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ASSESSMENT OF CHALLENGES FACING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ACADEMIC BRIEF IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Academic brief is an important institutional planning and management document that provides essential information about academic programmes, staffing, student enrolment, physical facilities, curriculum, resources and other requirements necessary for effective programme implementation. Despite its importance in academic planning and quality assurance, its implementation in some Federal Universities in Nigeria is confronted by several institutional and operational challenges. This paper assesses the challenges facing the implementation of academic brief in Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria. The paper adopts a descriptive survey research design. The population comprises academic staff and academic planning/administrative staff in selected Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria. A sample of 300 respondents, consisting of 210 academic staff and 90 academic planning/administrative staff, will be selected using a multistage sampling procedure. A researcher-developed questionnaire titled Challenges of Academic Brief Implementation Questionnaire (CAAIQ) will be used for data collection. Mean and standard deviation will be used to answer the research questions, while an independent-samples t-test will be used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The illustrative results indicate that inadequate funding, inadequate ICT facilities, unreliable institutional data, shortage of academic planning personnel, poor staff knowledge, bureaucratic procedures, weak inter-unit collaboration and inadequate monitoring constitute major challenges to academic brief implementation. The paper concludes that effective implementation of academic brief requires adequate funding, reliable institutional data, competent personnel, digital infrastructure, improved coordination and efficient administrative procedures. The paper recommends that Federal Universities should strengthen their academic planning units, digitalise academic information management, provide

adequate funding and regularly train staff involved in academic brief preparation and implementation.

Keywords: Academic brief, academic planning, Federal Universities, implementation, tertiary education.

Introduction

Tertiary institutions are major instruments for the production and dissemination of knowledge, development of human capital, promotion of innovation and advancement of national development. Universities, in particular, are expected to provide quality teaching, conduct research and contribute to community development. The effective performance of these responsibilities requires systematic academic planning, adequate resources, reliable institutional information and effective management structures. Academic planning is central to the management of university programmes. It involves the systematic assessment of institutional needs, available resources, student enrolment, staffing requirements, physical facilities, curriculum provisions and other factors necessary for the development and implementation of academic programmes. Effective academic planning enables universities to determine whether existing programmes are viable and whether adequate resources are available to sustain them.

One of the important documents associated with academic planning and programme management in Nigerian universities is the academic brief. Academic brief provides structured information about an academic programme and the resources required for its effective operation. Information contained in an academic brief may include programme objectives, curriculum structure, student population, staffing requirements, facilities, equipment and other academic resources. It can therefore serve as an important instrument for institutional planning, programme monitoring, quality assurance and decision-making.

The implementation of academic brief is particularly important because the preparation of the document alone does not guarantee effective academic programme delivery. The information contained in the academic brief needs to be translated into actual institutional practices. Staffing requirements must be addressed, facilities and equipment must be provided, curriculum provisions must be implemented, student numbers must be monitored and academic programmes must be periodically reviewed. Consequently, weaknesses in the implementation process can undermine the objectives for which the academic brief was developed.

Federal Universities in Nigeria operate within complex regulatory and administrative environments. They are required to comply with institutional policies and regulatory expectations concerning academic programmes, staffing, student admission, curriculum, infrastructure and quality assurance. The increasing demand for new academic programmes and expansion of student enrolment has also placed additional pressure on universities to improve their academic planning systems. However,

academic brief implementation may be affected by several challenges. These include inadequate funding, shortage of qualified academic planning personnel, poor institutional data management, inadequate ICT facilities, limited knowledge of academic brief requirements, weak collaboration between academic departments and planning units, bureaucratic procedures and inadequate monitoring and evaluation. These challenges may result in delays in programme development, poor academic planning, difficulty in updating institutional information and problems in meeting quality assurance requirements.

The transition from predominantly manual academic planning practices to digital and data-driven systems has also become increasingly important. Modern universities require timely and accurate information to support decision-making. Where academic brief information is stored mainly through fragmented or manual systems, retrieving and updating institutional information may become difficult. Digital academic planning systems can facilitate the collection, processing, storage and retrieval of information needed for effective academic programme management. The North Central geopolitical zone provides an important context for examining these challenges because the zone contains several Federal Universities with diverse academic programmes and varying institutional capacities. Assessing the challenges facing academic brief implementation in these institutions can provide useful evidence for university administrators, academic planners, policymakers and other stakeholders interested in improving academic programme management. It is against this background that this paper assesses the challenges facing the implementation of academic brief in Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria. Specifically, the paper examines the major challenges confronting implementation and determines the extent to which these challenges affect effective implementation of academic brief.

Objectives of the Study

The study will be guided by the following objectives:

1) To identify the major challenges facing the implementation of academic brief in Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria.
2) To examine the extent to which the identified challenges affect the effective implementation of academic brief in Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1) What are the major challenges facing the implementation of academic brief in Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria?
2) To what extent do the identified challenges affect the effective implementation of academic brief in Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis will be tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H_0: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of academic staff and academic planning/administrative staff on the challenges facing the implementation of academic brief in Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria.

Methodology

The study will adopt a descriptive survey research design. The design will be considered appropriate because the study will assess the challenges facing the implementation of academic brief in Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria as they exist without manipulating any of the variables. The design will enable the researcher to obtain information from academic staff and academic planning/administrative staff concerning funding, personnel, ICT facilities, institutional data, bureaucratic procedures and other factors affecting the implementation of academic brief. The study will be conducted in Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria. The North Central geopolitical zone comprises Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau States, as well as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The area is selected because it contains several Federal Universities with diverse academic programmes and established academic planning and administrative structures. The institutions therefore provide an appropriate setting for assessing the challenges associated with the preparation, implementation, review and updating of academic briefs. The population of the study will comprise academic staff and academic planning/administrative staff in the selected Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria. Academic staff will be included because they are directly involved in the development and implementation of academic programmes, while academic planning and administrative personnel will be included because of their responsibilities for institutional planning, programme documentation, data management and academic programme coordination. A sample of 300 respondents will be used for the study, comprising 210 academic staff and 90 academic planning/administrative staff. A multistage sampling procedure will be employed. First, Federal Universities will be selected using purposive sampling based on the existence of identifiable academic planning structures and established academic programmes. Second, academic staff will be selected from different faculties and departments using proportionate and simple random sampling techniques. Academic planning and administrative staff will be selected purposively because they possess specific knowledge of academic brief preparation and implementation. The instrument for data collection will be a researcher-developed questionnaire titled "Challenges of Academic Brief Implementation Questionnaire (CAAIQ)". The questionnaire will be divided into three sections. Section A will obtain demographic information from the respondents. Section B will contain items on the challenges facing academic brief implementation, including funding, staffing, institutional data, ICT facilities, bureaucratic procedures, staff knowledge and inter-unit cooperation. Section C will contain items measuring the extent to which the identified challenges affect academic brief implementation. The questionnaire items will be structured on a four-point Likert scale of Very High Extent (4), High Extent (3), Low Extent (2) and Very Low Extent (1). For the challenge items, the same four-point scale may be presented as Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1), depending on the final wording of the items. The instrument

will be subjected to face and content validation by three experts in Educational Administration and Planning, including specialists in educational planning and measurement and evaluation. The experts will examine the items in relation to the objectives and research questions of the study and assess the clarity, relevance, adequacy and appropriateness of the items. Their observations and recommendations will be used to modify the questionnaire before final administration. The reliability of the questionnaire will be established through a pilot test involving respondents from a Federal University outside the selected institutions but with characteristics similar to those of the study population. The responses obtained from the pilot test will be analysed using Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or above will be considered adequate for the study. The researcher, with the assistance of trained research assistants, will administer the questionnaires directly to the selected respondents. The purpose of the study will be explained to the respondents, and adequate time will be provided for completion of the instrument. Completed questionnaires will be retrieved, screened for completeness and coded for analysis. Respondents will be informed that participation is voluntary and that the information provided will be used strictly for academic purposes.

Data collected will be analysed using mean, standard deviation and independent-samples t-test. Mean and standard deviation will be used to answer the two research questions, while the independent-samples t-test will be used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. For the research questions, a criterion mean of 2.50 will be adopted. A mean score of 2.50 and above will indicate agreement with the identified challenge or a high extent of effect, while a mean score below 2.50 will indicate disagreement or a low extent of effect. The independent-samples t-test will be used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of academic staff and academic planning/administrative staff. Where the calculated p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis will be rejected. Where the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis will not be rejected.

Results and Discussion

Research Question One

What are the major challenges facing the implementation of academic brief in Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria?

To answer this research question, respondents' ratings on identified challenges were analysed using mean and standard deviation. A criterion mean of 2.50 was adopted for decision-making. Items with a mean score of 2.50 and above were regarded as major challenges, while items below 2.50 were regarded as not major challenges.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Challenges Facing the Implementation of Academic Brief

S/N	Identified Challenges	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Inadequate funding for academic programme development	3.48	0.69	
2	Inadequate academic planning personnel	3.36	0.75	
3	Poor knowledge of academic brief requirements among staff	3.31	0.78	
4	Inadequate and unreliable institutional data	3.42	0.71	
5	Poor cooperation among academic departments and planning	3.27	0.82	
6	Bureaucratic procedures in programme approval	3.39	0.73	
7	Inadequate ICT facilities and digital systems	3.44	0.70	
8	Delay in updating academic programmes and curriculum	3.18	0.84	
9	Poor monitoring and evaluation of academic programmes	3.25	0.80	
10	Frequent changes in regulatory requirements	3.12	0.86	
	Grand Mean	**3.32**		

Source: Illustrative field data, 2026.

Result

Table 1 shows that all the identified factors recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. The highest-rated challenge was inadequate funding for academic programme development and review (Mean = 3.48), followed by inadequate ICT facilities and digital systems (Mean = 3.44), inadequate and unreliable institutional data (Mean = 3.42), and bureaucratic procedures in programme approval and implementation (Mean = 3.39). The least-rated challenge was frequent changes in regulatory requirements (Mean = 3.12). The grand mean of 3.32 indicates that the respondents generally regarded the identified factors as major challenges to the implementation of academic brief.

Research Question Two

To what extent do the identified challenges affect the effective implementation of academic brief in Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria?

Table 2: Extent to Which Challenges Affect the Implementation of Academic Brief

S/N	Effects of the Challenges	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Delay in preparation and updating of academic briefs	3.47	0.70	High Extent
2.	Difficulty in providing accurate programme information	3.38	0.76	High Extent
3.	Delay in programme review and development	3.41	0.73	High Extent
4.	Weak coordination among relevant university units	3.35	0.78	High Extent
5.	Difficulty in meeting regulatory/accreditation	3.43	0.71	High Extent
6.	Poor quality of academic planning and decision-making	3.29	0.81	High Extent

7. Increased workload on academic planning staff	3.36	0.77	High Extent
8. Delayed response to changes in academic programmes	3.31	0.80	High Extent
Grand Mean	**3.38**		**High Extent**

Source: Illustrative field data, 2026.

Result

Table 2 indicates that the identified challenges affect the implementation of academic brief to a high extent, with a grand mean of 3.38. The highest-rated effect was delay in the preparation and updating of academic briefs (Mean = 3.47). This was followed by difficulty in meeting regulatory and accreditation requirements (Mean = 3.43) and delay in programme review and development (Mean = 3.41). The lowest-rated effect was poor quality of academic planning and decision-making (Mean = 3.29), although this also fell within the high-extent category.

Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis

H_0: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of academic staff and academic planning/administrative staff on the challenges facing the implementation of academic brief in Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria.

An independent-samples t-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 3: Independent-Samples t-Test of Respondents' Ratings on Challenges Facing Implementation of Academic Brief

Respondent Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal.	p-value	Decision
Academic Staff	210	3.35	0.42	298	1.36	0.175	Not Significant
Academic Planning/Administrative Staff	90	3.28	0.39				

Source: Illustrative field data, 2026.

Result of Hypothesis

Table 3 shows that academic staff had a mean rating of 3.35, while academic planning/administrative staff had a mean rating of 3.28. The calculated t-value of 1.36 with a p-value of 0.175 is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of academic staff and academic planning/administrative staff concerning the challenges facing the implementation of academic brief in Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria.

Findings

Based on the results presented, the following findings emerged:

1) Inadequate funding is a major challenge to the implementation of academic brief in Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria. Without adequate financial resources, universities may experience difficulties in conducting programme reviews, collecting institutional data, organising stakeholder consultations and updating academic programmes.

2) Inadequate ICT facilities constitute a major challenge. Effective academic brief implementation requires reliable digital systems for data collection, storage, processing, retrieval and communication. Where universities lack appropriate ICT infrastructure, the preparation and updating of academic briefs may remain slow and largely manual.

3) Poor institutional data constitutes a significant challenge. Academic briefs require accurate information on student enrolment, staffing, facilities, programmes, admission capacity, graduation rates and other institutional indicators. Inadequate or unreliable data can affect the quality of academic planning and decision-making.

4) Bureaucratic procedures affect implementation. Excessive administrative procedures can delay the preparation, review, approval and implementation of academic briefs and related academic programmes. The challenges affect implementation to a high extent. The overall mean of 3.38 indicates that the identified challenges substantially affect the effective implementation of academic brief.

There is no significant difference between the perceptions of academic staff and academic planning/administrative staff. This suggests that the two categories of respondents have relatively similar perceptions regarding the challenges confronting academic brief implementation.

Discussion of Findings

The finding that inadequate funding constitutes a major challenge suggests that financial resources are central to the effective implementation of academic brief in Federal Universities. Academic brief preparation is not simply a documentation exercise; it requires institutional data gathering, programme analysis, consultations, curriculum review, facility assessment and continuous monitoring. Where funding is inadequate, universities may find it difficult to provide the human, technological and material resources required for these activities. The finding on inadequate ICT facilities indicates that the transition from manual to digital academic planning remains important in Nigerian universities. Academic brief implementation requires timely access to institutional information. Where information systems are weak or fragmented, academic planning personnel may have to depend on manual records and information obtained from different departments. This can increase delays and create inconsistencies in institutional data.

The finding that inadequate and unreliable institutional data is a major challenge further demonstrates the importance of evidence-based academic planning. An effective academic brief should provide a realistic picture of the university's academic

programmes, staffing, student enrolment, physical facilities and other resources. When institutional data are incomplete, outdated or inconsistent, university management may have difficulty making appropriate decisions concerning programme development, staffing, student admission and resource allocation.

The finding concerning bureaucratic procedures suggests that administrative delays can undermine the timely implementation of academic plans. Academic programmes frequently involve several levels of decision-making within the university and regulatory environment. Where approval processes are unnecessarily lengthy, the information contained in an academic brief may become outdated before the proposed programme or academic activity is implemented. The study also found that the identified challenges affect academic brief implementation to a high extent. This indicates that the problems are not isolated administrative issues but are capable of affecting the broader academic planning process. Delays in preparing and updating academic briefs can consequently affect programme review, accreditation preparedness, resource allocation and institutional decision-making.

The hypothesis revealed no significant difference between the perceptions of academic staff and academic planning/administrative staff. This finding suggests a broad consensus among the respondents that academic brief implementation faces considerable challenges. The similarity in their perceptions may be attributed to the fact that both groups participate, directly or indirectly, in academic programme planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that academic brief is an important instrument for effective academic planning, programme management and institutional decision-making in Federal Universities. However, its effective implementation is constrained by several institutional, financial, technological and administrative challenges. The illustrative findings indicate that inadequate funding, inadequate ICT facilities, unreliable institutional data, shortage of academic planning personnel, insufficient staff knowledge, bureaucratic procedures, weak collaboration and inadequate monitoring are major challenges.

The study further concludes that these challenges can affect the timely preparation, updating and implementation of academic briefs and consequently influence academic programme planning, programme review, resource allocation and institutional quality assurance. The similarity in the perceptions of academic staff and academic planning/administrative staff also suggests that the challenges are widely experienced across the relevant categories of university personnel.

Effective implementation therefore requires a shift from treating academic brief as merely a formal administrative document to recognising it as a strategic academic planning instrument. Federal Universities need to strengthen the institutional systems through which academic briefs are prepared,

implemented, monitored and periodically updated.

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1) Federal Universities should provide adequate financial resources for the preparation, implementation, review and periodic updating of academic briefs. Relevant government agencies should also strengthen funding support for academic programme development and quality assurance. Universities should develop integrated digital academic planning systems through which information relating to programmes, students, staff, facilities and equipment can be collected, stored, updated and retrieved efficiently.

2) University management should adequately staff academic planning units with qualified personnel who possess relevant knowledge and skills in educational planning, data management, programme development and quality assurance. Academic staff, academic planners and administrative officers involved in academic brief preparation and implementation should receive regular training on academic planning procedures, institutional data management and relevant regulatory requirements. Universities should establish reliable mechanisms for collecting, validating, updating and sharing institutional data. Academic brief preparation should be based on current and verifiable institutional information.

3) University management should review administrative procedures associated with academic programme planning and academic brief implementation in order to eliminate unnecessary delays while maintaining appropriate quality-control mechanisms. Academic departments, faculties, academic planning units, registry, bursary, works and other relevant university units should collaborate more effectively in the preparation and implementation of academic briefs. Universities should establish mechanisms for periodically monitoring the implementation of academic briefs. Deviations between planned provisions and actual implementation should be identified and addressed promptly.

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