

**ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS' PERCEPTION ON ACCREDITATION PRACTICE IN SELECTED
NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES**

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Abstract

Every university is set up for teaching and learning, research, and community service or development. This triad mission forms the basis to determine the quality and standard of university education. As a measure of the quality of university education delivered or received, accreditation exercise is carried out regularly. In the process, the quality of library services provided is a huge determinant of the overall quality of university education, and should this be below expectation, a university stands the risk of being denied full accreditation with its implications. Against this backdrop, this paper investigated academic librarians' perception on accreditation practice in selected nigerian university libraries. Survey research design was used for the study. The population comprised of 64 academic librarian in the study area. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 64 academics in four university libraries. Total enumeration or census method was adopted for this study. This is because the researcher considered the population as not too large to manage and that the use of the total enumeration can eliminate any potential bias that may occur if a sample is selected and allowed for the generalization of the findings from the study. The questionnaire was validated, tested for reliability, and administered to the sample. The data collected were analyzed using

descriptive statistics. The findings revealed some challenges which were ranked in order of priority. Against the challenges, prospects were identified and discussed with appropriate recommendations made.

Key words: Academic librarians'; Perception; Accreditation Practice; University Libraries

Introduction

Universities are set up for teaching and learning, research, and community service or development. This triad mission forms the basis to determine the quality and standard of university education. As a measure of the quality of university education delivered or received, accreditation exercise is carried out regularly. In the process, the quality of library services provided is a huge determinant of the overall quality of university education, and should this be below expectation, a university stands the risk of being denied full accreditation with its implications. Against this backdrop, this paper identified the challenges and prospects of accreditation practice in Nigerian universities from the perception of the academic librarians in particular identifying the challenges of funding; the state of facilities; the quality and quantity of resources; quality of staffing; and the importance of accreditation practice in university libraries.

Accreditation is a process of self-study and external quality review used in higher education to scrutinize an institution and/or its programs for quality standards and need for quality improvement. (Corazon, 2002). The process is designed to determine whether or not an institution has met or exceeded the published standards (set by an external body such as a government, national quality assurance agency, or a professional association) for accreditation, and whether it is achieving its mission and stated objectives. The process usually includes a self-evaluation, peer review and a site visit (Adeola, 2014). Accreditation is one of the mechanisms for judging the quality of university education and has been employed by many countries including Nigeria. According to Okojie (2008), accreditation of universities, be it institutional or program is a way of examining the state of the institution concerning where it ought to be as well as a quality assurance process. Hence, accreditation as one of the processes of examining institutional procedures for assuring quality and assessing the arrangements for effective implementation of strategies for achieving stated objective has been employed by Nigeria. The National University Commission (NUC) is the regulatory body in charge of accreditation and quality assurance of university education in Nigeria. The process of programmes accreditation in Nigerian universities is to ensure uniform Maximum Academic Standards (MAS).

Objectives of Accreditation are to promote and foster good quality university education and training for the production of high quality skilled manpower and similar levels of business manpower for the society; To ensure uniformity of standards in all programs offered by universities and similar tertiary institutions in Nigeria; To certify to the Nigerian Community that the programs offered by an institution have satisfied the minimum educational requirements as lay down by the National Universities Commission (NUC); To provide counsel and assistance to the established and developing institutions and programs where necessary.

One of the major objectives of the university is to produce qualified, skilled and globally competent individuals, which is a critical factor to a nations national growth and development, since no nation can develop beyond the quality of its higher education. Recent developments such as increasing student enrolments; reduced state funding for public higher education; increasing number of private providers; internationalization cross border education have also influenced the purpose and functions of higher education (Hayward, 2006). The need for global competitiveness is another recent development that has impacted higher education in Nigeria. National Universities Commission (NUC), which is the regulatory body established to oversee the administration and delivery of higher education in Nigeria ensures the orderly development of a well-coordinated and productive university system that will guarantee quality and relevant education for national development and global competitiveness (NUC, 2009).

Joseph and Urhiewhu's (2016) paper was about the challenges and way forward on the roles of academic libraries in university accreditation in Nigeria. They looked at the major role played by academic libraries

to achieve success during accreditation. It is a prose literature design that stresses the value of academic libraries during accreditation in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. The paper found that honest among NUC terms, fund, staff, and collection are the major challenges faced by universities during accreditation exercises. Anugom (2016), examined accreditation and quality assurance: the management imperative. The study employed a correlation survey design to answer the research questions and hypotheses. The population comprised of 2,893 university administrators out of which 578 heads of department and deans of faculties were sampled. The instrument for data collection consisted of a questionnaire. Research questions were answered with Pearson 'r' while T-test statistics were used to test the hypotheses. The finding revealed that the quality of accreditation and physical facilities of universities in Nigeria have a high relationship. In addition, the study found that the programme accreditation is positively related to staffing in Nigerian universities.

Ekpoh and Edet (2017), examined the politics of National Universities Commission Programme accreditation practices. This study used a descriptive survey design to cover universities in Akwa Ibom and Cross River states, Nigeria. Three research questions guided the study. The purposive sampling technique was utilized to raise a sample of 85 current and former heads of departments. A questionnaire was designed, validated, and tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha. The index of reliability was 0.84 indicating the fitness of the used instrument. Means and standard deviations were used to analyze the data. Findings indicated that politics has been part of programme accreditation practices. Aspects of politics of accreditation identified were: politics of funding, borrowed facilities, the window dressing of facilities among others. Major challenges to programme accreditation were inadequate funding and obsolete facilities as well as too much paper documentation.

Simmons (1991), reflected the stance of regional accrediting bodies concerning the role which academic libraries play in the evaluation and accrediting processes. The paper discussed access and equity considerations as they relate to the teaching and learning process, identified and discuss problems and opportunities in providing library services to off-campus or distance learning programs, and suggested recommendations for good practice. A recurrent theme in the article is the need for access to library and information resources and the need for library instruction programs that assist students and faculty in becoming more effective information managers. Development and utilization of strategies that assist students in becoming more independent learners, regardless of where they find themselves studying and learning was recommended.

Adeola (2014), examined the process of accreditation exercise at Fountain University, indicating the role of the library in the exercise, in compliance with the National Universities Commission's definition of accreditation. This study seeks to provide an insight into the accreditation exercise at Fountain University, Osogbo, to share experiences of the library as an integral part of the institution. Emphasis was on the library holdings, quantity, and quality of materials and their currency. The accreditation exercise indicated that the institution maintains specified educational objectives that are consistent with its mission and appropriate to the degrees it offers. Based upon reasoned judgment, the process stimulates evaluation and improvement, while providing a means of continuing accountability to the public. The paper thus concluded that the statement of Fountain University accreditation status with the NUC is also an affirmation that the institution is persistently committed to the Commission's principles and philosophy of accreditation.

Achi, Aikeh, and Allahde (2019) focused on the role of academic libraries in course accreditation at Bingham University, Karu, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design that sought library staff assessment on the subject matter. The population consisted of fifty library staff. A questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Fifty copies of the questionnaire were administered to the staff but a total of forty-eight (98%) duly completed were returned and used for this study. Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. The finding revealed that academic libraries play important, direct, and positive roles in courses accreditation of academic programmes in Bingham University, Karu, Nasarawa State by providing up-to-date information resources in both printed and electronic formats, skilled personnel

and conducive infrastructure needed for learning and teaching with the guarantee of easy access to the organized information resources. Inadequate funding and erratic power supply were the major challenges to the provision of necessary accreditation requirements.

Uzoagba and Okiche (2018) examined the role of the library in accreditation in Nigerian universities with a particular focus on the University of Nigeria, Nsukka Library. It highlights the legal backing of the National Universities Commission (NUC) in regulating institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. The paper founds that University Libraries face a lot of challenges during accreditation exercises. These include lateness in getting information about upcoming accreditation exercises, the inadequacy of funds for collection development, and delays in accessing approved funds.

Nkiko and Yusuf (2007) examined the issue of accreditation, types, status, and ethical considerations in Library and Information Science, regarding other professions as a model to adopt. The concept of accreditation, objectives, and types was defined, issues and status of accreditation with disciplines in Nigeria were discussed as well as lessons from other disciplines in connection with their professional standards. It finally enjoined the Nigeria Library Association (NLA) and Librarian Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) to borrow a leaf from other developed countries to help ensure standards in the profession. Findings revealed that accreditation is a process by which institutions or programmes continuously update their educational standard through evaluation programmes and institutional accreditation. Some of the objectives of accreditation are to stimulate and integrate the efforts of institutions, to evaluate the standards of education, to strengthen the capabilities of the educational institutions for service to the nation, and to identify educational institutions that meet stated criteria for academic quality. In Nigeria, the National University Commission (NUC) is responsible for the accreditation of Library and Information Science (LIS) Schools, unlike in the United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (USA), and Australia where professional bodies are chiefly responsible for the accreditation of LIS Schools. Other professional bodies in Nigeria like Nigeria Institution of Architecture, the Council of Legal Education, the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria and Chartered Accountants of Nigeria participate actively in the accreditation of their professions.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Every university is established to meet the mandate for which it was established (research, teaching & learning and community development), it then has to take into consideration the level and quality of its collections, services, staff and facility. For this to be possible, the faculty and the library are subjected to accreditation by the governing body responsible for the quality of education in Nigerian Universities by NUC. The practice of accreditation of the academic programme and the library is to achieve a high-quality standard of education, but this is not the case with the number of the low and average quality of graduates from these universities due to some factors as poor funding, degenerate state of facilities, low and inadequate quality and the number of resources and staff which has caused a low quality of education even with the number of accreditation practices done in the libraries. To this, the study investigated the perception of accreditation practice in selected academic libraries in Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives are;

1. To determine the quality/ quantity of resources in the study area
2. To determine the importance of staffing during accreditation practice in the study area
3. To determine the state of the facility of the libraries in the study area
4. To determine the funding issues faced during an accreditation in the study area
5. To determine the challenges of accreditation practices in the study area

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the quality/ quantity of resources in the study area?
2. What is the importance of staffing during accreditation practice in the study area?
3. What is the stste of the facility of the libraries in the study area?
4. What are the funding issues faced during accreditation practice in the study area?
5. What are the challenges of accreditation practice in the study area?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey research design. The target population of the study consisted of the academic staff in three University libraries in Kwara State. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 64 academic librarians in three universities being the University of Ilorin, Kwara State University and Landmark University. Total enumeration or census method was adopted for this study. This is because the researcher considered the population as not too large to manage and that the use of the total enumeration can eliminate any potential bias that may occur if a sample is selected and allowed for the generalization of the findings from the study. A questionnaire that was validated and tested for reliability with a coefficient of 0.81 was used to gather data. Data were collected after 7 days and a total of 47 questionnaires were used for analysis which is 78.3% response rate and was then analyzed with the aid of SPSS version 21.

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Analysis of Research Questions

The data shown in Tables 1 to 5 were collated to enable the researcher provide answers to the research questions raised in the study.

Table 1: Perception on Quality and Quantity of library Resource

s/n		SA	A	SD	D
1	The accreditation exercise helps the Library to acquire current books and journals.	36 76%	8 17%	3 6%	1 2%
2	Our Library is Always equipped such that we do not need to acquire new/ current resources during Accreditation	4 8.5%	5 10.6%	28 59.6%	10 21.3%
3	More books and journals are purchased during the Accreditation Exercise	35 74.5%	5 10.6%	4 8.5%	3 6.4%

Table 1 revealed that accreditation exercise in the library helps the library acquire current books and materials with a frequency of 76% agreeing to this. Also, the libraries are not equipped such that there is no need to acquire new/current resources during accreditation with a freckly rate of 59.6% strongly disagreeing with the statement. And finally, 74.5% revealed that it is during the accreditation exercise that more books and journals are purchased in the library. A study by Uzoagba and Okiche (2018) the study found that University Libraries face a lot of challenges during accreditation exercises. These include lateness in getting information about upcoming accreditation exercises, the inadequacy of funds for collection development, and delays in accessing approved funds

Table 2. The Librarians Perception of Library Facilities and Accreditation

s/n		SA	A	SD	D
1	Accreditation exercise helps the upgrade/improve the Toilet facilities in my Library	39 83%	7 15%	0	1 2%
2	The toilet facilities in my library are better kept clean during the Accreditation exercise.	40 85% ^v	5 10.6%	2 4.4%	0
3	Not having fire control/ fire prevention facilities such as a sand bucket, fire dictator, a fire extinguisher can affect Accreditation exercise negatively.	39 83%	6 12.8	2 4.3	0
4	The sitting capacity of the Library is a factor in the Accreditation Exercise	15 32%	12 26%	20 43%	0
5	Effective lighting and neatness of the library can play a positive role or negate the success of the Accreditation Exercise	25 53.2	15 32%	4 9%	3 5.8%

On librarian's perception of library facilities and accreditation, table 2 revealed that 83% strongly agreed that to an extent the toilet facility in the libraries is improved and maintained more during accreditation. Also, 83% of the respondents agreed that not having fire control facilities affects accreditation in the university libraries. Furthermore, 85% agreed with the lighting and neatness of the library during the accreditation exercise. Onwudinjo, O.T.U. (2015) the findings showed that no law library in the zone met the Council of Legal Education standards in both local and foreign law journals. Recommendations were made which include among others, the need for adequate funding of law libraries, periodic assessment of collections, facilities, and constant review and revision of the list. Achi, Aikeh, and Allahde (2019) focused on the role of academic libraries in course accreditation at Bingham University, Karu, Nasarawa State. Nigeria. The finding revealed that academic libraries play important, direct, and positive roles in courses accreditation of academic programmes in Bingham University, Karu, Nasarawa State by providing up-to-date information resources in both printed and electronic formats, skilled personnel and conducive infrastructure needed for learning and teaching with the guarantee of easy access to the organized information resources. Inadequate funding and erratic power supply were the major challenges to the provision of necessary accreditation requirements.

Table 3: Librarian perception on staffing and knowledge about preparation for Accreditation Exercise.

s/n		SA	A	SD	D
1	Adequate staff strength contributes to the success of the Accreditation Exercise.	32 68.1%	12 26%	2 4.3%	1 1.6%
2	All categories of staff play an important role in the success of the accreditation exercise.	28 59.6%	10 21.3%	2 4.3%	514.8%
3	I have adequate knowledge of what to put in place for the Accreditation exercise.	8 17%	10 21.3	27 57.5%	2 4.2%

68.1% of the respondents opined that the library had adequate staff strength when it comes to accreditation in the library and all categories of staff play important roles towards the success of accreditation. Furthermore, 57.5% of the librarians did not have adequate knowledge of what to put in place for the accreditation exercise. Folorunso, F.J and Lucky, O.U. (2016) study identifies that honest among NUC term, fund, staff, and collection are the major challenges faced by universities during accreditation exercise. From the findings, libraries should continue to join in the struggle for improved funding of the university, but the Vice-chancellors should respect the 10% allocation to library development and allow the librarians to spend the funds on the library development instead of undue interference. There is a need for the Librarian

Registration Council of Nigeria to show its relevance by pushing for an enforceable law that will ensure that the 10% allocation for library development is guarantee and protected. The application of I.T should be fully explored and exploited in library and information services

Table 4: Academic Staff perception of library Funding

s/n		SA	A	SD	D
1	The Library receives more funding during the Accreditation exercise	29 62%	15 32%	3 6%	
2	Our library is adequately funded such that it does not need funds to purchase new/current information resources during the Accreditation Exercise	2 4.2%	4 8.5%	31 66%	10 21.3%
3	Funds are released during the accreditation exercise	28 59.3%	12 26%	4 8.5%	3 6.2%
4	Funding of the library is mostly done through Tetfund	29 62%	15 32%	0	36 6%

94% of the respondents agreed that the library received more funding during accreditation. Also, 87% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that the library was adequately funded such that it did not need funds to purchase new/current information resources during accreditation. Furthermore, funds are released during the accreditation exercise, this was from the response of 85.3% of the respondents. Finally, 94% of the respondents agreed that funding of the library is mostly done through Tetfund. Adetunla and Familusi (2017), the finding revealed that there is a paucity of funds affecting the optimum performance of academic libraries in Nigeria; the fund is not released until accreditation is approaching. Findings further revealed that accreditation exercise has been beneficial to the library in terms of increased library information resources and library facelift. The finding also revealed some of the challenges facing academic libraries in Nigeria. When there is no accreditation, the library faces poor attention and lack of funds from the university management which results in poor library services and no acquisition

Table 5: Academic Librarian’s perception of challenges of Accreditation Practice of Libraries.

s/n		SA	A	SD	D
1	Inadequate funding of Libraries is a major challenge for Accreditation exercise	44 94%	2 4%	1 2%	0
2	Funds are mostly released to the library during Accreditation	39 83%	6 13%	0	2 4%
3	There is always emergency buying of information resources during the accreditation exercise	40 85%	5 11%	2 4%	0
4	Some of the books and journals purchase for accreditation exercises by non-library professionals sometimes fall below standard.	35 75%	10 21	1 2%	1 2%
5	Funds for accreditation are most times released late.	33 70%	10 21	2 4.5%	2 4.5%
6	Faculty Staff members augment with their information resources in programmes where there are inadequate resources to build up the collection to the accepted standard.	39 83%	15 15%	2 2%	0

Table 5 revealed that the Academic libraries in Kwara state that were studied (University of Ilorin, Kwara State University and Landmark University) faced a lot of challenges which are peculiar to each other such as inadequate funding, late release of funds, emergency of buying information resources, low standard of books and journals bought by non-library professionals and so on. Also, 98% of respondents agreed that Faculty Staff usually augments with their resources during accreditation exercises. These are in line with the

study by Ekpoh and Edet (2017), which examined the politics of National Universities Commission Programme accreditation practices. Findings indicated that politics has been part of programme accreditation practices. Aspects of politics of accreditation identified were: politics of funding, borrowed facilities, the window dressing of facilities among others. Major challenges to programme accreditation were inadequate funding and obsolete facilities as well as too much paper documentation

CONCLUSION

Academic Libraries and Librarians in Nigeria Universities are ignored and only considered valuable during the accreditation exercise alone. These libraries have been very dependable in fostering the frontiers of research through making available timely, current and reliable information and cutting-edge library services that make them relevant in their quest to meeting the information needs of their users. The study examined the perception of librarians to the challenges and prospects of accreditation practice in Nigerian university libraries.

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendations were made:

1. For the quality and quantity of resources in the libraries, allocated funds that were budgeted for the libraries should be released not only during the accreditation exercise
2. Books, journals, and other information resources should be acquired to meet the information needs of users before the accreditation exercise in Universities and the Library
3. Facilities in the libraries should be properly maintained at all times and not only during the accreditation exercise
4. The staff of libraries should be trained and oriented on the practice of accreditation in other for them to have good and adequate knowledge on the gimmicks of accreditation, which makes them more prepared.
5. There should be other forms of funding to the University and libraries and not just only Tetfund.

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