

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

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### POLITICS OF NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION (NUC) PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION PRACTICES AND QUALITY UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA

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#### **Abstract**

*The objectives of accreditation of academic programmes in Nigerian universities ensure that at least the provisions of the minimum academic standards document are attained, maintained, and enhanced. More so, assure employers and other members of the community that Nigerian graduates of all academic programmes have attained an acceptable level of competency in their areas of specialization and certify to the international community that the programmes offered in Nigerian universities are of high standards and their graduates are adequate for employment and further studies. This paper, which examined the politics of the National Universities Commission (NUC) programme accreditation practices, is a survey design. The research covered universities in the south-east geo-political zone, Nigeria. The institutions used were two federal universities and two state Universities in the south-east geo-political zone of Nigeria. Findings indicated that politics has been part of programme accreditation practices. Aspects of politics of accreditation identified were: politics of funding, borrowed books to boost library stock, borrowed facilities, and window dressing of facilities, among others. It was recommended that institutional administrators should ensure that the requirements for accreditation of academic programmes be sufficiently provided in universities to enhance quality education. The government should adequately fund university education to enable institutional administrators to provide the necessary physical, human and material resources for the enhancement of quality university education in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Politics, National Universities Commission, Programme Accreditation Practices, and Quality University Education

#### **Introduction**

Higher education has a significant contribution to social, political, economic, and technological development. As such, the criticality of education is dependent on its quality. In an era of increased globalization, the quality of higher education has become the focus of every country's strategic plans to enhance competitiveness and to meet international expectations and standards. Education in Nigeria is viewed as an instrument for national development and social change. It is essential for the enhancement of quality of life. However, it is based on this that the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2019) state that Nigeria aims at providing education that is qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the needs of the society. This calls for quality education at all levels in the country to meet the aspirations of individuals and the society, especially in this era of knowledge-driven society and global competitiveness. University education in Nigeria is aimed at producing high-level manpower to man the various sectors of the Nigerian economy. To

achieve this goal, the universities need to carry out quality students' intake, quality teaching/learning processes, quality research and provide quality infrastructural facilities, services and resources. They need to provide quality and adequate students' support services to enhance quality learning outcomes. One way of stimulating authorities of universities to provide these services is through accreditation because no university wants to be denied accreditation (Amaechina 2014). **Nigeria has exactly 174 universities**, as approved by the National University Commissions (NUC), NUC as the only organization in Nigeria that has the right and power to approve universities and colleges as well as accredit courses studied in these institutions, has an official website <http://nuc.edu.ng/> that provides all the information about NUC accredited courses, institutions and part-time programs you can study. According to NUC's site (2018), there are 41 federal, 47 state and 74 private universities in Nigeria that are officially accredited. Presently, as of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2019, the commission has approved 43 Federal Universities, 52 State Universities and 79 Private Universities. NUC (2019).

The rise in the number of universities also translates to an increase in enrolment, competition for human resources, and scarce financial resources, especially among public universities. The growth has also brought new concerns for quality, especially as these universities offer diverse programmes, have varying capacities and delivery methods. Quality issues have been in the front burner of university education in Nigeria, with quality assurance being the mechanism put in place to ensure that programme offerings in universities meet the minimum standard. Accreditation of academic programmes is one of the quality assurance mechanisms initiated by the National Universities Commission (NUC) to regulate academic standard and enhance quality university education in Nigeria. But the dwindling quality of our university education has become a matter of great concern to the nation, whether the accreditation exercise achieves its purpose. Accreditation of academic programmes in Nigerian universities dated back to 1990 when the first accreditation exercise was carried out. Since then, accreditation of academic programmes has become a culture and a continuous process to ensure that the provision of the minimum academic standard by NUC is adhered to. Archibong (2013) observed that Nigerian public universities have not fared well with respect to quality education delivery due largely to rapid expansion of universities within a very short period, inadequate funding, poor management culture, infrastructural decay, examination malpractice, increased students population and so on. It is generally acknowledged that the quality of tertiary education is crucial to the socio-economic and political development of any nation. It is also central to competitiveness in an increasingly globalized world. Otto and Musinguzi (2013), defines quality assurance as the mechanism put in place to guarantee that education is fit for purpose. According to Obadara and Alaka (2013), accreditation is 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 the high standard of quality and effectiveness. It is a measure of the quality of academic programmes on the acceptable minimum standard provided by the accrediting agency.

The objectives of accreditation of higher institutions/programmes as outlined by the NUC (2012) include. 1. To ensure that at least the minimum academic standards documents are attained, maintained and enhanced. 2. To assure employers and other members of the community that Nigerian graduates of all academic programmes have attained an acceptable level of competency in their areas of specialization. 3. To certify to the international community that the programmes offered in Nigerian universities are of a high standard and their graduates are adequate for employment and further studies. To ensure quality in higher institutions, a 5-year accreditation regime has been developed to ensure quality delivery and improvements in tertiary education. Accreditation involves the evaluation of programmes to improve upon excellence, to enable higher institutions face competition and attract client, to provide a relevant profile for better result achievement, and to provide the rationale for funds granted by government and external donors. The three main objectives of accreditation as provided by the National Universities Commission, NUC (2012) accreditation manual are: to ensure that minimum academic standards are maintained in programmes; to ensure employers of labour (both local and international) that Nigerian graduates possess required competence in requisite areas of specialization, as well as, confirm to the international community that programmes offered in Nigerian universities are of acceptable standards and their graduates are adequate for further studies.

Accreditation is presumed to be an evaluation of institutions' offerings against the minimum academic standard and qualities of a certain status (Ibijola, 2014). The benefits of accreditation as pointed out by Jack (2014) are: to identify the strengths and weaknesses of universities' programmes using external-based evaluation, to ensure quality assurance. Thus, it requires information on peer reviews, students' surveys and self-evaluation that creates a sense of identity and purpose for institutions as they are involved in the evaluation process. In Nigeria, accreditation of universities' programmes is carried out by the National Universities Commission (NUC) which is the agency established by the federal government to maintain and enhance standards in universities. NUC accreditation system has been used over the years to maintain high standards in Nigerian Universities. Accreditation, according to the law establishing NUC is a process whereby academic programmes are evaluated every five years. In the accreditation process, the NUC sets the criteria, conducts the accreditation and also makes the final decision. Accreditation, according to the law establishing NUC is a process whereby academic programmes are evaluated every five years. In the accreditation process, the NUC sets the criteria, conducts the accreditation and also makes the final decision. The process of accreditation is usually done using the following criteria: Staffing (32%), academic content (23%), physical facilities (25%), library (12%), funding (5%) and employers rating (3%) (NUC, 2012). Using these criteria, the NUC teams visit the universities to carry out the exercise.

The results of accreditation may be in three forms, based on the outcome. It could be full accreditation, interim/partial, or denied accreditation. Departments denied accreditations are asked to discontinue or stop the further intake of students until identified deficiencies are rectified and the programmes revisited. Programmes granted interim accreditations are

revisited after two years while those granted full accreditation are revisited after five years. There has been growing criticism of NUC programme accreditation practices in Nigerian universities. For instance, it has been alleged that during accreditation processes, politics come into play, such that NUC is finding it difficult to achieve its objectives in terms of quality assurance. Ibijola (2014) submitted that the needs assessment report contradicted the regular 5-year NUC's accreditation exercise. The results of the needs assessment survey indicate the presence of an enabling policy environment for diaspora engagement in the Nigerian education sector. The results show that there are currently debilitating skill and competency gaps in the nation's education sector. Analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data reveals acute skill gaps in the core disciplines of science, foreign languages, mathematics and basic technology at the basic and post-basic education levels while special education, computer science, technology, law, engineering, medicine and surgery were identified as domains of skills shortage in tertiary education. Results of the assessment further reveal that teachers at all levels of education generally lack information and communications technology (ICT), counselling and pedagogical competencies. The results also show that lack of modern infrastructure, scarcity of teaching materials and inadequate research equipment in Nigerian educational institutions are push factors for the exodus of Nigerian academics to other countries in search of greener pastures. It is therefore on this background that the paper aims to investigate the politics of programme accreditation on academic programmes and quality university education in south-east Nigeria.

### **Objectives of Accreditation**

To ensure that at least the provisions of Minimum Academic Standards Documents are attained, maintained and enhanced.

To assure employers and other members of the community that Nigerian graduates from all academic programmes have attained an acceptable level of competency in their areas of specialization.

To certify to the international community that the programmes offered in Nigerian Universities are of high standards and their graduates have sufficient intellect for employment and for further studies

### **Types of Accreditation**

1. Full Accreditation
2. Interim Accreditation
3. Denied Accreditation

1. Full Accreditation: It is granted to programmes that satisfy the provisions of the MAS for a period of five academic sessions. The programme attains a minimum of 70% aggregate score as well as four core areas of academic content, staffing, physical facilities/library.

2. Interim Accreditation: It is granted to programmes that have minor deficiencies that must be rectified within a stipulated period. The programme must also attain an aggregate score of not less than 60%. Programmes with a total score above 70% but less than 70% in any of the

indicated 4 core areas are awarded Interim status which could be valued for a period of not more than two academic sessions.

3. Denied Accreditation: It applies to any academic programme which has failed to satisfy the Minimum Academic Standards. It also applies to programmes with less than 60% aggregate score. The re-visitation of this can be done at the request of the University concerned. University ceases to admit students into such a programme with effect from the next admission exercise (Okojie, 2008).

### **Politics of Programme Accreditation**

Harold (2010) defined Politics as taking sides; it is partisan. Not only are there sides—typically liberal and conservative in our day—but also they argue against each other so that it is liberals versus conservatives." Politics has permeated every aspect of human life, the home, religious institutions, public and private organizations as well as educational institutions. Politicking has been part and parcel of the Nigerian educational system. Hence we see politics of funding, politics of siting of institutions, politics of provision of facilities, politics of access and educational opportunities, and so on. Programme accreditation of Nigerian universities is not devoid of politics. Harold (2010) defines politics as a system of who gets what, when and how. Politics of accreditation in this paper may be said to revolve around some practices that are carried out in universities during accreditation exercise. They include, but not limited to the following:

1. Politics of panel composition: Usually four or five team members are assigned by NUC to assess a programme. Invariably, the fate of an institution's programme will be in the hands of the panel. It has been observed by Utuka (2011) that in practice; some panel chairmen often encroach or infringe upon full control of discussions, thus reducing other members to mere listeners. Moreso, given that some of the panel members can be influenced financially by the host university authorities; the decision of the panel members can be compromised in favour of the institution.

2. Politics of accreditation compliance to NUC Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS): Irrelevant courses are thrust upon the departments with the revised benchmark curriculum provided by the NUC, whereas the major reason for accreditation is to institute quality. Utuka (2011) observed that some external quality assurance agency adopt a compliance approach in their daily operations. He further submitted that compliance approach does not encourage the staff to become committed to a quality process where they will see the process as a developmental issue that will help them genuinely to find out how they can improve the programmes. They rather consider the process as a compliance issue in situations where they have to perform the task quickly because they have to; thus placing the responsibility of ensuring quality assurance of higher institutions on NUC while individual universities are only made to comply with NUC directives.

This process does not strengthen the internal structures for quality improvement. Thus

Middlehurst and Woodhouse (1995) cautioned that compliance may be taken for improvement in the short term, but as soon as the need to show improvement has passed, old ways of doing things are likely to re-surface. Similarly, Utuka (2011) opined that current approaches stand the risks of failing to gain institutional commitment, a panacea for achieving desired quality outcomes. The NUC approach may not likely achieve the desired results of assuring the quality of education provided.

3. Politics of facilities borrowing: During accreditation exercises, most institutions engage in unethical practices. Such practices involve borrowing books into the library and facilities/equipment are also borrowed into the laboratories. The borrowed facilities, if carefully scrutinized by accreditation teams, have labels of the real owners. Otokunefor (2013) reported that facilities are brought overnight to put in the department before accreditation and disappear immediately after the exercise, an indication that the facilities have been returned to the owners.

4. Staff politics: It is commonly observed that prior to accreditation; most staff does not want to release their curriculum vitae in order not to give credence to the universities. Those who do so often withhold vital information. This issue arises due to the fact that what most staff acquire to improve themselves comes as a result of personal effort as management rarely support staff attendances at conferences or publication costs. Ensuring quality academic programmes in universities depend on high-quality lecturers because the qualities of lecturers determine the quality of products. Lecturers, however, cannot give what they do not have. Recent recruitment into institutions is done without recourse to departmental input or due process. Thus such recruitment does not take into consideration staff mix. In most departments, academic staff population is bottom-heavy with many lecturers below the rank of lecture 1. As a result, during accreditation, external university professors are borrowed and listed as staff of some departments. Sometimes, part-time lecturers are also listed as full-time staff.

Politics of funding: Funding is a major challenge in higher institutions of learning. There is a continuous dwindling of funds made available to a higher institution of learning. As a result, funds are made available mostly to departments whose programmes are listed for accreditation. During accreditation, university authorities often shift their focus more to departments due for accreditation and less towards other programmes. The issue is, who are we really deceiving? What happens to other programmes in the universities? Invariably, they are left to rot for another five years.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The general functions of the university amongst other things include teaching, research and community service. Universities are recognized as the apex of learning, accumulating and imparting knowledge and skills of all kinds to students to enable them to be productive, earn their living and to make optimum contributions to national development. This is equivalent to the production of human capital in the form of high-level manpower needed to administer the educational society, be useful to society and manage the economy. Quality has become a matter of major importance for university education in Nigeria. Accreditation is the systematic review of educational programs to ensure that acceptable standards of education,

scholarship and infrastructure are being maintained. Accreditation ensures that the institution maintains quality. Every five years, academic programmes in Nigerian universities are subjected to the accreditation process to ensure that minimum academic standards are maintained and that quality is guaranteed in Nigerian Universities. However, there is a general outcry among employers of labour that Nigerian universities are churning out low-quality graduates. This is seen in the last ranking of universities in Africa, where only seven Nigerian universities were listed in Africa's top 100 universities. It is observed that despite the world ranking of Nigerian universities, most universities' programmes always scale through the NUC accreditation hurdles. It seems accreditation of academic programmes does not necessarily guarantee quality because most of the time, unethical practices are carried out during programme accreditation by NUC.

Despite the emphasis placed on accreditation, it appears that some public universities in Nigeria are still struggling to satisfy the minimum academic standard (MAS). Some seem to be grossly underfunded and lack the basic infrastructural facilities such as libraries, laboratories, e-library and lecture facilities. The quantity/quality of staff needs to be adequately insured, the level of participation in accreditation exercise seems to be low, while the level/extent of accreditation of academic programmes is a burning issue which still needs to be seriously addressed if quality assurance has to be ensured in public universities in Nigeria today.

The question then is: Are Nigerian universities benefiting from the robust quality assurance used by NUC during programme accreditation in Nigerian universities? What is the level of influence of accreditation exercises on quality assurance in universities in Nigeria? These questions constitute the problem of the study.

### **Research Questions**

The following three research questions guided the study.

1. To what extent is politics part of NUC programme accreditation practices in universities south-east geo-political zone Nigeria?
2. To What extent is the demurring NUC programme accreditation?
3. To what extent is this show of reluctance to NUC programme accreditation is solved?

### **Methodology**

The research design adopted for the study is the survey design which was intended to identify the politics of programme accreditation on academic programmes and quality university education in south-east Nigeria. Obadara and Alaka (2013) while citing Creswell noted that survey design is a technique in quantitative research in which investigators administer a survey instrument to a sample or to the entire population of people to define the attitudes, opinions, behaviour or characteristics of the population. This design was found appropriate for the study because the study involved collecting data from universities academic staff that are involved in the day to day running of a university particularly in the accreditation process, to determine the politics of National Universities Commission (NUC) programme

accreditation practices in universities in South East of Nigeria. This survey design helped to collect comprehensive data from respondents which also helped to find the answers to the research questions as well as to test the hypotheses. The population of the study comprised all current Heads of Departments who have experienced in programme accreditation in their various universities. The institutions used were two federal universities and two state Universities in the south-east geo-political zone of Nigeria. ABSU (Abia State University) and IMSU (Imo State University Owerri) were the state universities while two federal Universities are FUTU (Federal University of Technology Owerri) and Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. Purposive sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 110 Heads of Departments (HODs) for the study. The sample consisted of 30 HODs from FUTU, 30 from NAU, 25 from ABSU and 25 from IMSU.

This study was conducted during the 2018/2019 academic session. A 21 - item instrument tagged "Politics of Accreditation Practices Questionnaire (PAPQ)" was used for data collection. The instrument was subdivided into three sections. Section A sought personal information about the respondents. Section B consisted of 16 items that measured accreditation practices on a 4 - point response option of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The respondents were required to tick one option to indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement with an item. Section C included two open-ended questions on challenges to programme accreditation and possible remedies to the challenges. The instrument was subject to validation by three experts in the Department of Educational Administration and Planning, Educational measurement and evaluation, and Educational foundation. Their suggestions were used in revising the instrument. The reliability indices of section B of the instrument was 0.79, using Cronbach Alpha reliability method. This is an indication of the items being internally stable and supports the use of the study. The instrument was administered on the respondents in their various universities with the help of trained assistants. All the 110 copies of the instrument were retrieved, ensuring a 100% return rate. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used for data analysis. An item with a mean rating of 2.50 was regarded as significant, while a mean rating below 2.50 was regarded as not significant. The hypotheses were tested using independent z-test statistics at 0.05 levels of significance.

## **Data Analysis and Results**

### **Research Question 1**

To what extent is politics part of accreditation practices? The statistical technique used for data analysis was means and standard deviation. The result is as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of the responses to the politics of NUC academic programme accreditation practices.

S/N	ITEMS	N	MEAN	SD	DECISION
1	Books are borrowed to update departmental university/library stock.	110	3.25	0.69	Agree
2	Lecturers are borrowed to satisfy mix.	110	1.75	0.65	Disagree
3	Part-time lecturers are converted to full-time staff.	110	1.62	0.62	Disagree
4	Sufficient fund is given to the department for accreditation.	110	1.94	0.58	Disagree
5	Funds are given during accreditation.	110	292	0.52	Agree
6	Accreditation team takes time to examine documents.	110	392	0.62	Agree
7	Accreditation teams do not examine other faculties.	110	182	0.64	Disagree
8	Equipment is being borrowed.	110	282	0.64	Agree
9	Accreditation panel members insist on seeing other faculties.	110	216	0.57	Disagree
10	Deficiencies identified are remedied instantly	110	192	0.64	Disagree
11	The window dressing of faculties during Accreditation.	110	273	0.59	Agree
12	Deficiencies are swept under the carpet.	110	206	0.47	Disagree
13	The panels do not insist on seeing all the list staff in the department.	110	294	0.45	Agree
14	Some staffs are temporary excluded.	110	206	0.58	Disagree
15	Only offices that are adequately funded are allowed to be visited.	110	339	0.66	Agree
16	Cash gift is given to influence the Accreditation report.	110	206	0.54	Disagree
<b>EXPECTED MEAN = 2.50</b>					

Table 1 shows the responses from departmental heads who have hosted NUC accreditation teams, on the accreditation practices. It was seen that items 1, 5, 6, 8, 11, 13 and 15 which are 7 out of 16 items obtained a higher mean score than the expected mean of 2.50. This indicates a high extent of the response for the items used to measure politics as part of NUC programme accreditation practices. It also indicates the responses that universities usually upgrade their facilities during accreditation programme, such measures which include: borrowing of books, the prompt release of funds to purchase facilities for the programme, borrowing and upgrading of equipment to satisfy the minimum standard of accreditation, window dressing of facilities and taking of accreditation team to only well-furnished offices. Thus, some universities do virtually everything, ethical or unethical, to secure accreditation

for their programmes, which may not reflect the true situation. The remaining 9 items obtained a lower mean score than the expected mean. This shows a low extent of application of the items as part of the politics to gain accreditation by the institutions.

### **Research Question 2**

To What extent is the demurring NUC programme accreditation? This question asked the respondents to mention the challenges to NUC programme accreditation. The constraints as indicated by the HODs are highlighted in Table two.

#### **Table 2: Statement of challenges**

- i. Inadequate funding for the departments
- ii. Delay in the release of funds for accreditation by university management.
- iii. Inadequate physical facilities
- iv. Lack of office accommodation for academic staff
- v. Poor library facilities
- vi. Lack of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities
- vii. Team membership often not adequate for all departments in the faculty
- viii. Insufficient time for preparation
- ix. Too much documentation that is time-consuming and staff are always stressed-up.
- x. Poor attitude of lecturers to accreditation.

#### **Research Question 3**

To what extent is this show of reluctance to NUC programme accreditation is solved?

The solutions to the challenges of NUC programme accreditation are presented in this Table. Suggested panaceas to enhance programme accreditation are;

- i. Improved budgetary allocation to departments.
- ii. Adequate provision of facilities.
- iii. Internal quality assurance mechanism should be enhanced
- iv. Guidelines for accreditation should be revised to reflect modern challenges and circumstances.
- v. Universities libraries should be equipped with current books and journals.
- vi. Deficiencies identified during accreditation should be rectified promptly

### **Discussion of Results**

The findings of research question one indicated a mixed outcome for accreditation practices. Findings of this study indicated that during accreditation, the following practices are observed: books are borrowed to boost the departmental library stock, only a few departmental facilities are checked by accreditation team, sufficient funds are not released to departments to prepare for accreditation, only staff offices that are adequately furnished are allowed to be visited by accreditation teams and that, there is window dressing of facilities during accreditation. The outcome of this study is not surprising as there is a consistent outcry about the dwindling funding of higher education in Nigeria as evidenced in the incessant strike actions by the various university unions. The high accreditation scores obtained by many academic programmes cannot, in any way, be justified. Jack (2014)

opined that a look at facilities in most universities reveals that the results of the accreditations are not compatible with what is on the ground. The physical facilities in most public universities are grossly inadequate and in a state of disrepair. Responses to research question two provide insight into the major challenges faced by academic departments during accreditation exercises. The most common challenges as cited by respondents in this study were inadequate funding, inadequate infrastructural facilities and insufficient time for preparation. The findings of this study corroborate the observation by Akuegwu (2014), that as it stands today, our higher institutions lack infrastructural facilities such as classrooms, furniture, books, laboratory equipment, among others, and even available ones are obsolete. In research question three, respondents were asked to suggest remedies to accreditation challenges. As would be expected, the most prominent suggestion among the respondents was funding, followed by the provision of not just adequate facilities but modern facilities that can compete with other world-class universities. Inadequate funding has been a major set-back in educational development in Nigeria. This has hindered the provision of adequate facilities in institutions of learning and has often resulted in strike actions by various unions in educational institutions in Nigeria.

### **Implications for Quality Assurance**

The need for quality assurance in Nigerian schools cannot be overemphasized to ensure the quality of teaching and learning. Otto and Musinguzi (2013), defines quality assurance as the mechanism put in place to guarantee that education is fit for purpose. Okebukola in Okojie (2013) defined quality assurance “as the policies, systems, strategies and resources used by the institution to satisfy that its quality requirements and standards are being met. It is appropriately described as “Fitness for Purpose”. In another way, Ojerinde (2008) in Okojie (2013) described quality assurance “as the degree of conformity of procedures of an organization with set standards”. Quality assurance refers to the set of planned and systematic actions necessary to provide appropriate confidence that the product or service will satisfy the requirements for quality. Therefore, the importance of NUC programme accreditation in enhancing quality assurance of universities' programmes cannot be overemphasized. It has been acknowledged by researchers that NUC programme accreditation has played a significant role in enhancing quality improvements in academic programmes (Obadara & Alake, 2013; Ibijola, 2014). It has helped to identify deficiencies in programme offerings which are subsequently rectified. Programmes that do not meet the expected minimum academic standards are brought to the knowledge of the public thereby protecting would-be students from enrolling in such programmes. Subjecting programmes' offerings in Nigerian Universities to NUC accreditation to ensure the minimum standard was a lofty idea with immense practical benefits. Therefore, politicizing the process through unethical measures by departments in their desperate effort to secure accreditation will have serious implications for quality assurance in programme offerings in the universities. It will not only result in the continued low ranking of Nigerian universities among world-class universities but also in non-recognition of some of our universities' degrees, lack of employability skills by our graduates and lack of high-level manpower. To achieve the goals of high-level manpower development through tertiary education, NUC accreditation

exercises should be taken seriously by all stakeholders, devoid of politics and complacency. To this end, funding of universities should be given serious and adequate attention to discouraging the observed "sharp practices" that could negate the very essence of NUC programme accreditation. Improvement in funding to universities is very imperative if the quality is to be guaranteed and sustained in Nigerian higher education. In this regard, therefore, the minimum budgetary allocation of 26% as recommended by UNESCO should be implemented.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that politics has been part and parcel of NUC programme accreditation practices. Such practices centre on poor funding, borrowed books, facilities and equipment. Obstacles to accreditation exercises are inadequate funding and facilities. The identified challenges, if not rectified, may compromise quality assurance in Universities, which is a necessity in enhancing the global competitiveness of Nigerian Universities. From the results of the ranking of world universities, no Nigerian Universities has entered the league of world-class universities. Given this ranking, therefore, there is an urgent need for improvement in accreditation practices which should match with an internal quality mechanism within the universities. Archibong (2013) succinctly pointed out the undeniable fact that except external efforts are matched with a purpose-driven internal quality assurance mechanism, the entire effort may be fruitless. Thus, to ensure the global competitiveness of universities in Nigeria, quality education delivery is imperative and cannot be compromised.

### **Recommendations**

In light of the above findings, the following recommendations are proffered. Human capacities should be built in the area of quality assurance to ensuring quality in Nigerian universities. Also, accreditation exercises and conducts should be properly manipulated and supervised without playing politics to achieve education standards, quality and effectiveness to accomplish goals of university education in Nigeria. Quality assurance should be a continuous process aimed at encouraging attitude change and teamwork and the inculcation of a value that acknowledges the student as the best judge of quality deserving the best possible service.

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