cluster SD is the mean of the item standard deviations.

The cluster mean of 3.09 (SD = 0.76) indicates that the facilities provided by the TETFund projects meet the quality assurance requirements. Completed interventions (M = 3.38) and enforcement of environmental safety and accessibility benchmarks (M = 2.75) had the highest and lowest means, respectively.

Research Question Three: What is the level of institutional development in the universities?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Ratings on Institutional Development

S/N	Development indicator	M	SD	Decision
13	Completed intervention projects expand instructional space capacity.	3.42	0.60	Agreed
14	Monitored research grants produce published empirical scholarship.	2.95	0.82	Agreed
15	Staff sponsorship tracking ensures scholars return upon study completion.	3.08	0.77	Agreed
16	Digital library installations enhance student access to scholarly literature.	3.14	0.75	Agreed
17	The long-term master plan expansion aligns with the implemented structures.	3.22	0.71	Agreed
	Cluster mean	**3.16**	**0.73**	**Agreed**

Note. N = 224. Criterion mean = 2.50. The cluster SD is the mean of the item standard deviations.

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Table 3 shows a cluster mean of 3.16 (SD = 0.73), indicating agreement across all development indicators. Respondents agreed most that completed projects expand instructional space (M = 3.42) and least that monitored research grants produce published scholarship (M = 2.95).

Hypothesis One ($H0_1$): There is no significant relationship between monitoring and evaluation of TETFund projects and quality assurance in federal universities in the North-West zone.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation between Monitoring and Evaluation and Quality Assurance

Variables	N	R	p	Decision
M&E and quality assurance	224	.682	< .001	Reject H_{01}

Note. M&E: M = 2.80; quality assurance: M = 3.09. Correlation is significant at the .05 level.

Table 4 shows a significant, strong positive correlation between M&E and quality assurance, r(222) = .682, p < .001, so $H0_1$ was rejected. M&E and quality assurance shared about 46.5% of their variance (r^2 = .465).

Hypothesis Two ($H0_2$): There is no significant relationship between monitoring and evaluation of TETFund projects and institutional development in federal universities in the North-West zone.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation between Monitoring and Evaluation and Institutional Development

Variables	N	r	p	Decision
M&E and institutional development	224	.714	< .001	Reject H_{02}

Note. M&E: M = 2.80; institutional development: M = 3.16. Correlation is significant at the .05 level.

Table 5 shows a significant, strong positive correlation between M&E and institutional development, r(222) = .714, p < .001, so $H0_2$ was rejected. The two variables shared about 51.0% of their variance (r^2 = .510).

Discussion of Findings

The study found a strong positive relationship between M&E of TETFund projects and quality assurance (r = .682, p < .001). Respondents who rated monitoring practices more highly also rated higher the extent to which delivered facilities met accreditation-related requirements. This aligns with the emphasis on monitoring and supervision in earlier TETFund studies: Ijigah et al. (2023) recommended using estimated costs and times to monitor project performance, and Katuka et al. (2025) recommended a task force to monitor and supervise project implementation. This also aligns with the view that quality assurance depends on whether inputs and processes meet minimum standards (Akpan, 2014). The finding is correlational and does not by itself show that monitoring causes better quality.

A similarly strong relationship was found between M&E and institutional development (r = .714, p < .001). This aligns with the Theory of Change (Weiss, 1995), where well-monitored implementation leads to intermediate results, such as structures that meet specifications, and then to longer-term institutional development. Under General Systems Theory (von Bertalanffy, 1968), monitoring serves as a feedback mechanism between grant inputs and institutional outputs. The stronger relationship with institutional development than with quality assurance may reflect that development, which covers instructional space, digital resources, and staff scholarship, depends more directly on whether projects are completed and tracked than quality assurance, which also depends on accreditation standards set outside the university. The descriptive results show where the system is weakest. Joint monitoring before tranche release was the strongest practice (M = 3.46), whereas digital project tracking (M = 2.18) and post-occupancy evaluation (M = 2.31) were rated lowest, and corrective feedback after site assessments was only marginally above the criterion mean (M = 2.68). Monitoring therefore appears strong at the point of fund release but weaker in continuously tracking projects and learning from completed projects. The low rating of digital tracking is notable given the 112.23% average time overrun reported for TETFund projects in South-West Nigeria (Ijigah et al., 2023), because continuous tracking is designed to detect schedule slippage early. The low post-occupancy evaluation rating aligns with Katuka et al.'s (2025) call for a maintenance culture, since evaluating how delivered spaces are actually used is a step toward maintaining them. Quality assurance and institutional development were rated moderately high (M = 3.09 and M = 3.16), and all items in Tables 2 and 3 exceeded the criterion mean. This aligns with the positive perception of TETFund projects' contribution to universities reported in North-Central Nigeria by Katuka et al. (2025) and suggests that respondents in the North-West also perceive a positive impact of infrastructure. Meanwhile,

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the lowest-rated items are enforcement of environmental safety and accessibility benchmarks (M = 2.75) and the link between monitored research grants and published scholarship (M = 2.95), suggesting that some benefits are not as safe as the numbers in the headlines suggest.

Implications of the Findings

1. The results suggest that TETFund and the universities should not stop monitoring when the fund is released but should continue throughout a project's life.
2. Digital tracking would allow delays to be identified earlier
3. structured feedback would ensure site assessments lead to corrective action,
4. post-occupancy evaluation would indicate whether the completed facilities meet the needs of those intended to use them.

These steps align with Oluchukwu and Pillah's (2025) recommendations to institutionalize M&E within public agencies and train officials on M&E metrics. The findings support the view that monitoring serves as a feedback link in the university system and as a link in processes of intervention and institutional change.

Conclusion

There is a positive and significant relationship between monitoring and evaluation of TETFund projects and quality assurance and institutional development in the federal universities studied. Pre-release monitoring of the joint was well established, but it placed less emphasis on digital monitoring, corrective feedback, and post-occupancy evaluation. Improving these areas will likely bolster the universities' long-term academic capacity through intervention funds.

Recommendations

1. Further, there is a need for an effective digital project-tracking system to track the project schedule and milestones, as this was the lowest-rated practice in this study, which can be adopted by the beneficiary universities and TETFund.
2. The projects that have been accomplished should be subjected to formal post-occupancy evaluations before the next cycle of interventions by TETFund, as this practice was among the lowest rated.
3. Universities should establish procedures to give corrective feedback following the site assessment, and provide a clear timeframe for responding to the results.
4. Strengthen Laboratory verification of structural materials prior to installation – This was considered to be the least effective control before installation; therefore, universities should strengthen this process.

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