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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF UNIVERSITIES COMPLIANCE TO NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION (NUC)'S BENCHMARK ON COURSE CONTENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES IN SOUTH-EAST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study which investigated the Comparative Analysis of Universities' compliance to National Universities Commission (NUC)'S benchmark on Course content and human resources in South East, Nigeria was guided by two Research questions. Descriptive survey Design was adopted for the study. The Population size of 155 consisted of 31 heads of department and 124 course representatives drawn from 31 Universities in South East. The only three Private Universities who offered Science Education were purposively selected while five Public Universities were selected using simple random sampling technique. Five respondents in each of the 8 Universities added up to a sample size of forty. The Researcher developed and utilized two instruments that were structured for data collection. It was named Observation Checklist for Compliance to NUC benchmark on course content and Observation Checklist for compliance to NUC benchmark on human resources. in South East Nigeria (OCCNUCBCC) and (OCCNUCBHR) respectively. Validation of the instruments was done by 3 Experts from Faculty of Education with a reliability coefficient of 0.94 obtained using Cronbach Alpha's reliability instrument. Data collected were analyzed with the aid of IBM SPSS while Mean, Standard deviation and percentages were used to answer the 2 research questions. The findings of the study revealed that Private Universities in South East, Nigeria have higher compliance to NUC requirements for course content compared to their Counterparts in the Public Sector while Public Universities were found to have complied more to human resources requirement than the Private Universities .It was recommended among other things that Federal government should make adequate budgetary provisions for Public Universities in other to make them stay focused in their academic work as incessant strike actions could undoubtedly be the cause of non -compliance to course content. NUC should from time to time conduct impromptu accreditation to know the true situation of things in order to figure out where supports are actually needed in terms of human resources and to also checkmate window dressing, borrowing of facilities and giving of false information during the regimented Visits. Again, NUC should place serious sanctions on Private Universities who do not comply with the

NUC stipulated human resources requirements as it can aid and abet poor quality of university products which is the bedrock of fallen standard of education.

Keyword: National Universities Commission (NUC), Compliance, Benchmark, human resources Course Content, Comparative Analysis

Introduction

The University Education that was handed down to Nigerians by our colonizers was of a global standard and could compete with Education anywhere in the world. There was international acceptability and high regards for the quality of its graduates, they were fit –for- purpose and had a maximum standard. However, the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of 1986 affected the major fabrics of education. Staffing was affected, laboratories were not fully equipped as it used to be, Libraries were not also furnished satisfactorily and a lot of things went wrong, Adejumobi (2000) noted that Education was a major victim of the social sector crisis engendered by SAP. Ukah (2014) observed that the policy made a nonsense of our educational efforts and went on to emphasize how it robbed us of educational freedom, building up of infrastructure, recruitment of competent teachers and articulation of worthwhile policy that will drive development in our country. That was the onset of falling standards of Education which was further aggravated by brain drain (which has persisted till date) and technical aid that took many university staff to other Countries. After this period the quality of university products became questionable and were unacceptable. Therefore, the first measure taken by the Federal Government to regain the lost grounds and ensure quality in Nigerian Universities was to leverage on decree 16 of 1985 on Minimum Standards on Basic Education in Nigeria (now in section 10 (1) act Cap E3,) (Ingawa, 2017). The decree empowered the National Universities Commission (NUC) in Nigeria to accredit the degree programmes, monitor for standards and other academic awards in all the Universities.

Out of a total of 274 Universities established in Nigeria between 1960 when the first indigenous University was built (https://www.nuc.edu.ng 2024), 31 are domiciled in South East, Nigeria. It is not certain whether NUC has been monitoring these 274 Universities adequately to ensure compliance to standards and by extension improved quality of Education or not since there has been allegations of some Universities borrowing Equipment and Staff for purposes of accreditation. According to (Ekpoh & Edet 2017), window dressing of issues during Accreditation has been prominent in Nigerian Universities. He noticed that books were borrowed to boost the library stock, facilities were also borrowed, giving of false impression about facilities, too much paper documentation among other things during accreditation. If this is to go by then the quality of university education may not improve until the incongruity is removed.

If any Nation must grow scientifically, technologically, economically then Education system of such a nation should be handled with extreme care.

Quality is an attribute that defines a good Education. Education without quality can be liken to cuisine without salt. Infact the savor of any Nation is quality Education. A good quality University Education is an instrument par Excellence for effecting National development therefore it should be sadled with care. Iy was in recognition of this that NUC was established.

NUC, an Agent of quality and a stakeholder in the University Education introduced Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards to all the Nigerian Universities to ensure that students produced are fit for the purpose they enrolled for in the programme. This is because quality is assured when benchmark minimum standards are complied with. Ibijola (2014) observed a direct positive relationship between accreditation role and the quality of educational inputs into Nigerian University System. Whether in business or Education, quality creates value for the products and services for the receiver. Quality in Education is defined as an education in which its curriculum is designed to impart relevant skills and knowledge that enable students to gain academic competencies for socio-economic survival. (https://www.igl-global.com). The quality of Education is embedded in her products and the product determines the quality of the society therefore no nation can earnestly rise beyond the quality of education in that Nation "No Nation can rise above the level of its teachers" Omoegun (2022). Consequently, it is expected that Universities produce a high-quality graduate if the nation/s need must be met. According to National Policy on Education (FRN, 2014) University Education is billed to make optimum contribution to national development by intensifying and diversifying its programmes for high level manpower within the context of the needs of the Nation. So, University is the epoch of knowledge and the hope of development of any Nation.

Dr. Frank on Comfort FM radio programme Akwa Ibom (2022) stated that university is built to proffer solution to the Country's developmental problems. Universities are established majorly to provide knowledge that would bring all-round advancement to the Nation. Any country that closes her eye against standards in the university is closing her eyes against the quality of her citizens and by extension the development of that nation. This is explained by what we are experiencing in Nigeria today where some products of the universities cannot adequately defend their certificates. Having every aspect of Education starting from conducive environment, excellent instructors, standard curriculum and good human resources which does not result in desirable learning outcomes tantamount to a great resources wastage. It is one thing to set the rules and standards, it is another thing to follow it up. It is when the rules/standards are complied with that the desirable learning outcomes can be realized. If a just and egalitarian society is in view, then compliance to Academic Standards must be attained.

Curriculum is very strategic to every Nation's Education and development because the quality of Curriculum determines the quality of Education and the Products of the Universities. Offorma in Kanu and Omele (2019) remarked, that curriculum is a vehicle through which Education is attained, knowing this, Nigerian Universities and other high educational institutions are equipped to

provide education through a curriculum that is guided by benchmark Academic Standards (BMAS) put together by elites from different endeavours after a careful conduct of Need assessment in the society. The Curriculum embodies the course content and human resources required to transmit the content to the students. These two variables are very important in Education system. Education becomes useless without them.

In order to evaluate the level of compliance with the NUC's guidelines for quality assurance in the Nigerian Universities as laid down in the BMAS document, this study carries out a comparative analysis of Universities' compliance to NUC benchmark on course content and human resources in South-East Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Many years after National Universities Commission (NUC) was empowered by Nigerian Government to monitor the administrative and academic progress of the Universities through accreditation processes with the hope of improving the quality of education, it appears that Universities are yet to fully comply with the Minimum Academic Standards laid down by the NUC. Studies have shown that both Private and Public Universities do not still comply to the set Standard in some areas of the University system especially Course content and Physical fa cilities. This puts in doubt the credibility of the Standard of Education in Nigerian Universities as well as the quality of her products.

Based on the above observation this Study was carried out to investigate the extent of Private and Public Universities' compliance to the NUC's Benchmark on minimum academic standards for Course content and human resources for Biology Education in South East Nigeria where no such study is known to have been conducted.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to carry out a comparative analysis of private and public universities compliance to NUC benchmark for Biology education in South-South Nigeria. Specifically, the research seeks to determine the extent of:

1. Universities compliance to course content coverage as stipulated in National Universities Commission (NUC)s benchmark in South–East Nigeria.
2. Universities Compliance to stipulated Human resources requirements in NUCs benchmark in South East, Nigeria.

Methods

This involves the procedures used in carrying out the study. The research was conducted using a Descriptive Survey Design which enabled the researchers to use observation checklists to collect information and analyze the data for appropriate presentation.

The study was carried out in South-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. South-East is one of the six geo-political Zones in Nigeria. There are five states that make up this zone. They are: Anambra, Imo, Enugu, Ebonyi and Abia states. The Zone is the Igbo speaking States of Nigeria. The researchers chose this zone because from the review of Literature, it was discovered that this type of research has not been carried out in this Zone.

There are a total of 31 Universities in the study area.

The population consisted of all the Class Representatives from levels one to four and all the Heads of Science Education Departments in the 31 Universities in South-east Zone totaling 155. Five Public Universities and three (3) Private Universities offering Biology Education were selected for the study. The three Private Universities offering Biology Education in the Study area were purposively selected while simple random sampling was used to select five public Universities There were five respondents in each of the eight Universities giving a total of 40 respondents as the sample size. These were constituted as follows: 4 Course Representatives, one from each level in each University giving 32 for the eight Universities used for the study and one Head of Department from each of the eight Universities giving 8.

The structured instruments (Observation Checklists) were used for data collection. These were developed by the researchers using the NUC Benchmark minimum academic standards for Biology Education to form the items of the instruments. The instruments tagged "Observation Checklist on Universities compliance to NUC Benchmark on Course Content for Biology Education and Observation Checklist on Universities compliance to NUC Benchmark on Human Resources were developed to collect information that were used to answer the two research questions.

The instruments, the purpose of the study and research questions were given to three experts for face validation. One of the validators came from science education Department and 2 from department of Educational Foundation (Measurement and Evaluation and Curriculum studies respectively) in Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reason for the engagement of experts was for them to check for clarity of instructions, proper wording of questionnaire items, expressions, and appropriateness of language and adequacy of items in measuring what they ought to measure. The comments and suggestions of these 3 experts were incorporated into the final copy of the instrument which was administered to the respondents.

After the modification of the items in line with the corrections and comments of the experts, the instruments were subjected to Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test which yielded a reliability estimate of 0.94 considered strong enough for this study.

Four research assistants were engaged to administer the instruments to the respondents in the selected Universities. To do this successfully, they were briefed on the best approach to enable them respond well to the items. Also, emphasis was laid on need to be patient and respectful when explaining anything necessary to the respondents. On-the- spot method of completion and retrieval of the instruments could not be used as most respondents were very busy people who could not be tracked down at will. There was therefore the need to leave the instruments behind with the respondents till the next day to ensure high-return rate of completed instruments. This also checkmated high errors or loss of instruments. When the instruments were retrieved, they were subjected to screening on the spot to ensure

that they were correctly completed. The information gathered were now subjected to data analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected was analyzed using IBM SPSS. Mean, standard deviation and Percentages were used to answer the research questions. The following are the ratings considered for the Observation Checklist: 0.0% - 29% connoted No Compliance, 30% - 49% connoted Low Compliance, 50% - 69.9% connoted Moderate Compliance, 70% - 79.9% connoted High Compliance and 80% and above represented very high compliance.

Results and Discussion

Question One: What is the extent of public and private universities' compliance to course content coverage as stipulated by NUC benchmark for biology education in Southeast Nigeria?

Table 1: *Percentage Compliance by Universities to Course Content Coverage as Stipulated by NUC Benchmark for Biology Education.*

	Public Universities	Remark	Private Universities	Remark
Course	**% Course Content Coverage**		**% Course Content Coverage**	
GST111	74.95	HC	98.15	VHC
GST112	73.54	HC	91.67	VHC
EDU101	82.50	HC	95.83	VHC
BIO101	83.92	HC	96.67	VHC
BIO102	82.83	HC	95.00	VHC
BIO107	78.83	HC	90.48	VHC
BIO108	71.24	HC	82.14	HC
CSC101	80.75	HC	96.88	VHC
CHM101	85.63	HC	100.00	VHC
CHM102	75.54	HC	95.00	VHC
MTH101	68.06	MC	86.57	HC
MTH102	61.43	MC	87.04	HC
PHY101	78.05	HC	95.83	VHC
PHY102	73.75	HC	89.10	HC
GST212	77.55	HC	96.88	VHC
ENT211	83.37	HC	80.56	HC
EDU201	85.41	HC	83.33	HC
BIO201	82.00	HC	93.33	VHC
BIO202	77.50	HC	100.00	VHC
BIO203	78.67	HC	83.33	HC
BIO204	66.89	MC	62.50	MC
BIO205	83.33	HC	79.17	HC

BIO206	58.53	MC	100.00	VHC
BIO208	85.42	HC	78.75	HC
GNT312	77.56	HC	91.30	VHC
ENT312	79.02	HC	-	-
EDU301	76.07	HC	91.67	VHC
EDU302	83.75	HC	93.33	VHC
SED302	80.59	HC	90.00	VHC
BIO301	76.44	HC	100.00	VHC
BIO302	73.79	HC	96.15	VHC
BIO303	89.58	HC	100.00	VHC
BIO304	75.83	HC	89.29	HC
BIO306	88.89	HC	66.67	MC
BIO307	48.33	LC	66.67	MC
EDU400	65.00	MC	-	-
EDU401	50.00	MC	-	-
SED402	72.22	HC	66.67	MC
BIO402	73.33	HC	79.17	HC
BIO403	76.25	HC	75.00	HC
BIO404	86.76	HC	100.00	VHC
BIO406	86.84	HC	100.00	VHC
BIO407	78.33	HC	-	-
BIO408	87.06	HC	86.36	HC
BIO410	77.08	HC	100.00	VHC
BIO413	64.40	MC	65.48	MC
BIO414	79.01	HC	84.62	HC
Overall Mean	**76.51**	**HC**	**88.39**	**HC**

Table 1 shows the percentage course content coverage for each course offered in the Universities as well as the overall mean course content coverage. The course content coverage for public universities ranged from 48.33% to 89.58 with a mean percentage course content coverage of 76.51. On the other hand, private universities' percentage course content coverage ranged from 62.50% to 100% with a mean percentage coverage of 88.39. Although, private universities had slightly higher mean percentage content coverage compared to public universities, both universities had very high compliance to course content coverage as stipulated by NUC Benchmark for Biology Education.

Table 2: *Percentage Compliance by Public and Private Universities to Availability of Human Resources as Stipulated by NUC Benchmark for Biology Education*

S/N	Human Resource Requirement	Public (n=5)					Private (n=3)				
		Available		Not Available		Rmk	Available		Not Available		Rmk
		N	%	N	%		N	%	N	%	
1.	Graduate Assistant with a good Bachelor's Degree.	4	80	1	20	AV	3	100	0	0	AV
2.	Assistant Lecturer with B.Sc in relevant field.	3	60	2	40	AV	1	33.3	2	66.7	NAV
3.	Assistant lecturer with M.Sc in relevant field.	4	80	1	20	AV	1	33.3	2	66.7	NAV
4.	Lecturer 11 with M.Sc in relevant field.	4	80	1	20	AV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV
5.	Lecturer 11 with Doctoral Degree in relevant field.	3	60	2	40	AV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV
6.	Lecturer 1 with M.Sc. in relevant field.	3	60	2	40	AV	0	0	3	100	NAV
7.	Lecturer 1 with a good Doctoral degree with 3 years of experience	4	80	1	20	AV	3	100	0	0	AV
8.	Senior lecturer at least 3 years as a lecturer 1	5	100	0	0	AV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV
9.	Reader/Associate Professor	5	100	0	0	AV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV
10.	Professor	5	100	0	0	AV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV
11.	Non-Academic Staff One Secretar (computer literate)	5	100	0	0	AV	3	100	0	0	AV
12.	Secretary (non-computer literate)	3	60	2	40	AV	0	0	3	100	NAV
13.	Clerical officer 2 cleaners	3	60	2	40	AV	1	33.3	2	66.7	NAV
14.	2 typists	2	40	3	60	AV	0	0	3	100	NAV
15.	One laboratory attendant	4	80	1	20	AV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV
16.	One technician	5	100	0	0	AV	3	100	0	0	AV

Table 2 shows that all (100%) of the 16 categories of human resources stipulated in NUC Benchmark for Biology Education were available in public universities whereas 10 (62.5%) of the 16 of them were available in private universities. These represent very high compliance by public universities and moderate compliance by private universities to human resources stipulated in NUC benchmark for Biology Education.

Summary of the Findings

The following findings were obtained:

1) There is a very high compliance (88.39%) in private Universities to course content coverage while in public universities compliance is high (76.51%) as stipulated by NUC Benchmark for Biology Education in South East.
2) Public Universities in South East have very high compliance (100%) to NUC stipulated requirements for human resources as against Private Universities with moderate compliance (62.5%).

Recommendations

The following Recommendation were made based on the findings from the study.

1. It was recommended among other things that Federal government should make adequate budgetary provisions for Public Universities in other to make them stay focused in their academic work as poor funding of universities can induce incessant strikes which in turn could be the cause of not complying fully with course content.

2. NUC should from time to time conduct impromptu accreditation especially in private universities to know the true situation of things in order to figure out where supports are actually needed in terms of human resources and to checkmate window dressing and borrowing of human resources during the formal accreditation exercise as alleged.

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