



Accreditation of Academic Programmes in Nigerian Private Universities: The Impact of the Library

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Abstract: In line with global change, the policy of privatization has become a concern of government in Nigeria, which led to the proposal of establishing Private Universities in the pursuit and enhancing of educational system. Establishment of private Universities in the country has served as a relief to the pressures on the government owned institutions. Thus, it is also essential for the appropriate authority to regulate the operation of Private Universities so as to ensure that the objectives of its establishment and services rendered are in order, as it is done for the government own institutions. The paper therefore focused on the emergence of Private Universities in Nigeria and the basis for accreditation of academic programmes offered in Private Universities. The paper therefore traced along the emergence of accreditation procedure of the Private Universities in history and also examines the need for such situations. More so, the paper identifies and discusses some key areas accessed by the Nigerian University commission (NUC) during accreditation in the development of Private Universities in Nigeria with a view to appraising them. Also, it enumerates the requirements for accreditation of academic programmes in Private Universities in Nigeria, with greater emphases on the impact of academic library in the accreditation of Private University programmes. This is because the provision and use of library materials and services affects the quality of the students' educational experience. How institutions manage and support library in the provision of adequate resources reflects the priorities of the institution, the educational goals and the performance of students and graduates. The use of information communication resources in organising and retrieving of information in the library, availability of relevant print and non –print materials in the collection of the university library for accreditations are also stated. The currency of the library holdings and the quantity/quality of each material in relation to the programme been accredited are clearly highlighted.

Keywords: Academic, Accreditation, Library, Nigerian University Commission, Private Universities

1. Introduction

It is no doubt that Private Universities have come to stay in the country as it has served as a relief to the pressures on the government owned institutions. Thus, it is also essential for the appropriate authority to regulate the operation of Private Universities so as to ensure that the objectives of its establishment and services rendered are in order, as it is done for the government own institutions.

Since it is expected that there shouldn't be discrimination between graduate of government own institution and private institution. They are expected to perform efficiently in the labour market and also contribute immensely to the

development of the nation.

2. Historical Background of Private Universities

Most countries in the world today have supported privatization as a policy to guide their educational systems, as a result of the value to be derived. Mba, Nzokurum and Joy Chimajulam (2018) [1] opined that since the public sector due to limitedness of resources allocated to education cannot meet the needs of industry and other sectors of the economy, it is vital that private sector is initiated in the programmes of skilled manpower to take advantage of

growing technologies while Verger, A., Fontdevila, C. & Zancajo, A. (2016) sees privatization as a formula to expand choice, improve quality, boost efficiency, or increase equity in the educational system. [2] In many African nations like Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, the policy of privatization has been entrenched (Uwakwe, Faloye and Adeleye, 2008) [3] while according to Bayliss (2000), the general concepts of privatization are now widespread in the industrialized, developing economies. [4]

In line with global change, the policy of privatization has become a concern of government in Nigeria, which led to the proposal of establishing Private Universities in the pursuit and enhancing of education at the pre-primary secondary schools etc in the educational system.

However, the emergence of Private Universities in the provision of university education to augment the government owned institutions in the country is not a recent development in Nigeria. The first university emerged at a time when people had lost hope and confidence in the government owned university (public) due to the following reasons:

Unacceptable demand for admission into universities as the nation's population increases. It is also well known that universities are panacea for knowledge, skills and development of the economy. Many parents wish their wards attend universities rather than polytechnics/monotechnics or college of education (Ige, 2010). [5] Universities' administrators have however continued to argue that the available infrastructural facilities are limited relative to the number of applicants hence the need to reduce intakes (Ige, 2012). [6] As a result of the inability to gain admission into the universities, many candidates are becoming frustrated and discouraged thus led many youths to enlist in social vices such as armed robbery, prostitution, swindling among others.

The 1979 constitution put higher education in the concurrent list. Some state government in that second republic took advantage of that provision to float their state universities. The states that were fore-runner in this regard were old Imo State, Bendel State, Lagos State etc. Because of the democratic government in place, and the attendant air of deregulation in the rules regarding establishment of higher institutions, a new but strange phenomenon emerged (Oladapo, 1991) as cited by Osagie (2009). [7] Some private individuals made bold steps to float private universities. The first and most famous of this new effort was the Imo Technical University founded by Dr. Nnanna Okaegbu. He's attempt was challenged by Government in the Supreme Court but the ruling was in favour of private citizens and non-governmental organizations to establish universities with the condition that the national Assembly should legislate on the quality of the programmes offered in such institutions (Oladapo, 1991) as cited by Osagie (2009). [7]

Within six months of the ruling of the Supreme Court, twenty-six Private Universities were established. The Federal Military Government, in June, 1984 abolished all Private Universities by Decree No. 19 of 1984. This restored some sanity to the system, even though one cannot state categorically that all the Private Universities were not viable

or that the private ownership of Universities was an unviable initiative in which the matter was approached by the interested parties was not only irrational but ridiculous.

Several events took place before Professor Babs Fafunwa, became the minister of education under the military government of General Ibrahim Babangida. Through his effort to tackle the issue of private universities, stringent conditions were laid down for the establishment of private universities and was approved by the federal government in 1992 (Fafunwa, 2010). [8] On 23rd July, 1999, the inaugural meeting of proprietors of Private institutions was hosted by Chief Dr. Sir G. O. Igbinedion, Proprietor, Igbinedion University Okada. Chief Igbinedion recounted all the stages of negotiations he passed through, before the Federal Government approved the Private Universities.

On November 7, 2003 the Chancellor of Madonna University very Rev. Prof. E. M. P. Edeh, addressed the Vice-Chancellors and Registrars of Private Universities in Nigeria. He stated:

- 1) Private Universities need to establish great excellence in Education as their counterparts in Europe and America
- 2) Private Universities should be referred to as Non-Governmental Universities

Ever since, many new Private Universities have emerged and are progressing in their operation creating job opportunities, alleviating the problem of limitations placed on the number of students to be admitted for studies in the limited government institutions.

3. Justification for Accreditation and the Body Responsible For the Exercise

Yearly the numbers of private owned universities are increasing, hence the need for a body to regulate its establishment and operation to control illegal operators. Dalrymple (2001) Submitted that the technological and social changes now underway emphasized the need for innovative and reliable methods for establishing quality in education and for protecting the public against fraudulent and worthless educational programs. [9]

Oladosu (2010) stated that if these institutions are allowed to operate without an accrediting agency, the standard of education would be compromised, and the ultimate goal of producing a high-level of manpower would remain a mirage. Hence, the need for a body to regulate the establishment of Private Universities and prevent illegal operators. [10]

Decree No 16 of 1985 empowers National Universities Commission (NUC) to lay down minimum standard for all universities (Private Universities inclusive).

4. Brief History of National University Commission

The National Universities Commission was first established in 1962 as an advisory agency within the

government's cabinet office but was then upgraded in 1974 to a full statutory body under the stewardship of Prof. Jibril Aminu.

Function of the National Universities Commission includes; granting approval for all academic programmes run in Nigerian universities, granting approval for the establishment of all higher educational institutions offering degree programmes in Nigerian universities, ensure quality assurance of all academic programmes offered in Nigerian universities and to be a channel for all external support to the Nigerian universities. To be able to perform the stated functions; Decree No 16 of 1985 as amended by National Universities Commission (Amendment) (Act) No. 49 of 1988 empowers the Commission to lay down minimum standards for all degrees, awards and use the same standards to accredit them. The Commission, in collaboration with the universities, developed the first set of Minimum Academic Standards for the undergraduate degree programmes under the thirteen disciplines taught in all Nigerian Universities. The documents were approved by the Federal Government in 1989 and became major reference instrument for the establishment and accreditation of all undergraduate academic programmes for all universities (whether Federal, state or Private). Okojie acting on the strength of the act, further reviewed the minimum academic standard in 2004, this gave birth to the development of benchmarks minimum academic standards with the aim of achieving some general and specific objectives. The NUC is currently headed by Professor Shehu Galadanchi with Prof. Abubakar Rasheed as its Executive Secretary. [11] (NUC, 2020).

5. Objectives of Accreditation

The objectives of accreditation as stated by the NUC in the manual of accreditation procedures for academic programmes in Nigeria universities (2012) are:

- a. Ensure that at least the provisions of the Minimum Academic Standard document are attained, maintained and enhanced.
- b. Assure employers and others members of the community that Nigerian graduates of all academic programmes have attained an acceptable level of competency in their areas of specialisation and
- c. Certify to the international community that the programmes offered in Nigerian Universities are of high standard and their graduates are adequate for employment and for further studies.

6. Accreditation Status and Its Implication

The following are the status of accreditation being given to universities at the end of accreditation exercise by NUC:

- i.) Full accreditation status: this is achieved by a programme when it has a total overall score of 70% and above. Likewise, it must have score 70% in each of the

core areas i.e. staffing, academic content, physical facilities and library. Thus, this programme will be re-visited after 5 years

- ii.) Interim Accreditation status: A programme with less than 70% score will be given interim accreditation for not more than two academic sessions in which a re-accreditation exercise is re-conducted.
- iii.) Denied accreditation status: A university programme with less than 60% scores is denied accreditation. This implies that the university must not admit student to such programmes until a re-accreditation exercise is re-conducted. Such university will request for Re-visitation for the programme/department as soon the institution have made available the needed requirement for the programme in question (Okolo, 2018) and (Oladosu, 2010). [12, 10]

7. Areas Assessed for a Degree Programme During Accreditation

Below are areas usually accessed during accreditation exercise according to the NUC manual of accreditation procedures of 2012 (NUC, 2012). [13]

- a. Philosophy and objectives of the programme to be accredited. There shall be evidence that the programme to be accredited has clearly defined philosophy and objectives
- b. Curriculum: the curriculum of the programme to be accredited should be adequate to prepare practitioners at an appropriate level in the particular field. This should include adequate theoretical knowledge and skills
- c. Teaching staff quantity and quality: The availability of competence teaching staff will determines adequacy of the programme.
- d. Students Admission, Retention and Graduation: it is expected that the university policies on admission, retention withdrawals, expulsion and graduation of students are well spelt out.
- e. Standard of Degree Examination: this include university rules and regulations governing degree examinations and awards, past question papers, projects, report of students' supervised industrial experience schemes etc will also be assessed.
- f. Financial support; there is need for adequate and consent financial backing to the university to predict continuity, quality in education and programme stability.
- g. Physical facilities: Availability of adequate physical facilities for the entire programme to be accredited will be assessed.
- h. Administration of departments: The emphasis here is on good administration policy and leadership skills enhancing student's performance.
- i. Employers' rating of graduates accreditation panel will want to ascertain the level of employers satisfaction of

the graduate, as well as assessing employers' rating of the students course work /projects.

- j. Professional services offered by the library efforts made to ensure maximum use of the library are enumerated alongside teaching and orientation given to new students to be able to use the library.
- k. Budgetary Allocation and Expenditure: Details of actual expenditure on library services for the last three years is expected to be stated. Likewise, details of library holding i.e library books and periodicals must be attached.

8. Impact of University Library in the Accreditation Exercise

Adetunla, G. & Familusi, E. (2017) submitted that no university can lay claim to academic excellence without a good library to back up its teaching, research and public service mandates. [14] Corroborating this view, Olorunsola (2009) further emphasise on the university library stating that, the quality and effectiveness of academic programmes of a university are measured in part by the quality of the library. [15] Okolo (2018) likened the library to the heart of the university which circulates blood to every part of the living animals; likewise the library as a store house of information is responsible for the circulation of information and its resources to all the departments that exist in that organization for which it is established. [12]

Omelizo & Ogo (2018) highlighted that the role of the library towards sustaining quality academic excellence in Nigeria makes it a port of call for every accrediting body to a university. [16] They further submitted that the library is a platform where people meet to research and share ideas on critical issues affecting the society, thereby becoming a knowledge space that is both larger and more general than those shared by any single discipline or affinity group.

Librarians are affected by accreditation because the provision and use of library materials and services affects the quality of the students' educational experience. How institutions manage and support library in the provision of adequate resources reflects the priorities of the institution, the educational goals and the performance of students and graduates. Indeed the impact of the University library in the accreditation exercise cannot be over emphasised.

1. *The Central Library:* The central library of the university is the foremost physical facilities stated in the NUC manual of assessment which is expected to make the following information available to the accreditation panel:

- i.) Name of highest officer in-charge of the main library, designation and salary grade level
- ii.) Useable floor area in m²
- iii.) Student population served
- iv.) Sitting capacity
- v.) Library opening and closing hours
- vi.) Lending policy for academic staff and students

2. *List of all books, journals and related facilities for:*

- a. General reading
- b. Degree Programme
- c. General Education
- d. Programme to be accredited

3. *Acquisition policy:* this include organisation chart to ensure effective administration of the library

Considering the view of different scholars stated above, it is quite obvious that the impact/ importance of well-structured and equipped library in the accreditation exercise cannot be over emphasised. Without the library a university will not be able to achieve teaching, learning and research functions effectively.

The University Librarian works in conjunction with the Dean of Faculty/HOD of the programme to be accredited to make available relevant books, periodicals, journals (both local and foreign authors) in the library before any accreditation exercise.

List of the available materials (books, journal) must be made available to the accreditation panel. It must be noted that in view of the fact that we are in an information age, the library is also expected to have functioning electronic section e-library where staff and student can access information from the whole world. The library must have subscribed to different /relevant electronic database such as JSTOR, AGORA, HINARI, OARE, EBSCOHOST etc. Through the library; Users must be able to access and retrieve journal articles of different disciplines relevant to their information need in acquisition of knowledge.

The sitting capacity of the library must be in correlation with the enrolment ratio of the university as this can be a clause in the scoring of the library. Therefore necessary expansion must be considered and put in place before accreditation. Functioning convenience such as toilet etc must be made available in the library.

In all, the library must score 70% before the programme can be accredited.

9. Implication of Accreditation to Private University Library

1. Needed attention is gained by the library from the patron of the university in terms of fund/ favourable budgetary allocation. Since there are spelt out conditions to be met, the proprietors of the university would want to do everything possible to meet the stated requirement. The library must therefore maximize this opportunity.
2. Technological advancement of the library services. The use of information communication technology in library service is now paramount thus, accreditation period gives Private universities library opportunity to acquire needed equipment for this and make it functional.
3. It also leads to recruitment of needed man power i.e professional librarian and adequate training of the library staff.
4. Lead to increase in the library holdings in terms of

- textbooks, journals (local and international) journals etc.
5. It gives room for expansion in the scope of collection, space etc.
 6. It is a time of evaluation of library services, holdings to ensure its meeting users need

Accreditation period gives Private University opportunity to acquire needed gadget for this make it functional the system to be more effective and efficient n adequate service delivery.

10. Recommendation and Conclusion

The academic library plays a vital role in the accreditation exercise; it is therefore recommended that the following areas are covered for the dream, goal and vision of the parent institution to be achieved, private university in particular. Adequate and well-structured financial plans for the library to make every required material available in high quality beforehand, especially: books, journals, e-resources with a good internet connection. Conducive reading environment must be put in place for users. Alongside well trained staff who are professional in library and information management.

Conclusively, since it is quite obvious that the library plays a significant role in the accreditation of academic programmes in private universities, thus the need for adequate funding of the academic library to put in place human resources of high quality who will make available information materials (print and non-print) for easy access of the university community for a successful accreditation exercise.

The library must be well stocked with relevant resources for each programmed been accredited as success of accreditation of a programme means more candidate for the private University. Therefore, Private University Management should not neglect professional advised and demand made by the library to ensure a successful accreditation exercise.

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