ACCREDITATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN CHUKWUEMEKA ODUMEGWU OJUKWU UNIVERSITY ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study evaluated the "Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Anambra State". Two research questions and hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted. The population of the study is 78 academic and non-academic staff in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra state. Data, collected through questionnaire, were analyzed using descriptive statistics, table frequencies and percentages, and item by item mean in line with the research questions. Formulated hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The findings revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between periodic evaluation of academic programmes by NUC and standard of education in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University. The study also found a significant positive relationship between periodic site visits by NUC and quality of physical infrastructures in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University. The study recommended among others those their vice chancellors should ensure that universities and programmes are accredited to make for quality assurance.*

KEYWORDS: Accreditation, Quality Assurance, National Universities Commission, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Quality assurance is a way of measuring, improving, and maintaining the quality of any institution of higher learning being it university, polytechnic or collages of education on their activity within their system for their core value. It may be academic performance or their infrastructure and their curriculum. Quality assurance is a means of ensuring that the best practices are encouraged in a university system. Quality as a concept has been defined differently by different people (Obiekezie, Ejemot-Nwadiaro, Timothy & Essien, 2016). In Nigerian Universities the noticeable trend is a decline in the quality of teaching that was witnessed as from the early 90s unlike the impressive rise beginning from 1948 to the close of the oil boom year around 1985. University teaching was elitist between 1948 and 1973. Great scholars and teachers from top overseas institutions were part of the teaching pool in the Nigeria Universities. Between that of 1948 and 1973 the welfare scheme for teachers was very attractive and also facilities such as books, well equipped Laboratories were available to support instructional process of teachings. All these combined to enhance sound and quality assurance teaching.

Things however, changed as from 1973 and worsen by the economic recession witnessed seven years later when it became difficult to maintain the existing teaching facilities much

less talk of purchasing and installing new ones. These problems and challenges tend to reduce the quality of educational system and therefore, require a check that would ensure all the standards are met. One of the major factors implicated as one of the contributors to the said fallen standard is the quality of staff (academic and non-academic) in the university. Another important factor is the learning environment which is often arid of necessary infrastructure needed for effective learning. The complication arising from the problem is that even when the quality of the staff and infrastructure is ensured, quality education is not achieved without a good curriculum that reflect the philosophy of learning that discipline. To ensure standards at least to a minimum is met by the Universities therefore, the Federal Government of Nigeria inaugurated the National University Commission (NUC) to accredit Universities programmes (Obadara, Olabanji & Alaka, 2013). Accreditation is a process of validation in which colleges, universities and other institutions of higher learning are evaluated (Akpan, 2011). The standards for accreditation are set by a peer review board whose members include faculty from various accredited colleges and universities. It is a type of quality assurance process under which services and operations of educational institutions or programmes are evaluated by an external body to determine if applicable standards are met. If standards are met, accredited status is granted by the appropriate agency.

Accreditation according to NUC (2012) is a system of evaluating academic programmes in Nigerian universities as having met the provision of minimum academic standards document. In Nigerian, NUC is empowered to conduct the accreditation of Nigerian Universities. The *NUC* was established in 1962 as an advisory agency in the Cabinet Office as government commission promoting quality higher education in Nigeria. Lay down minimum standard for all universities in the federation and to accredit their degrees and other academic awards after obtaining prior approval therefore through the minister from the president, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed forces; provided that the accreditation of degrees and other academic awards shall be in accordance with such guidelines as may be laid down and approved by the commission from time to time (p. 4)" Manual for accreditation procedures for academic programmes in Nigerian Universities,(1) Self-Study form (NUC/SSF),(2) Programme Evaluation Form (NUC/PEF), (3) Accreditation Panel Report Form (NUC/APRF), and (4) Accreditation Re-visitation Form (NUC/ARVF). The status of accreditation of an academic programme could be full, interim or denied. Full accreditation is granted for five years with a mid-tem appraisal after three years, to any degree or academic programme that satisfied the provision of the Benchmarks Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS). Interim accreditation is granted to any academic programme that has minor deficiencies that must be rectified within a stipulated period of not more than two years. Denied accreditation applies to any degree or academic programme which has failed to satisfy the approved BMAS.

The objective of accreditation as stated by the commission include among others to assure employers and other members of the community that Nigerian graduates of all academic programmes have attained an accepted level of competency in their areas of specializations; and to certify to the international community that the programme offered in Nigerian universities are of high standards and their graduates are adequate for employment and further studies nationally and internationally. The criteria for accrediting a degree program according to the NUC include among others: philosophy and objectives of the programme to be accredited, the curriculum, the teaching staff, quantity and quality, students admission, retention and graduation, standard of degree examination, financial support, physical facilities, and administration of the department and employers' rating of graduates. This study

was particularly interested in the staff quality and quantity, physical facilities and curriculum and how accreditations in these areas have influenced quality assurance in them. Quality assurance is a powerful approach to ensure educational improvement and to achieve set educational goals effectively (Moreetsi, 2010) Quality Assurance is a process of monitoring, assessing, evaluating and reporting objectively based on agreed quality standards, all aspects of school life to ensure that acceptable standards are attained, maintained and improved upon continually (Zayat, 2007). In Nigeria, through the NUC accreditation exercise, quality control is assured. However, research is not replete as to how the accreditation exercises influence quality assurance in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Anambra State Nigeria. The researcher was therefore, poised to investigate the influence of accreditation of Universities and quality assurance in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University on her staff, physical facilities.

Statement of the Problem

Quality education has become one of the central issues accorded priority in recent educational reforms going on worldwide, and quality assurance has become one of the mechanisms used in achieving it. However, understanding of quality and the possible ways and means of assuring quality educational programmes varies. The Nigerian University educational system is bedeviled by poor standard contributed by lack of staff both in quality and quantity, physical facilities and inapt curriculum. The only way to assure quality is to monitor and evaluate quality through accreditation of programmes that meet minimum educational standard and non-accreditation of programmes that do not meet the requisite standard. The exercise of accreditation has continued to be carried out by the NUC empowered by the government of Nigeria to ensure quality. However, there is lack of understanding in terms of how the accreditation exercises have influenced growth in quality of educational programmes in Nigerian universities, especially the state-owned universities such as Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State. This study therefore, sought to investigate the influence of NUC accreditation on quality assurance in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to evaluate the relationship between accreditation of university and quality assurance in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State.

1. Periodic evaluation of academic programmes by NUC and quality of education in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University.

2. Periodic evaluation of academic programmes by NUC and quality of physical infrastructures in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. Is there a significant positive relationship between periodic evaluation of academic programmes by NUC and standard of education in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University?

2. Is there s significant positive relationship between Periodic evaluation of academic programmes and quality of physical infrastructures in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University?

Hypotheses: The study is guided by the following hypotheses, which are in null forms:

1. There is no significant positive relationship between periodic evaluation of academic programmes by NUC and standard of education in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University.

2. There is no significant positive relationship between periodic evaluation of academic programmes and quality of physical infrastructures in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The theoretical framework provides supportive theories on which the study is anchored. The theory reviewed is the Deming's theory of Total Quality Management. Deming's Theory of Total Quality Management Deming proposed the theory of total quality management in 1986. Deming's theory of total quality management rests upon fourteen points of management which was identified as the system of profound knowledge, and the Shewart Cycle (Plan-Do-Check-Act). Deming is known for his ratio states that quality is equal to the result of work efforts over the total costs. If a company is to focus on costs, the problem is that costs rise while quality deteriorates. Deming's system of profound knowledge consists of the following four points: -System Appreciation understanding of the way that the company's processes and systems work. Variation Knowledge - an understanding of the variation occurring and the causes of the variation. Knowledge Theory - the understanding of what can be known. Psychology Knowledge - the understanding of human nature. By being aware of the different types of knowledge associated with an organization, then quality can be broached as a topic. Quality involves tweaking processes using knowledge. The fourteen points of Deming's theory of total management are as follows:

- Create Constancy of purpose
- Adopt the new philosophy
- Create Stop dependencies on mass inspections`
- Do not award operation based upon the price
- Aim for continuous production and service improvement
- Bring in cutting-edge on the job training
- Implement cutting-edge methods for leadership
- Abolish fear from the organizations
- Deconstruct departmental barriers
- Get rid of quantity-based work goals
- Get rid of quotas and standards
- Support pride of craftsmanship
- Ensure everyone is trained and educated
- Make sure the top management structure supports the previous thirteen points.

Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) is a cycle created for continuous improvement. In the planning phase, objectives and actions are outlined; then, you do your actions and implement the process improvements. Next, you check to ensure quality against the original. Finally acting requires that you determine where changes need to occur for continued improvement before returning to the plan phase. Total Quality Management systems use a variety of tools and theories to empower employees, build a team atmosphere and focus on the voice of the customer to deliver quality products on time to customers.

The implication of Deming's theory is that University using a TQM system engages in incremental improvements continuously to affect the quality of the educational processes and products. A continuous improvement approach requires that employees strive for zero defects and efficiency in all processes resulting in quality staff. The theory also purport that continuous-improvement activities should seek areas requiring improvement in a proactive manner.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Jonathan, Shalom, Tayo, Elizabeth and Godwyns (2015) conducted a study on quality assurance practices in African Universities. The core research questions addressed are: What is the quality assurance models operational in the Nigerian private university studied? To what extent do the models meet international standard? How are the Quality Assurance models implemented? What are the challenges experienced in the course of implementing the Quality Assurance models? What is the degree of overall success in attaining and maintaining quality? Consequently, questionnaires, interview guideline and observation grids were among the instruments used for data collection. The content validity was established by experts. Data was analyzed with simple descriptive statistics and qualitative techniques. Some of the Quality Assurances practices/models adopted in the private Nigerian University were: National University Commission [NUC] Accreditation visits; Proprietor's impromptu visits; Faculty Support Programme; Web metric Ranking Model, and Thomas Reuter University Ranking Model. Findings reveal that though Quality Management practice in the Nigerian private university studied was of world-class standard, there is still room for improvement.

Szymenderski, Yagudina and Burenkova (2015) examined the impact of an assurance system on the quality of teaching and learning—using the example of a university in Russia and one of the Universities in Germany. The purpose of the study was to accomplish the following tasks:

- Describing the quality assurance systems in both universities as part of national quality assurance systems in higher education institutions;

- Analyzing the impact of external and internal systems of quality assurance on the quality of teaching and learning in the perception of university lecturers and students;

- Analyzing the impact on the quality of teaching and learning exercised by a certain type of quality evaluation—evaluation of teaching quality by students.

- Elaborating upon recommendations aimed at improving the systems of quality assurance for universities. The results have shown that the aforementioned functions are not fulfilled by both universities and a special organizational culture is not the only condition that must be met for effective evaluation efforts. In order to fulfil motivational, informational and administrative functions, it is important as well that the quality assurance system is transparent and that all participants see that the surveyed data and results lead to measures for quality development.

The study recommended that impromptu visits by Accreditation Teams or panels should always be done to move university administration into ensuring quality assurance of academic programmes. Moreetsi (2010) conducted a study on enhancing quality of tertiary education through programme accreditation: A case of Botswana. This study presents narrated facts about the complex nature of accrediting tertiary education programs in Botswana. The study is a content analysis procedure were employed to characterise the accreditation process experienced by local tertiary institutions. The accreditation process experienced hiccups that include; long-established institution having their own quality assurance procedures; programmes being purchased from external institutions; elusive on-line and distance education programmes offered by cross-border institutions. It was recommended that the government of Botswana must strengthen the Tertiary Education Council by giving it capacity to grow beyond its current status hence assume full control of tertiary education in the Country.

Accreditation is a necessary requirement for the quality assurance of any tertiary institution. The accreditation of tertiary institutions is conducted by the National University Commission in Nigeria. Universities are granted full, interim or no accreditation depending whether the University met the minimum standard required of academic institutions.

METHODOLOGY

Participants: The Population of the study is 78 academic and non-academic staff of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra state. The population comprised 10 Deans of Faculties, 16 Heads of Department and 9 Directors of programmes and 43 non-academic staff in Personnel, University Academic Committee, Physical and planning units. The sample size for the study is 50 staff of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra state. Thus, the sample is over 64% of the population. The sampling was purposive. The choice of the staff is because they had bearings with academic activities related to curriculum development of University courses, Infrastructural development of University, and recruitment of staff.

Instrument: The study employed two main sources of data collection for this study; primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data were collected through structured responded to by Heads of Departments (HODs), All Directors of Academic Programmes and Deans of Faculties, Head of Personnel Services Unit University Academic Committee members were not left out. The major instrument used for the collection of data is a structured questionnaire. The researcher carries out the task, administered the questionnaire to the respondents. The instrument for the study was face and content validated by three professors in Management Science in Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University. Their suggestions were affected in

the Study. The generated scores were subjected to Cronbach's Alpha. The computation of the reliability yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.77. A commonly-accepted rule of thumb is that an alpha of 0.7 indicates acceptable reliability and 0.8 or higher indicates good reliability. Very high reliability (0.95 or higher) is not necessarily desirable, as this indicates that the items may be entirely redundant (Zaiontz, 2014).

Area of the study: The area of the study is Anambra state. Anambra is a state in southeastern Nigeria. Her name was inspired by one of her Northern and Omambala clans Anam but merged with branch. The indigenous ethnic groups in Anambra state are the Igbo (98% of population) and a small population of Igala (2% of the population), who live mainly in the north-western part of the state. The people of Anambra state are good business men and Civil servants. The state is a host to a number of reputable tertiary institutions and is also a hub of commercial activities.

Design/Statistics: The design adopted for this study is descriptive survey. Descriptive research is used to describe characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied. Survey on the other hand described the characteristic of a population using a portion of the population as representative of the entire population. Descriptive survey therefore describes the characteristic of a population using a sample of the population to describe the entire population (Nworgu, & Ellah, 2015). The design was adopted for the study since one University was used to study the influence of accreditation on quality assurance of COOU in Anambra state. Descriptive statistics including item by item means and standard deviation were used to present data and address research questions. Item means above the cut-off mean of 2.5 indicated acceptability while those below 2.5 were not accepted. The formulated hypotheses were tested using Pearson Correlation Analysis. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) assesses the degree that variables are linearly related in a sample. The significance test for r evaluates whether there is a linear relationship between the two variables in the population.

DATA ANALYSES AND RESULT

The data presented in form of tables provided answers to the research questions. The interpretations of the results are provided immediately below the table.

Table 1: Demographic data of respondents

S/N	Staff	N	%
2	Heads of Department	9	18
3	Directors of programmes	6	12
4	Personnel workers	10	20
5	Academic committee members	14	28
	Members of Physical and planning units	7	14

Table 1 shows that 8% of the respondents are Deans, 18% are Heads of Department, 12% are Directors of programmes, 20% are personnel workers, 28% are members of the academic committee, 14% are members of physical and planning units. Core Issues of Investigation in NUC Accreditation and Quality Assurance.

Table 2: Influence of NUC Accreditation Visits in the Universities.

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Seasoned academics are recruited to undertake accreditation duties	2.06	0.17	Not accepted
2	Visits by NUC personnel are received with serious by host institutions	2.66	0.91	Accepted
3	Academic records of students are scrutinized.	2.17	1.04	Not accepted
4	Quality of academic staff are ascertained and emphasized during accreditation visits	2.88	0.78	Accepted
5	Curriculum and academic programmes are scrutinized for standards and quality purposes.	2.67	1.22	Accepted
6	NUC accreditation personnel ensure that administrative personnel in the university are appropriate and sufficient	1.78	0.83	Not accepted
7	Staff remuneration and promotions are verified and emphasized.	3.01	0.46	Accepted
	Grand mean	**2.46**	**0.77**	**High Extent**

Table 2 shows the influence of accreditation on quality staff capacity of tertiary institutions. From the table 1, items 2, 4, 5, and 7 have means above the cut off mean. Thus, the items were accepted as the influence of accreditation on staff capacity. In table 1 therefore, during accreditation seasoned academics are recruited to undertake accreditation duties, visits by NUC personnel are received with serious by host institutions, curriculum and academic programmes are scrutinized for standards and quality purposes, and Staff remuneration and promotions are verified and emphasized.

Table 3: Extent of the Influence Accreditation by NUC on Quality of Curriculum of Academic Programmes in the University.

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Curriculum is dynamic and evolve regularly to meet students' needs	1.52	2.01	Accepted
2	Curriculum development is guided by NUC directives	2.01	1.92	Accepted
3	Quality of programmes is paramount in all curriculum planning.	1.31	2.11	Accepted
4	Departments are wary of the NUC curriculum requirements in their programmes.	1.94	1.09	Accepted
5	Examinations, quizzes and assignments Curriculum is flexible	2.12	0.97	Accepted
6	Academic staff is made to pay more attention to research and publishing.	2.46	1.39	Not accepted
	Quality staff is recruited to boost and ensure quality programmes	2.61	1.11	Accepted
	Grand mean	**1.92**	**1.52**	**Moderate Extent**

Table 2 shows that all the items are below the cut-off mean except for item 7. Thus, accreditation by NUC ensures the curriculum is responsible for personality development of the individuals. The accreditation exercises however influence the quality of the curriculum of academic programmes to a moderate extent.

Table 4: Extent of the Influence of Accreditation on the Quality of Physical Facilities of the University

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Repair and provision of more classroom blocks	2.98	0.52	Accepted
2	Equipment of laboratories	2.83	0.66	Accepted
3	Provision of workshops with necessary instruments	2.51	0.61	Accepted
4	Provision of staff offices with furniture's and computers	3.63	0.98	Accepted
5	Provision and equipment of libraries with computers	3.66	0.51	Accepted
6	Provision of sporting and game facilities	1.52	1.82	Not accepted
7	Provision of staff and student's recreation centres	2.66	0.62	Accepted
8	Repair and provision of roads, electricity and water supply	2.72	0.93	Accepted
	Grand Mean	**2.81**	**0.83**	**High Extent**

Table 4 shows the influence of accreditation on the quality physical facilities in tertiary institutions. From the table 2, all the items except item 6 have mean that are above the cut off mean. Thus, the items were accepted as the influence of accreditation on quality of physical facilities in tertiary institution. In table therefore, the accreditation results in the provision and repair of more classroom blocks, laboratory equipment, workshop instrument, furnishing of staff offices, provision of staff and recreation centers and repair as well as provision of roads, electricity and water supply. The grand mean however shows that accreditation influence the developmental quality of physical facilities in tertiary institutions to a high extent.

HYPOHESES

Hypothesis One

H_0: There is no significant positive relationship between periodic evaluation of academic programmes by NUC and standard of education in COOU.

H_1: There is significant positive relationship between periodic evaluation of academic programmes by NUC and standard of education in COOU.

Table 5: Correlation Analysis for Testing Hypothesis One.

		NUC Periodic Evaluation	Education Standard in COOU
NUC periodic evaluation	Pearson Correlation	1	0.302**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	50	50
Education standard in COOU	Pearson Correlation	0.302**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	50	50

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation coefficient 0.30 as given in table 4 above portrays a weak relationship between job knowledge and employee engagement. However, the coefficient is positive and significant at 0.01 levels. Based on this, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate is accepted. We, therefore conclude that there is significant positive relationship between periodic evaluation of academic programmes by NUC and standard of education in COOU.

Hypothesis Two

H_0: There is no significant positive relationship between periodic evaluation of academic programmes by NUC and quality of physical infrastructures in COOU.

H_1: There is significant positive relationship between periodic evaluation of academic programmes by NUC and quality of physical infrastructures in COOU.

Table 6: Correlation Analysis for Testing Hypothesis Two

		NUC Periodic Evaluation	Quality of Infrastructures
NUC periodic evaluation	Pearson Correlation	1	0.456**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	50	50
Quality of infrastructures	Pearson Correlation	0.456**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	50	50

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation analysis was equally used to test this hypothesis. It was found from table 5 above that the relationship, weak and positive, was significant at 0.01 level. Based on this, the null hypothesis two is rejected and the alternative is accepted. We conclude here that there is significant positive relationship between periodic evaluation of academic programmes by NUC and quality of physical infrastructures in COOU.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. There a significant positive but weak relationship between periodic evaluation of academic programmes by NUC and standard of education in COOU.

2. There a significant positive but weak relationship between periodic evaluation of academic programmes by NUC and quality of physical infrastructures in COOU.

CONCLUSION

Sequel to the above findings, the study concluded that accreditation by NUC assure quality of staff capacity to a high extent, developmental quality of physical facilities to a high extent and quality of curriculum to a moderate extent. In general, the study shows that accreditation of universities bears substantial influence on the quality assurance control of the University. Therefore, the government should ensure that regular accreditation should be conducted by NUC to ensure quality assurance in Nigerian Universities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

In the light of the findings, the study recommends the following:

1. Policy should be put in place to regularly accredit academic programmes in University System to ensure quality. Indeed, vice chancellors of universities, including COOU should endeavor to meet the accreditation standards of the NUC.

2. The government, especially in state owned Universities such as COOU should enhance efforts at providing for establishment of physical infrastructure such as class rooms, library, staff offices among others to promote the level of academic excellence and scholarship in the various universities.

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