

Relevance of Programmes Accreditation in Nigeria Universities for Quality Assurance

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Abstract – This study was designed to examine accreditation of University Academic Programmes in Nigeria towards sustainable quality assurance in education output. The population of the study comprised of five thousand (5,000) academic staff from five (5) Federal Universities in South-South zone of Nigeria. A sample of five hundred (500) academic staff was used for the study. Four hypotheses were formulated and tested using Pearson products moment correlation coefficient analysis. The result showed that, a significant relationship exists between accreditation and programme development, human resources, physical resources, and teaching quality. Based on the findings the study recommends that institutions to be accredited should be closely monitored and not allowed to exceed their carrying capacity.

Keywords – Programme Accreditation, Quality Assurance, Nigeria Universities

I. INTRODUCTION

Accreditation of programmes in the Nigerian Universities was not quite noticeable until about 1989 despite the fact that the Federal Government of Nigeria in her education policy profile had promulgated the necessary laws towards the exercise. The effort in the history of accreditation of programme in Nigerian Universities was in 1990. This was made possible as a result of the Federal Government Act No.16 section 10 of 1985, incorporated as section 4(m) of National Universities Commission amended Act No. 49 of 1988, which empowered the National Universities Commission to lay down minimum and academic standards (MAS) for the performance of Universities through accreditation of their degrees and other academic awards.

According to Okudola and Sofolahan (2008) accreditation is the process of self-study and external

quality review, used in higher education to scrutinize colleges, Universities and higher education programmes for quality assurance and quality improvement. Thus, accreditation measured quality of an institution. The development of the minimum academic standards and their subsequent approval provided the basis for accreditation exercise of all programmes taught in Nigerian Universities. This exercise is often organized and conducted through the platform provided by the National Universities Commission with about 100% indigenous resource persons. The essence is to evaluate all, academic programmes offered in Nigerian Universities as having met the provisions of the minimum academic standard documents.

The objectives of this exercise in the Universities in addition are simply to ensure maintenance and enhancement of minimum academic standard; to ensure employers and other members of the community that Nigerian graduates of all academic programmes have attained acceptable level of competency in their fields of specialization; and to certify to the international community that the programmes offered in Nigerian universities are of high standards and their graduates are adequate for employment and further studies.

The mechanism for creating quality assurance in the university system was set by National Universities Commission (NUC). The processes of ensuring quality assurance in the University motivated the production of policy guideline on all University programmes. Accreditation visitation became necessary procedure for ascertaining the quality of a university programme. During such visits which, comes up every year as programmes are continuously maturing for accreditation because they have fulfilled the required validity period for their accreditation status or they have to make a request for re-visitation because they earned denied or interim accreditation status in a previous visit or that they are just maturing for accreditation.

The accreditation status awarded to a programme by accreditation Panel may be full, interim or denied as the case may be based on quality and quantity of input such as student, staff and facilities, quality of curriculum, quality of process especially programme delivery and, evaluation, as well as employers' rating of graduates. Owoeye and Adedeji (2008) maintained that all these variables are measured against the minimum academic standards to determine the status of the programme.

Practically, at the accreditation site, the panel set up for that purpose meets with the university administrator, then with the Dean, Head of Department and staff of programme to be evaluated. Interviews are held with students and sample lecturers and practical are observed. Although, according to Odejide (2007), the primary responsibility for quality assurance rests with the institution administrator who should from time to time carry out periodic audits of the university programmes in order to identify its strengths and weaknesses. The overall assessment of the quality of teaching effectiveness, courses, course text, academic records, facilities and capacity development is the responsibility of the accreditation team to ensure relevance quality management and improvement.

From the foregoing, it is clear that one of the measures of the quality of programmes offered is their accreditation status.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The issue of accreditation of university programme for quality learning has been on the forefront of many educational debates, conferences and workshops. This exercise became popular since 1990. During such exercise, there has been a progressive increase in performance of Universities over the years. This attests to the fact that quality assurance has been effective in the university system. Through the mechanism of accreditation, Universities have established that their products are competitive and can meet internationally accepted standards of quality and excellence. There is no doubt that this popular global trend towards quality assurance has considerably shaped the University education policies, programmes and academic planning of Universities throughout the country.

In spite of the foregoing benefits of this form of evaluation, issue of standard and quality assurance are still a mirage to most concerned Nigerians and the public. This observation, has in fact remained a bone of contention in the minds of people. Most universities are still facing additional challenges of recognition, quality

and development of programmes offered in their institutions.

To address these problems, there is need to evaluate accreditation of the programmes and making suggestions that will promote quality of output towards sustenance of the Universities programmes. This has to be resolved if quality performance is to be assured. It is against this backdrop that this study was embarked upon to actualize the dream.

Hypotheses

- 1) Accreditation of academic programmes in Nigerian Universities does not significantly relate with enhancement of minimum academic standards.
- 2) Accreditation of academic programmes in Nigerian universities does not significantly relate with assurance of members of the community that graduates of Universities have attained acceptable level of competency for employment.
- 3) Accreditation of academic programmes of Nigerian Universities does not significantly relate with improvement of curriculum contents of the Universities.
- 4) Accreditation of academic programmes of Nigerian Universities does not significantly relate with quality improvement of programmes of studies.

III. METHODS

The survey design approach was adopted in this study. The population consisted of five thousand (5,000) academic staff from five (5) Federal Universities in South-South zone of Nigeria. In view of the size of the population a simple random sampling technique was used to select 500 staff as sample for the study. Using this process, one hundred (100) academic staff was selected from each university that was involved in the study.

The instrument used to collect relevant data for the study was a researcher developed questionnaire. The instrument was titled; Accreditation of Programme for Quality Assurance Questionnaire, (APQAQ). The Questionnaire consisted of two sections, A and B. Section 'A' dealt with a biographical data of the staff of all the Universities sampled, such as, sex, qualification and years of experience. Section 'B' consisted of a 30-items of a 4 points Likert questionnaire designed to elicit information on the progress of the Universities in terms of academic standard, students performance, curriculum content and improved quality of programme of studies. The questionnaire was subjected to face

validity by experts in Measurement and Evaluation in the Faculty of Education, Niger Delta University.

The reliability of the instrument was determined using test-retest method, which involved one hundred (100) staff of the institutions who were not part of the sample subjects used for the study. The reliability coefficient for the research variables ranged from 0.78 to 0.85. These estimates were observed to be high enough for use in the study. The data gathered with the instrument was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

IV. RESULTS

Table 1. Relationship between accreditation and enhancement of minimum academic standards (N = 500)

Variables	$\sum x$ $\sum y$	$\sum x^2$ $\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r
Accreditation	4091	87067		
Enhancement of minimum academic standards	3796	70370	70570	0.84

Significance of .05, critical r = .196, df = 498.

The result of the analysis as presented in table 1 shows that the calculated r-value of 0.84 is greater than the critical r-value of .195 at .05 level of significance with 498 degrees of freedom. This further shows that the calculated r-value is significant since it is higher than the table or critical value. This result therefore means that there is a significant relationship between accreditation of university programmes and enhancement of minimum academic standard.

Table 2: Relationship between accreditation of Universities academic programmes and assurance of community that graduates are employable (N=500)

Variables	$\sum x$ $\sum y$	$\sum x^2$ $\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r
Accreditation of Universities academic programme	4651	104213		
Assurance of the community members of graduate employment	3796	70370	74490	0.78

Significance of .05, critical r = .196, df = 498

The result of the analysis in table 2 reveals that the calculated r-value of 0.78 is greater than the critical r-value of .195 at .05 level of significance with 498 degrees of freedom. This result further implies that the analysis is significant since the r-value calculated is

higher than the table or critical r-value. Thus, the understanding therefore is that, accreditation of universities academic programmes is significantly related to assurance of community members of graduate employment. Indeed, the result shows that when universities academic programmes are rated to be of high quality due to accreditation exercise, there is a tendency for a high regard to be given to the certificate obtained as well as the possibility of using the quality certificate to secure graduate employment for the unemployed. On the strength of this result, and the analysis thereof, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 3. Relationship between accreditation and improvement of curriculum contents (N = 500)

Variables	$\sum x$ $\sum y$	$\sum x^2$ $\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	R
Accreditation of academic programme	5222	131182		
Improvement of curriculum contents	3897	713805	90678	0.89

Significance of .05, critical r = .196, df = 498

The result of the analysis indicated that the calculated r-value of 0.89 is greater than the critical value of .195 at .05 level of significance with 498 degrees of freedom. Since the calculated value is higher than the table or critical result of the analysis is therefore significant. This means that accreditation of academic programmes often leads to improvement of curriculum content of Nigerian universities. The result further reveals that without accreditation of academic programme, university management may not show concern for improvement of the university curriculum content. The more the accreditation exercise is carried out in the universities the higher the rate of improvement of the university academic curriculum content. With this result the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 4. Relationship between accreditation of academic programmes and the quality improvement of programmes of studies (N = 500)

Variables	$\sum x$ $\sum y$	$\sum x^2$ $\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r
Accreditation of education programme	4591	137067		
Quality programme of studies	4296	120371	121570	0.92

Significance of .05, critical r = .196, df = 498

A test of hypothesis four reveals that r -value calculated which is 0.92 is greater than the critical r -value of .195 at .05 alpha levels of significance with 498 degree of freedom. The result of the analysis is therefore significant since the calculated r -value is greater than the critical r -value. This simply means that there is a significant relationship between accreditation of e programme and quality of programme of studies. In other words the result has shown that accreditation of programmes lead to improvement of the quality of programmes offered in the universities.

IV. DISCUSSION

One of the measures of the quality of programme in our educational system is their accreditation status. This has been affirmed by Cheng and Tarn (1997) who observed that accreditation of university programmes is seen in the progressive increase in performance of universities in recent time. This further results in adjustments to the curriculum or to the assessment to ensure continued effectiveness. In view of this, most programmes have earned full accreditation status while relatively less have interim and sometime denied status. This effort has contributed to both external and internal quality assurance in the Nigeria university education system. The prevalence of this development attest to the fact that there is a relationship between accreditation of programmes and quality performance of education institutions. The essence of accreditation system according to Buadach (1998) is that of meeting input standards in such areas like curriculum, library facilities, staff qualifications, students' data and duration of studies.

Still, in line with the outcome of this study, it was upheld that there is a significant relationship between accreditation and the satisfaction of members of the community of graduate employment due to the quality assurance status of the various programmes offered in the university education system. This supported the work of Pounder (2000) who maintained that the importance and acceptance of graduates from most Nigeria universities education institutions by employers of labour depends on the quality of the institution programme and extent of knowledge of graduates of the school.

On this note, Hughes (2001) emphasized that quality of product from higher education form one of the bases of providing employment opportunities for our young graduates in the country. In other words, accreditation of school programmes and quality assurance have impacted on the education system and

the society positively. As a way of continually meeting the above criteria, quality assurance mechanisms are built into the admission processes, staffing, course design and development continuous assessment through regular accreditation and regular feedback, periodic training, workshops to sensitize staff who are responsible for the success of the programme of studies (Owoeye & Adedeji, 2008).

The study further revealed that as a result accreditation exercise of higher education system has improved tremendously in status of their programme of studies offered in the institution. In all the above cited studies experience on research has shown that programmes of studies have in recent years stabilized on their accreditation process. This is evident in the fact that the exercise comes up every year as programmes are continuously maturing for accreditation, as they fulfilled the required validity period for assessment. This position must have informed and motivated most administrators of Nigerian Universities to improve on their programme of studies offered in their institutions. This could be explained in terms of the efforts and ranking of higher education system as a result of improved performance of programme of studies.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the analysis of this study the researchers concluded that a significant relationship exists between accreditation of academic programmes and enhancement of minimum academic standards. This indicates that when academic programmes of higher institutions are regularly assessed and subjected to evaluation, there is an increase in the quality of output. In other words, there is quality assurance in the product (graduates) of the system. Moreso, there is a significant relationship between improvement of quality of programme of studies in the educational institutions in the country.

This study recommends that the National Universities Commission needs to bring on board institutional accreditation to complement and improve its current programme accreditation so that the entire Nigerian educational institutions could be object of focus rather than the programmes of study only. In addition, accreditation should be included in annual national budget to forestall the cost sharing of the exercises expenditure with other sectors of the economy.

To ensure high quality of programmes and product, Nigerian Universities should be made not to exceed

their carrying capacity or their quota capacity in their admission process. For actualization of accreditation exercise, Nigerian educational institutions should re-address the issue of quality assurance by making sure that the National Universities Commission established Act No.49 of 1988 is deeply involved in the monitoring of quality assurance successfully. All Universities in Nigeria should of necessity institutionalized quality assurance units, whose membership will include seasoned academics, technocrats, and the alumni.

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