

Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Nigerian Universities: The Management Imperative

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Abstract—The general functions of the university amongst other things include teaching, research and community service. Universities are recognized as the apex of learning, accumulating and imparting knowledge and skills of all kinds to students to enable them to be productive, earn their living and to make optimum contributions to national development. This is equivalent to the production of human capital in the form of high level manpower needed to administer the educational society, be useful to the society and manage the economy. Quality has become a matter of major importance for university education in Nigeria. Accreditation is the systematic review of educational programs to ensure that acceptable standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure are being maintained. Accreditation ensures that institution maintain quality. The process is designed to determine whether or not an institution has met or exceeded the published standards for accreditation, and whether it is achieving its mission and stated purposes. Ensuring quality assurance in accreditation process falls in the hands of university management which justified the need for this study. This study examined accreditation and quality assurance: the management imperative. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The design was a correlation survey with a population of 2,893 university administrators out of which 578 Heads of department and Dean of faculties were sampled. The instrument for data collection was titled Programme Accreditation Exercise scale with high levels of reliability. The research questions were answered with Pearson 'r' statistics. T-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses. It was found among others that the quality of accredited programme depends on the level of funding of universities in Nigeria. It was also indicated that quality of programme accreditation and physical facilities of universities in Nigeria have high relationship. But it was also revealed that programme accreditation is positively related to staffing in Nigerian universities. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommend that academic administrators should be included in the team of those who ensure quality programs in the universities. Private sector partnership should be encouraged to fund programs to ensure quality of programme in the universities. Independent agencies should be engaged to monitor the activities of accreditation teams to avoid bias.

Keywords—Accreditation, quality assurance, NUC, physical facilities, staffing.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE demand for education of the world continues to increase and the most significant pressure is on university education. The university education system in Nigeria faces a lot of challenges, and several factors were posed as challenges of quality assurance to it. Some of these factors are inadequate funding and facilities, curriculum issues, insufficient human

resources and technology input, high enrolment pressure and inefficient quality graduates to drive the economy. Hence, the quest for improved quality has dominated discussions on university education all over the world. One of such discussions was the World Conference on Higher Education in 1998 which examined some aspects of higher education including the strategies for delivering good and quality education [1].

The concern for quality in Nigerian university education is most desirable for obvious reasons. University education is the nation's hope for national development and technological advancement. Education is critical for socio- economic and political development of Nigeria. The goals of education can be fully attained if quality delivery is rendered in university education in Nigeria. One way to guarantee that university education is sensitive to national situations and offers value-for-money spent on education is to constantly and efficiently assure high standards in the provisions of human and material resources to the institutions that deliver university education.

To formally enhance quality in university education like in other developing nations in the world, Nigeria has adopted various methodologies such as quality assurance, accreditation and audit to address the question of quality in university education similar to those in western countries [2]. Quality assurance is an umbrella concept for a host of activities that are designed to improve the quality of input, process and output of the university education system. Quality assurance is not accreditation as some erroneously conceive. Accreditation is one of the activities in quality assurance [3]. Quality assurance and accreditation in university education in Nigeria is seen as systematic management and assessment of procedures adopted by the government to monitor performance and to ensure achievement of quality improvement [4]. Admittedly, accreditation is one of the mechanisms for judging the quality of university education and has been employed by several countries. Quality assurance aims to give stakeholders confidence about the management of quality and the outcomes achieved.

According to Okojie [5], accreditation of universities whether it is institutional or programme is a way of examining the state of the institution in relation to where it ought to be and it is a quality assurance process. Thus, accreditation as one of the processes of examining institutional procedure for assuring quality and assessing the arrangements for effective implementation of strategies for achieving stated objectives has been employed in several countries.

The regulatory body in the Federal Republic of Nigeria in charge of accreditation and quality assurance of university

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education is the National Universities Commission (NUC). It discharges its duties by monitoring the internal and external quality assurance mechanisms of the universities and by assessing the standards of their programmes and educational delivery through some processes. These include establishment of infrastructure, personnel, teaching/learning facilities, setting of admission criteria to institutional programmes, laid down processes of establishing and monitoring programmes and their implementation, use of external examiners and accreditation of programmes [6]. The Commission is involved with virtually all aspects of university education in the country, from regulation, accreditation, recruitment and admission to information and communication technology (ICT) development and implementation. In accomplishment of its mission, the Commission collates, analyses, and publishes information relating to university education. Such information includes academic programmes taught in particular universities, approval status, Year of establishment, level of degrees that are offered, accreditation status, and carrying capacity of each programme [7]. Therefore, there are high expectations of the impact of NUC accreditation exercise on the quality assurance indices of Nigerian universities.

The conspicuous indices for quality assurance in universities as a result of accreditation include; academic content, funding, physical facilities, staffing and library. In this study, the relationship between programme accreditation, funding, physical facilities and staffing are considered. Onifade et al. [7] submitted that one of the areas of improvement that is often targeted in university education is funding. Funding affects every aspect of the university system. It can be noted that adequate provision of fund is sacrosanct to quality assurance practices, this is because adequate funding will enable the institution provide adequate physical facilities and the right staffing capacity.

Staffing is one of the components of accreditation instrument. The vision of the Nigerian higher education system has the following expectations: to be relevant and responsive to the need of the society and adequate in quality with a well-motivated, highly skilled and qualified staff whose products are knowledgeable, technically competent and adequately prepared for fulfilled life and for positive contribution in the society. To maintain quality in higher education, there are bound to be assessment in educational process and methods. One of such areas to be assessed is that of staffing, how adequate is the quality and quantity of the teaching staff needed for effective teaching and learning. According to NUC [8] Manual of Accreditation, the areas assessed during accreditation include; academic staff, non-academic staff, head of department/discipline/sub-discipline and staff development. During accreditation, adequacy of the teaching staff in numbers, competence and standard of instruction in all subject areas of the programme are taken into consideration. The adequacy of the teaching staff determines the adequacy of the programme as the instructional goal and objectives are achieved only to the level of competence and vision of the teaching staff.

Physical facilities are among the components of accreditation instruments and a determinant of the quality in the teaching and learning process in the educational system [9]. Physical facilities in higher institutions involves provision of buildings, classrooms, hostels, staff quarters, workshops, laboratories, ICT centres, libraries, health centres and sports facilities. Provision of stimulating learning environment is a major consideration in achieving quality in education. The quality of infrastructural development guarantees good climate for teaching, learning and research activities. The quality of university education is often a reflection of the performance of university graduates in the labour market which is also dependent on the quality of academic programmes and provision of infrastructural facilities provided by the various universities. The NUC [8] prescribes a minimum of twenty one (21) lecture theatres with a capacity to sit between one thousand (1000) to two thousand (2000) students at once.

The relationship between accreditation and quality assurance in terms of physical facilities and staffing has not been fully established. Empirically, Obadara and Alaka [10] findings revealed that there is relationship between accreditation and resource input into Nigerian universities, quality of output, quality of process, and no significant relationship between accreditation and quality of academic content. Akhuemonkhan and Raimi [11] indicated that the impact of Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Nigeria has not been impressive because of ineffective quality assurance at all levels. Similarly, Oribabor [12] study revealed that accreditation exercise had no impact on administrative structure and efficiency of university staff. Oyekan [13] found out that quality control measures exert great influence on the quality of graduates in public universities in Nigeria. It can be felt that no comprehensive study examined the relationship between programme accreditation, physical facilities and staffing of universities in Nigeria. Therefore, to build and enhance quality programmes offered in institutions of higher learning like universities, maintaining and providing quality education is a fundamental aspect of gaining and upholding credibility for its programmes. It is important to examine the relationship between programme accreditation, physical facilities and staffing of universities in Nigeria.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In Nigeria, there is little evidence about the actual impact of programme accreditation exercises on quality assurance indices in universities in Nigeria with consideration to physical facilities and staffing. With comparison to other universities in other parts of the world, can one say that Nigerian universities are living up to standard in the aspect of quality input of physical facilities and staffing. The question then is: What is the linear relationship between accreditation, physical facilities and staffing of universities in Nigeria? The answer to this question is the thrust of this study.

III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The general purpose of this study is to examine accreditation and quality assurance: the management imperative. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. establish the correlation coefficient between programme accreditation and level of funding of universities in Nigeria,
2. ascertain the correlation coefficient between programme accreditation and physical facilities of universities in Nigeria and
3. examine the correlation coefficient between programme accreditation and staffing of universities in Nigeria.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were posed to guide the study:

- 1) What is the correlation coefficient between programme accreditation and the level of funding of universities in Nigeria?
- 2) What is the correlation coefficient between programme accreditation and physical facilities of universities in Nigeria?
- 3) What is the correlation coefficient between programme accreditation and staffing of universities in Nigeria?

V. HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were stated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- **H₀₁:** There is no significant relationship between programme accreditation and level of funding of universities in Nigeria.
- **H₀₂:** There is no significant relationship between programme accreditation and physical facilities of universities in Nigeria.
- **H₀₃:** There is no significant relationship between programme accreditation and staffing of universities in Nigeria.

VI. METHOD

This study was conducted using the correlational research design. The population of the study is made up of 2,893 Head of Departments (HODs) and Deans of 10 universities in South East Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. The sample of 578 HODs and Deans was involved for the study using stratified random sampling technique. The researcher made use of two rating scales as the research instruments titled "Programme Accreditation Exercise Scale" (PAES) with 10 items and Quality Assurance Indicator Scale (QAIS) with 30 items. Draft copies of the scale were given to three experts from the field of Education Measurement and Evaluation and two experts from Educational Management for Validation.

Cronbach alpha statistics was used to determine the reliability of the rating scales with indexes of 0.82 and 0.78 for (PAES) and (QAIS) respectively. The researcher visited the schools involved to collect data for the study and also administered the instrument to the respondents and patiently

waited for them to fill their responses and collected it giving a 100% return rate. The research questions were answered with Pearson "r" statistics. This was used to establish the significant relationship between the dependent and independent variables in the study. The bases for the decision for the research questions' conclusion were as follows: 0.00-0.20=very low relationship, 0.21-0.40=low relationship, 0.41-0.60=moderate relationship, 0.61-0.80=high relationship and 0.81-1.00=very high relationship. The hypotheses were tested using t-test significance of correlation at a $p < 0.05$ level of significance.

VII. RESULTS

A. Research Question One

What is the correlation coefficient between programme accreditation and level of funding of universities in Nigeria?

TABLE I
INDEX OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION AND LEVEL OF FUNDING OF UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

| n | r | r ² | Decision |
|-----|------|----------------|----------------------------|
| 578 | 0.93 | 0.86 (86%) | High Positive Relationship |

Table I shows the correlation coefficient between programme accreditation and level of funding of universities in Nigeria. The result of the analysis indicated that the sample size is 578 while the correlation coefficient is 0.93, the coefficient of determination is 0.86. This implies that there is a very high positive relationship between programme accreditation and level of funding of universities in Nigeria with 86% of the total variation accounted for by programme accreditation.

B. Research Question Two

What is the correlation coefficient between programme accreditation and physical facilities of universities in Nigeria?

TABLE II
CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION AND PHYSICAL FACILITIES OF UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

| n | r | r ² | Decision |
|-----|------|----------------|----------------------------|
| 578 | 0.79 | 0.62 (62%) | High Positive Relationship |

Table II shows the correlation coefficient between programme accreditation and physical facilities of universities in Nigeria. The result of the analysis indicated that the sample size is 578 while the correlation coefficient is 0.79, the coefficient of determination is 0.62. This implies that there is a high positive relationship between programme accreditation and physical facilities of universities in Nigeria with 62% of the total variation accounted for by programme accreditation.

C. Research Question Three

What is the correlation coefficient between programme accreditation and staffing of universities in Nigeria?

Table III shows the correlation coefficient between programme accreditation and staffing of universities in Nigeria. The result of the analysis indicated that the sample

size is 578 while the correlation coefficient is 0.88, the coefficient of determination is 0.77. This implies that there is a very high positive relationship between programme accreditation and staffing of universities in Nigeria with 77% of the total variation accounted for by programme accreditation.

TABLE III

CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION AND STAFFING OF UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

| n | r | r ² | Decision |
|-----|------|----------------|----------------------------|
| 578 | 0.88 | 0.77 (77%) | High Positive Relationship |

VIII. TEST OF HYPOTHESES

A. Hypothesis One

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between programme accreditation and level of funding of universities in Nigeria.

TABLE IV

SUMMARY OF T-TEST SIGNIFICANCE OF CORRELATION COEFFICIENT ANALYSIS BETWEEN PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION AND LEVEL OF FUNDING OF UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

| n | r | α | Df | t _{cal} | t _{tab} | Decision |
|-----|------|----------|-----|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 578 | 0.93 | 0.05 | 576 | 60.72 | 1.96 | Reject H ₀ |

Table IV shows that summary of t-test significance of correlation coefficient analysis between programme accreditation and level of funding of universities in Nigeria. The table indicated that the hypothesis is rejected. This is because, with the degree of freedom of 576, Pearson r of 0.93, the t-cal of 60.92 is greater than the t-tab of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is a significant relationship between programme accreditation and level of funding of universities in Nigeria.

B. Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between programme accreditation and physical facilities of universities in Nigeria.

TABLE V

SUMMARY OF T-TEST SIGNIFICANCE OF CORRELATION COEFFICIENT ANALYSIS BETWEEN PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION AND PHYSICAL FACILITIES OF UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

| n | r | α | Df | t _{cal} | t _{tab} | Decision |
|-----|------|----------|-----|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 578 | 0.79 | 0.05 | 576 | 30.92 | 1.96 | Reject H ₀ |

Table V shows that summary of t-test significance of correlation coefficient analysis between programme accreditation and physical facilities of universities in Nigeria. The table indicated that the hypothesis is rejected. This is because, with the degree of freedom of 576, Pearson r of 0.79, the t-cal of 30.92 is greater than the t-tab of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is a significant relationship between programme accreditation and physical facilities of universities in Nigeria.

C. Hypothesis Three

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between programme accreditation and staffing of universities in Nigeria.

TABLE VI

SUMMARY OF T-TEST SIGNIFICANCE OF CORRELATION COEFFICIENT ANALYSIS BETWEEN PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION AND STAFFING OF UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

| n | r | α | Df | t _{cal} | t _{tab} | Decision |
|-----|------|----------|-----|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 578 | 0.88 | 0.05 | 576 | 44.47 | 1.96 | Reject H ₀ |

Table VI shows that summary of t-test significance of correlation coefficient analysis between programme accreditation and staffing of universities in Nigeria. The table indicated that the hypothesis is rejected. This is because, with the degree of freedom of 576, Pearson r of 0.88, the t-cal of 44.47 is greater than the t-tab of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is a significant relationship between programme accreditation and staffing of universities in Nigeria.

IX. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study indicated that there is a very high positive relationship between programme accreditation and level of funding of universities in Nigeria. This implies that funding plays a crucial role in quality assurance measure of universities. This is because adequate funding improves the quality of inputs in the school system but less funding mar the achievement of quality assurance measures. This finding led to the inference indicating that there is a significant relationship between programme accreditation and level of funding of universities in Nigeria. In consonance to this finding, Nwaogu [7] submitted that one of the areas of improvement that is often targeted in university education is funding. Funding affects every aspect of the university system.

This study revealed that there is a high positive relationship between programme accreditation and physical facilities of universities in Nigeria. This could be explained that programme accreditation affect physical facilities of universities in terms of provision and maintenance. This finding led to the inference that there is a significant relationship between programme accreditation and physical facilities of universities in Nigeria. This implies that it can be generalized that programme accreditation of universities in Nigeria influence quality assurance index of physical facilities. In line with this finding, [10], findings revealed that there is relationship between accreditation and resource input into Nigerian universities. But contrarily, [11], finding indicated that the impact of Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Nigeria has not been impressive because of ineffective quality assurance at all levels. The discrepancies among the findings could be explained by the fact that the studies were not carried using the same universities. This could explain the variations in the findings.

It was also revealed in this study that there is also a revelation of programme accreditation being related positively

with staffing in Nigerian universities. This implies that there is a great of influence programme accreditation on recruitment and selection of staff in Nigerian universities. Lending credence to this finding, it was concluded by the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between programme accreditation and staffing of universities in Nigeria. Implying that programme accreditation has significant impact on the staffing of universities in Nigeria. This explain why universities always employ more academic staff before NUC visits them for accreditation. In line with this finding, [13] found out that quality control measures exert great influence on the quality of graduates in public universities in Nigeria. But contrary to the findings, [12] revealed that accreditation exercise had no impact on administrative structure and efficiency of university staff. The variations among the findings could be explained by the fact that the studies could not have used universities in South East Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria as used in this present study.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study; the following recommendations were made:

1. University management should be made to be part of the accreditation team so as to understand the need of ensuring quality programs of our courses.
2. University management should partner with the private sector to sponsor programs in advance for accreditation.
3. The national university commission should also engage independent agencies to monitor the activities of accreditation teams to avoid nepotism.

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