
Accreditation of Undergraduate Programmes in Nigerian Universities: Implications for Graduate Employability and Educational Management

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Abstract: This study examines the accreditation exercises of undergraduate programmes in Nigerian Universities from 2001 to 2013. The main objective of the study is to investigate the implications of NUC accreditation on graduates employability and educational management in Nigeria. The study adopted Ex Post Facto design as part of the methodology. Four Federal Universities in Nigeria; comprising two conventional and two specialized universities were selected for the study. All the 267 programmes in the four universities participated in the study. The instrument for the study was records of accreditation results of universities programmes taught in Nigerian universities. Three statistical techniques were employed for data analysis; Simple Percentages, Mean, and t-Test. Analysis of the findings revealed that there has not been regular accreditation of universities undergraduate programmes in Nigerian Universities. The study found that very few undergraduate programmes had full accreditation status which affected the quality of graduates and their employability and is posing serious problem to educational management in the country. Some recommendations were made among the recommendations is the need for NUC to embark on regular accreditation visits for undergraduate programmes in the universities so as to raise public confidence that programmes offered in the Nigerian Universities satisfies the Benchmarks and Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) to boost graduates chances for employment and postgraduate programmes elsewhere in the world.

Keywords: Accreditation, Educational Management, Graduates Employability, Undergraduate Programmes,

1. Introduction

University education in Nigeria began with the setting up of University College Ibadan (UCI) in 1948. The establishment of the university was based on the recommendation of the Elliot Commission's report of 1943 Ajayi and Haastrup (2008). In 1959, the Federal Government set up the Ashby Commission to among other things, advise on the education needs of the country for its first two decades after independence in respect of higher education. The Commission's recommendation led to the establishment of four universities and a university coordinating agency in Nigeria (Fafunwa, 1995). The agency was to have undisputed control over the affairs of the multi-universities with specific reference to finance, staff and courses offered in the universities (Fafunwa, 1995). This was a land mark achievement in the development of university education in Nigeria. The numbers of universities in Nigeria have increased from six universities in 1960s; referred to as first generation universities to 103 as of 2014.

In order to ensure that quality was not compromised for quantity in university education, the Federal Government promulgated Decree No. 16 in 1985, NUC amended Decree 49 of 1988 and established the National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions' Act of 1993, empowering the National Universities Commission (NUC) to lay down Benchmark Minimum Academic Standard (BMAS) and to conduct accreditation for all undergraduate programmes in Nigeria for quality assurance (FGN, 1995). The extent to which NUC has regularly performed accreditation of undergraduate programmes in the Nigerian university system, to ensure graduate employability remains an area to be investigated. The finding of study would provide basis for sound educational policies and decision making among stakeholders; Government, firms and families in education.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to investigate the implications of NUC accreditation on graduate employability and educational management in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

2. Assess the regularity of accreditation of university undergraduate academic programme to ensure programmes meet demands for graduate employability and educational management.
3. Evaluate the accreditation status of undergraduate programmes in the selected universities for increased access to quality university education

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Globalization has brought about unprecedented knowledge expansion, the speed and the rate of knowledge expansion in the world today requires every society to be on it 'toes' to match the pace of development in the knowledge world. However, there are public concerns about the quality of university education and graduate employability for the development of Nigeria economy. This is heightened and manifested in different forms as graduates are subjected to all sorts of tests and pre-employment trainings before offered job or admitted for graduate programmes in most universities in Nigeria. In order to ensure that the quality of university education meets the growing and emerging needs of the country's economy for graduate employability, The study will investigate problems of regularity or otherwise of accreditation of academic programmes by NUC and current status of the selected universities aimed at assuaging public concerns and employers of labour that academic programmes offered in Nigerian universities satisfies the Benchmarks and Minimum Academic Standards (BMASS) to adequately prepare graduates of the universities with basic skills required for employment in Nigeria and elsewhere in the world.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How regular is the accreditation exercise of undergraduate academic programmes in Nigerian Universities that would meet the demand for graduate employability and educational management?
2. What are the accreditation status of academic programmes in the four selected universities for increased access to university education for graduate employability and educational management?

1.4 Statement of Hypothesis

The following hypothesis is hereby been formulated:

H₀: There is no significant difference in terms of regular accreditation of undergraduate academic programmes in conventional and specialized universities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Quality Assurance in University Education-a Factor for Graduate Employability

Quality assurance is a system which includes all policies, procedures, processes and actions intended to lead to the achievement, maintenance, monitoring and enhancement of quality through inspection or testing of samples (Rami and John, 2008). It comprises of planned activities and actions necessary to provide adequate confidence that a programme, service or product satisfies given requirements for quality (Olorunfemi and Ashaolu, (2010). Quality assurance helps to establish an institution's good reputation and image by defining standards of achievements, documented procedures for all identified process, establishing ways of responding to issues and clear accountability for outcomes Akerele,(2008). Quality assurance of university education has to do with meeting acceptable standards as defined by quality assurance bodies or appropriate academic and professional associations so as to garner greater public confidence, more satisfied students, efficient processes and staff who are confident in their jobs (Oyebade, 2008).

Quality assurance consists two aspects; internal and external; the internal aspect is concerned with the implementation of the school objectives while the external aspect deals with the implementation of national objectives, which are pre-requisites to the achievement of quality in any educational institution Oderinde (2004). Through accreditation - the quality assurance mechanism, employers, Nigerian public

and the international communities are guaranteed that university graduates have attained an acceptance level of competence in their areas of specialization and so are adequate for employment and further studies Okebukola, (2004).

2.2 Objective of NUC Accreditation

The accreditation of undergraduate programmes is directed towards assuring that universities' academic programmes meet Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS). This also entails ascertaining that universities do not over shoot their admissions' quota and their carrying capacities. Other major functions of the accreditation agency is to assure that universities observe the laid down basic entry requirements in the admissions exercise, and that academic content of programmes meet specified standards for award of degrees for graduate employability. In addition, that universities achieve the academic staff mix and teacher/student ratios for all academic programmes and that there are adequate human resources, materials and physical facilities for the establishment of new programmes in the universities, NUC (2004). Furthermore, the accreditation of undergraduate programmes is expected to be carried out after every four years to ensure quality of university education in Nigeria.

2.3 Empirical Studies

Ibijola, (2014) conducted a study on the accreditation role of the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the quality of the educational inputs into Nigerian university system. This was to find out the level of performance of the accreditation role of the NUC and its relationship with the quality of educational inputs. The study used a descriptive survey design. The population consisted of public Universities in South-West, Nigeria. The sample was made up of 300 subjects, consisting of 50 staff members from six Universities sampled from the population. The findings of the study revealed a moderate level of NUC performance of its accreditation role, and showed a direct positive relationship with quality of inputs into Nigerian university system.

In another study, Obadara and Abayomi (2013) carried out a study on accreditation and quality assurance in Nigerian universities. The purpose of the study was to empirically establish the correlation between accreditation and quality assurance with the aim of using its findings to make useful recommendations on how to strengthen Nigerian university programmes for quality assurance and quality improvement. A descriptive survey design was used for the study. A sample of 74 selected by proportionate stratified random sampling technique constituting a total of 1480 staff in the selected universities. The findings revealed that there is significant relationship between accreditation and resource input into Nigerian universities, quality of output, quality of process. The study therefore, recommended that human capacities should be built in the area of quality assurance so as to ensuring quality university education in Nigerian.

Furthermore, Mmeka and Nwogu (2014) examined instruments and procedures for academic programmes accreditation in Nigerian Universities. The aim of the study was to survey universities academic staff awareness of accreditation instrument and procedure of accreditation of undergraduate programmes in universities. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Two hundred and sixty-seven (267) respondents took part in the study. The study revealed that academic staff were conversant with the accreditation instruments and aware of the procedures employed by the National Universities Commission for accreditation of programmes. Therefore, the study recommended that National Universities Commission should continue to formulate the rules, standards and conditions governing assessment and academic accreditation, as well as the procedures which guarantee their application in the various academic institutions.

Okebukola, Adedipe & Uvah, (2005), carried out a National Needs Assessment/Survey as a preliminary step in the curriculum review process, the survey aimed at identifying skills/subjects specific knowledge gaps in the existing delivery of university education which makes the Nigerian Universities graduates not to fit effectively into the world of work. The teams of researchers were seasoned professors in their areas of specialization. The findings were specific to various disciplines and professions but some were reflected in all, such as weak foundation in English and student population and increasing laxity/generosity/liberalism in admission requirements; High student population without commensurate

structural, infrastructural and teaching/learning/research facility base, thus overstressing carrying capacity and deficient libraries in terms of currency, number of books and journals/electronic support facilities (Information Communication Technology) and others. From the foregoing, scholars have concentrated on stakeholders perceptions on the quality assurance roles of the NUC on university education, surveying impact of accreditation on quality university education and examining the stakeholder's awareness of the accreditation using descriptive research design. Little studies has been done on assessing accreditation of programmes from existing records. This study therefore, assesses accreditation of university undergraduate programmes using an ex post factor design.

2.4 Theoretical Bases for the Study

This study is anchored on the works of Woodhouse (1999) and Canadian Council on Learning, (2009) who see quality Assurance in higher education as fitness for purpose, accountability and/or enhancement. "fitness for purpose", in *quality assurance* "refers to the policies, attitudes, actions and procedures necessary to ensure that quality is being maintained and enhanced" According to Canadian Council on Learning (2009), Accountability is associated with external stakeholders, such as state and accrediting bodies, governmental agencies and the public, while improvement—or enhancement—focuses on internal processes: Quality occupies the middle ground between the external and the internal; a philosophy or system that focuses and guides the interaction between the external calls for increased accountability and the internal efforts of an organization that is addressing it. *Accountability* requires quality measures, metrics or performance indicators, typically defined as inputs, outputs or outcomes. In this study, NUC is a governmental agency and one the external stakeholders of university education reposed with quality assurance function of university education in Nigeria. This function is carried out through accreditation of undergraduate programmes in the universities; a process which ensures that all programmes offered in Nigerian universities attains Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS). These attainments would in turns guarantees that the graduates output of Nigerian universities have attained minimum level competence in their various areas of specialization for employment.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Study Approach

The study adopted the Ex Post Facto design. Ex-post –facto research design is a non experiment research technique in which seeks to explain a phenomenon that has occurred without manipulation independent variable, Amdii (2003). The study, seeks to investigate accreditation results of undergraduate academic programmes in the Universities from 2001 to 2013 and its effects on graduates employability and educational management.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population for the study comprised of 27 Federal Universities in Nigeria. The study only focus four Federal Universities in Nigeria; comprising two conventional and two specialized universities were selected by a proportionate stratified sampling random technique. All the 267 programmes in the four universities were involved in the study. The instrument for the study was records of accreditations results obtained from the NUC, National Universities Commission (2014).

3.3 Method of Data Analysis

Three statistical techniques were employed for data analysis; frequency count percentages, mean and t-Test. Percentages and mean were used to answer the research questions and the t-Test was used in testing the hypothesis of the study. Accreditation result record were grouped, and assigned numerical values based on the likert type scale: 4 points were assigned to programmes with three times accreditation visits; 3 points to programmes with two times accreditation visits; 2 points to programme with one time accreditation visit and 1 point to programme without accreditation visit. To compute the mean for accreditation for all the programmes, checklist was developed with the assigned values which were scored on each programme and the means for accreditation visit for programmes in the faculties were obtained. To analyze accreditation status of academic programmes in the universities, the accreditation status of all programmes in accreditation result were counted and the percentage determined. On the decision rule, a mean accreditation visit of 2.50 and above was considered moderate for producing graduate employability, while below 2.50 was adjudged weak for quality graduate output for employability while

managerial implications was assessed qualitatively based on effectiveness and efficiency.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Research Questions

In a bid to achieve the objectives of the study, the analysis of the study was conducted in line with the research questions and hypothesis of the study.

Research Question 1: *How regular is accreditation exercise of universities' undergraduate academic programmes that would meet the demand for graduate employability and educational management?*

The results of the data analysis in Table 4.1 indicated that trend of accreditation exercise was weak in the 267 academic programmes in 39 Faculties spread across the four universities of the study. Generally, accreditation visits across universities were weak; the mean accreditation visit of programmes in Federal University of Technology, Minna was 2.06; 2.23 in University of Nigeria, Nsukka; 2.23 in Federal University of Technology, Akure; and 2.35 in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The overall mean accreditation visit of programmes in the universities' undergraduate academic programmes was below 2.50 minimum accreditation visits of programmes. Details of the analysis indicated that the trends of accreditation visits in most of the academic programmes in the four universities were not good. However, the professional programmes; Engineering, Medicine, and Veterinary Medicine in the conventional universities, recorded above 2.50 mean accreditation visits.

Table 4.1: Analysis of Accreditation Results of Undergraduate Programmes (2001-2013) No.: 4

Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria			University of Nigeria, Nsukka			FUT, AKURE			FUT, MINNA		
Faculty	N	Mean	Faculty	N	Mean	Faculty	N	Mean	Faculty	N	Mean
Arts	10	2.00	Arts	13	2.23	Agric. & Agri Tech	5	1.62	Agric. Tech	6	1.33
Administration	4	2.75	Administration	6	2.66	Eng. & Eng. Tech.	6	3.00	Eng. & Eng. Tech.	5	2.83
Education	21	2.19	Education	16	2.18	Earth & Mineral Science	5	2.20	Environ. Tech	11	2.00
Agriculture	2	2.00	Agriculture	7	1.37	Envrn. Tech	8	2.62	Education	14	1.85
Engineering	9	2.66	Engineering	7	2.14	Mgt. Tech.	4	1.50	Natural & Applied Sci.	9	2.29
Science	12	2.25	Physical Sciences	7	2.57	Science	13	2.61			
Social Science	6	2.83	Social Science	8	2.37						
Environmental Design	10	2.20	Environmental Studies	5	2.80						
Medicine	4	2.50	Medicine	1	4.00						
Pharmaceutical Science	1	3.00	Pharmaceutical Sciences.	6	1.50						
Veterinary Sc.	1	3.00	Veterinary Medicine	1	3.00						
Law	2	3.00	Law	3	2.00						
			Biological Sc.	4	2.00						
			Health Science	7	2.14						
			Tech.								
			Child Dental Health	3	1.00						
Overall	82	2.35	94	2.13		44	2.23		47	2.06	

Key: n=Number of programmes in Faculty

Source: NUC Results of Accreditation of Undergraduate Programmes taught in Nigerian Universities (2001-2013).

Research Question 2: What are the accreditation status of academic programmes in the four selected universities for increased access to university education for graduate employability and educational management?

Table 4.3: Analysis of NUC's Accreditation Status of Programmes by University (N=4 Universities)

Type of University	Name of University	Accreditation Status of Programmes						
		Full Accreditation		Interim Accreditation		Awaiting Accreditation		
		N	n	%	n	%	N	%
Conventional	Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	82	14	17.10	Nil	Nil	68	82.9
	University of Nigeria, Nsukka	94	16	17.02	3	3.19	75	79.79
Specialized	Federal University of Tech., Akure	44	2	4.54	Nil	Nil	42	95.45
	Federal University of Tech., Minna	47	11	23.49	8	17.02	28	59.57
	Total	267	43	16.10	11	4.11	213	79.77

Source: NUC Results of Accreditation of Undergraduate Programmes 2001 -2012.

Table 4.3 indicates that out of 267 programmes in the four universities only 43 programmes representing 36.46% had full accreditation during the period of study. A total of 11 programmes which was 4.11% had interim accreditation and 223 were awaiting the NUC accreditation. From the records of accreditation available, many of the programmes with full accreditation have been due for re-accreditation since 2010/2011 academic year.

Further analysis indicated that in ABU, Zaria only 14 programmes representing 17.10% had full accreditation with 68 (82.90) awaiting accreditation. University of Nigeria, Nsukka, had 16 programmes representing 17.02% with full accreditation status, three programmes (3.19%) had interim accreditation and 75 programmes representing 79.79% programmes awaiting accreditation. In the specialized universities; Federal University of Technology, Akure, had only two programmes representing 4.54% with full accreditation and 42 programmes (95.45%) awaiting accreditation. Finally, in the Federal University of Technology, Minna, 16 programmes (23.41%) had full accreditation, while eight programmes (17.02%) had interim accreditation and 28 programmes representing 59.57% awaiting accreditation.

4.2 Test of hypothesis

H₀₁ There is no significant difference in accreditation status of undergraduate academic programmes in conventional and specialized universities.

Table 4.4 shows the results of the hypothesis testing of difference in accreditation status of undergraduate academic programmes in conventional and specialized universities. The calculated t-value is 1.10 which was greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 (df=). The implication is that significant difference exists. The hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in accreditation status of undergraduate academic programmes in conventional and specialized universities was thus rejected.

Table 4.4: Difference in the Accreditation of Undergraduate Programmes in Conventional and Specialized Universities

Type of University	x	SD	T	df	*Sig. (2 Tailed - Test)	Decision
Conventional	2.24	.73	1.10		±1.96	Reject the null hypothesis
Specialized	2.16	.95				

*p = 0.05

Source: NUC Results of Accreditation of Undergraduate Programmes 2001 -2012.

4.3 Major findings

The study's finding reveals that regular accreditation of undergraduate programmes in the universities leaves much to be desired; quite worrisome is the fact that the finding indicated that undergraduate programmes in specialized universities were even more grossly under- accredited. This finding confirmed Ayodele and Awe's (2007) findings that NUC's accreditations have not translated into effective teaching and learning interactions because it is a partisan state-driven quality assurance agency imposed on the universities; furthermore its accreditation procedures fail to take cognisance of the peculiarities of different universities, nor engenders a quality culture to enhance graduate employability. Accreditation is a quality assurance tool in university education, through which academic programmes are assessed to ensure that they meet set acceptable standards (Oyebade, 2008). Accreditation is necessary to ensure an effective teaching-learning process and enhanced learning outcomes. Accreditation of programmes provides basis of public confidence on the quality of programmes offered in the universities. As Oyebade (2008) reiterated, when university education meets acceptable standards as defined by quality assurance bodies or appropriate academic and professional associations, then this would engender public confidence, more satisfied students, efficient processes and graduates confident in their jobs, thus increasing their employability.

Regular accreditation is necessary for curriculum content review; accreditation provides basis for quality relevance in curriculum contents. Where university academic programme are not reviewed, the university curriculum contents according to Oyebade's (2012), would be deficient in many respects, with miss-match between what universities produce and what the employers need. This appears to be the trends in the Nigerian universities. This argument was further stressed by Archibong (2013) who contended that the university curriculum is 'obsolete' and does not satisfy the needs of students. Also, that this development has led to a growing number of unemployed graduates, due to the problem of relevance of courses to which students are exposed to. It is on this premise that Adekunle, Tayo, and Olugbenro (2012) and Archibong (2013) have advocated constant review of the university curriculum to keep pace with national and global needs and to provide graduates with the training to enable them to be creative, innovative, self-employed and self-reliant. In a globally competitive knowledge economy, there is a need for continuous updating of curriculum content in order to ensure that the content taught and learnt reflects the rapidly advancing frontiers of scientific knowledge (Saint, Hartnett and Strassner (2003). One of the roles of universities is to produce manpower needed to drive the economy, if the curriculum contents of university academic programmes are not reviewed in line with current events, the cardinal goal of university education which is producing the right calibre of manpower will not be realized.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Analysis of accreditation results indicated that there has not been regular accreditation of universities undergraduate programmes that would ensure that undergraduate programmes meet demands for graduate employability and educational management. Very few undergraduate programmes had full

accreditation status in the four universities for increased access to university education for graduate employability and educational management. This development does not support access and quality graduate output of universities to support the economic development in Nigeria and elsewhere in the world. Regular accreditation of undergraduate programmes in Nigerian universities is important to the quality of university education and this has serious implications for graduate employability in Nigeria. Without regular accreditation of undergraduate programmes, what this implies is that quality access to university education would continue to decline and universities would be producing half-baked graduates that do not meet the labour market needs for a sustainable economic growth in Nigeria and may be ill-prepared for employment and postgraduate studies both locally and abroad.

5.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. The NUC should embark on regular accreditation of university undergraduate programmes. To raise public confidence that programmes offered in the Nigerian university satisfy Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) for quality graduates output that are employable in Nigeria and elsewhere in the world.
2. In this era of globalization and technology-driven economy, NUC should ensure regular accreditation of academic programmes particularly in specialized universities toward increasing number of programmes with full accreditation status that would expand access to quality university education and ensure graduates acquire relevant skills necessary for employment

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