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PERCEIVED IMPACTS OF PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION ON PHYSICAL FACILITIES FOR ACADEMIC EFFECTIVENESS IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH EAST

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ABSTRACT
The study examined the impact of programme accreditation on physical facilities for academic effectiveness in federal universities in South East. It was guided by two research questions, which sought to: determine the extent to which accreditation exercises affect school facilities; and to ascertain the extent to which accreditation exercises affect lecture quality in federal universities in South East, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised 5,201 academic staff in the five federal universities in south-east, Nigeria while the sample size was 374 academic staff selected from two federal universities (University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State; Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Imo State; NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State) using multi-stage sampling technique. Simple random sampling technique was used. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection and mean rating was used for data analysis. The study revealed, to a great extent, accreditation exercises facilitate the provision of school facilities such as library/laboratory holdings and offices/classrooms. It was also revealed that accreditation exercises aid the provision of quality lecture content by ensuring that, among other things, there are quality teaching staff, students meet admission requirements, rules for conducting examination are met, syllabus and marking schemes are adhered to in federal universities. It was recommended among other things that the Nigerian University Commission should ensure that senior academics used for accreditation are not compromised. Also, that the NUC should intensify effort in ensuring that accreditation of academic programmes is carried out regularly in order to assure improvement in quality of higher education in Nigeria

Keyword: Accreditation, Programme Accreditation, Physical Facilities, Academic Effectiveness

Introduction
Higher Education or Tertiary Education is generally referred to as education given after secondary education, usually in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics including those institutions offering correspondence courses. Its goals include: to contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training; develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society; develop the intellectual capability for individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments; etc. (FRN, 2013). To achieve these goals, the concept of quality

and standards sets in. Often, these two concepts are collectively used to measure academic effectiveness in the university system. This is why Amaechi & Obiweluozor (2021) described academic effectiveness in the university system as a function of quality and standard maintained each university.

The concepts of quality and standards are closely related and often used interchangeably. In higher education, there is considerable overlap between the two concepts. However, quality and standards are not the same. Standards are specified and usually have measurable outcome indicators, which are used for comparative purposes. According to Amaechi (2018), standards in the university system have been categorized into three areas: academic standard, standards of competence and service standards. Academic standards are concerned with measurement of ability to meet specified levels of academic attainment. They measure the ability of students to fulfill requirements of the programme of study through whatever mode of assessment is required. Standards of competence measure specified levels of ability on a range of competence related to the transferable skills of students. Service standards attempt to specify the level of service provided to students, such as turn-around times for assessing student work, maximum class sizes, frequency of personal tutorials, availability of information on complaints procedures, and the lag on introducing recommended reading into the library, and so on (Amaechi & Obiweluozor, 2021).

Quality on the other hand, quality can be identified through five major approaches, which are: exceptionality, consistency, fitness for purpose, value for money and transformation. Exceptional quality is further conceptualized in three ways. These are, distinctiveness, excellence (exceeding high standards) and passing a set of (minimum) standards. Quality as distinctiveness confers the idea of high-class status to the possessor of the product. The idea of exceeding high standards implies excellence in input and output. In higher education, it means that the best students are admitted into the institution and efforts are made to produce excellent students. Also, the institution possesses the best in terms of human and physical resources. The third idea in this approach is to make sure that the product passes a set of standards. In higher education this presumes that the institution or programme fulfils the minimum standards set by the accrediting agency. The agency determines and sets criteria for testing the quality of similar programmes (Evard, Mike &Teun, 2010).

It is important to note here that it is the desire to maintain these dual concepts of standard and quality in the university system that accreditations sought to meet. 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 (Okudola and Sofolahan, 2008). For Okebukola (2006), accreditation is a process of examining the availability and adequacy of resources, merit rating of resources and programmes in order

to enhance quality of output. This means that accreditation involves the process of ensuring that curricula, physical facilities, personnel, funds and so on meet the needs of the university to achieve its stated philosophy and objectives. Amaechi & Obiweluozor (2021) sees it as a measure of quality of academic programmes and it is aimed at strengthening academic programmes for quality assurance and quality improvement. Obadara and Alaka (2013) see accreditation as a process that aids institutions in developing and sustaining effective educational programmes and assuring the educational community, the general public and other organizations that the accredited institution has met high standard of quality and effectiveness. It is a measure of the quality of academic programmes on acceptable minimum standard provided by the accrediting agency.

Ozurumba & Ebuara (2014) observed that 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 (Agboola & Bassey, 2021).

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 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 (Anugom, 2016). 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.

Statement of the Problem

In recent times, there is an increasing public outcry about the quality of university education in Nigeria by stakeholders and the general public. The first-generation universities in Nigeria such as University of Ibadan, University of Nigeria Nsukka, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Obafemi

Awolowo University Ile-Ife and University of Lagos were established between 1948 and 1962, subsequently, the National Universities Commission was established in 1962 and made a statutory body in 1974, to ensure academic standards and quality in Nigerian universities. Before now, the products of these first-generation universities were comparable to world-class standard in quality, but today, observation has shown that some Nigerian graduates are deficient in communication skill and the ability to apply technical and professional knowledge in solving personal and work- related problems. Some of them are poor in oral and written expression in English language. They lack leadership competence and good sense of judgment. Some of them are deficient in the proficiency for time management and self-control. This shows that the quality of university education and/or graduates is deteriorating. This has been blamed on the politics and poor manner in which accreditation of academic programmes are carried out in Nigerian universities. In some universities, management does not release money, so facilities and equipment are borrowed and used for accreditation, some academic programme contents are inadequate and not relevant to the needs of the students and the labour market. On the other hand, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has been on steady face-off with the federal government due to poor funding and inadequate physical facilities in universities, yet most of the programmes in these universities have full accreditation through peer review mechanisms by these senior academics. The big question therefore is where did we get it wrong? The thrust of this seminar is to assess the impact of programme accreditationon physical facilities for academic effectiveness in federal universities in South East, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of programme accreditation on physical facilities for academic effectiveness in federal universities in South East. The specific objectives are:

1. to determine the extent to which accreditation exercises affect school facilities in federal universities in South East, Nigeria
2. to ascertain the extent to which accreditation exercises affect lecture quality in federal universities in South East, Nigeria

Research Questions

1. To what extent do accreditation exercises affect school facilities in federal universities in South East, Nigeria?
2. To what extent do accreditation exercises affect lecture quality in federal universities in South East, Nigeria?

Research Method

The design of this study is a descriptive survey design. It provides the opinion of the respondents on the impact of programme accreditation on physical facilities for academic effectiveness in federal universities in South East. However, this design is considered appropriate because it enables the

researcher to identify the characteristics of the population objectively. The research is carried out in five federal universities in the South East states of Nigeria: University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State; Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Imo State; NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State; Alex Ekwueme - Federal University Ndufu-Alike, Ebonyi State; and Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State. The population of the study comprised 5,201 academic staff in the five federal universities in south-east, Nigeria while the sample size was 374 academic staff (Heads of Departments-HODs, lecturers and librarians) selected from two public universities using multi-stage sampling technique. Simple random sampling technique was used to select two out of the five federal universities in south-east zone. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting four faculties and eight departments which offered same programmes. The simple random technique of cap and draw was used in selecting academic staff from the two universities used for the study. Data were generated with three faced and content validated questionnaire titled: "Impact of Programme Accreditation on Physical Facilities for Academic Effectiveness Questionnaire (IPAPFAE)". The questionnaire had two sections A and B. Section A is information on personal data of the respondents, while section B, contains items on the research questions. The check-list was constructed to use response options VGE – Very Great Extent, (4 points), GE – Great Extent (3 points), LE – Low Extent (2 points) and VLE – Very Low Extent (1point) for the research questions. The data were analysed in tables using mean wherein nominal value was assigned to scaling items.

Results

Table 1: Responses on the extent accreditation exercises affect school facilities in federal universities in South East, Nigeria

S/N	Items	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	N	Σfx	$\bar{X}$	Decision
1.	Accreditation exercises cause laboratories, clinics and studios for academic purpose to be adequate and well equipped	109	149	76	40	374	1075	2.87	Great Extent
2.	Adequate classrooms and lecture theatres are provided in the universities	112	153	74	35	374	1090	2.91	Great Extent
3.	Improved Library holdings in Nigerian Universities	121	150	71	32	374	1108	2.96	Great Extent
4.	the adequacy of office accommodation provided for teaching staff in the university.	129	138	70	37	374	1107	2.96	Great Extent
5.	the adequacy of research laboratories provided for teaching staff in the university.	118	159	74	35	374	1087	3.03	Great Extent
	Grand Mean							**2.95**	**Great Extent**

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Table showed that all items have mean score above the mean cut of point. this implies that they are all accepted to be impacted by the accreditation exercises to a great extent.

Table 2: Responses on the extent accreditation exercises affect lecture quality in federal universities in South East, Nigeria

S/N	Questionnaire Items	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	N	Σfx	$\bar{X}$	Decision
1.	Teaching staff adequate in quality in the university	151	168	24	31	374	1187	3.17	Great extent
2.	teaching staff adequate in quantity in the university	91	67	96	120	374	877	2.34	Little Extent
3.	students admitted into the university meet admission requirements as set by NUC	121	150	71	32	374	1108	2.96	Great Extent
4.	university enforce rules and regulations governing conduct of examinations as stipulated by NUC	109	149	76	40	374	1075	2.87	Great Extent
5.	university enforce grading system and use of external examiners as stipulated by NUC	78	89	111	96	374	897	2.39	Little Extent
6.	university ensure that syllabus is covered for all courses per semester.	129	138	70	37	374	1107	2.96	Great Extent
7.	university ensure that marking scheme exists for students‟ evaluation.	112	153	74	35	374	1090	2.91	Great Extent
	Grand Mean							**2.80**	**Great Extent**

From table 2, all items except item 7 and 10 have mean scores above the mean cut-off point 2.50. This implies that all these the ways through which accreditation affects the quality of lecture in federal universities in South East, Nigeria.

Summary of Findings:

From the above analysis, the following findings were made:

(1) That accreditation exercises aid the provision of adequate laboratories, clinics and studios for academic purpose; adequate classrooms and lecture theatres are provided in the universities; improved library holdings in Nigerian Universities; adequacy of office accommodation provided for teaching staff in the university; adequacy of research laboratories provided for teaching staff in the university.

(2) That accreditation exercises aid: the provision of quality teaching staff in the university; students admitted into the university meet admission requirements as set by NUC; university enforce rules and regulations governing conduct of examinations as stipulated by NUC; university ensure that syllabus is covered for all courses per semester; and that university ensure that

marking scheme exists for students' evaluation.

Conclusion

The findings have established that programme accreditation in federal universities have aided, to a great extent, the provision of school facilities and quality of lecture in these schools. Given these findings, it is concluded that programme accreditation by the Nigerian University Commission have been an effective tool for boosting the provision of physical facilities in these universities and in turn aiding academic effectiveness.

Recommendations

In view to the findings, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. The NUC must ensure that senior academics used for accreditation are not compromised; they should intensify effort in ensuring that accreditation of academic programmes is carried out regularly in order to assure improvement in quality of higher education in Nigeria
2. University administrators should ensure that adequate qualified teaching personnel are employed, quality infrastructural facilities, and adequate library holdings are provided in universities; this will enhance quality instructional delivery.

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