An Evaluative Study on the Accreditation of Academic Programmes and Quality Assurance in Public Universities in Nigeria

Prof. (Mrs). Comfort Olufunke Akomolafe
Dr. (Mrs). Veronica Olubunmi Adesua
Department Of Educational Management Faculty Of Education,
Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria

Abstract

The licensing of Universities is not just a yardstick or criteria to set up and operate a university system in Nigeria. Certain quality indices set standards, operational guides and discipline needs to be ensured to satisfy the minimum academic standards. The accreditation of such university needs to be put into consideration and embarked upon to ensured quality assurance of the academic programmes. This paper examined academic programme and quality assurance in public universities in southwest Nigeria. Descriptive research design was adopted. To carry out the study a research instrument titled "Questionnaire on Academic Programme and Quality Assurance in Nigerian Public Universities: (QAPQANPU)" was administered to elicit information from respondents. The population of the study comprises all academic staff in public Universities in Southwest, Nigeria. The sample of the study comprises three hundred and fifty-one (351) respondents. Purposive sampling technique was used to select four public universities in Southwest, Nigeria. Three research questions were formulated, it was revealed that accreditation had positive impact on quality assurance, the level of participation of academic staff in accreditation exercise was low and the level of accreditation of academic programme was very high. Two hypotheses were tested, hypothesis one was tested using t-test and hypothesis two was tested using Analysis of variance (ANOVA). The hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The two hypotheses were not rejected. The findings revealed that there was no significant difference between male and female lecturers' perception of the impact of accreditation on university quality assurance, also there was no significant difference between the perceptions of the impact of the accreditation by academic staff based on their status. Based on the findings of this study it was recommended that academic programmes in Nigeria universities should be accredited from time to time through the

Nigeria University Commission (NUC) to ensure quality assurance and satisfy the minimum academic standards (MAS). Moreover, more academic staff should participate in accreditation exercise, once they have the experience and are qualified to encourage wider participation in various discipline/fields of study. Also government who is the proprietor of these public universities should provide adequate funds to improve the academic standards in Nigerian Universities.

Keywords: Accreditation, Academic Programmes, Quality Assurance, Public Universities, Nigeria

Introduction

The history of accreditation of programmes in Nigerian universities can be traced to 1990 after the Minimum Academic Standards were developed for all programmes existing in Nigerian universities at that time. It was the first of its kind in Africa and it was organized and conducted through the platform provided by the NUC with 100% indigenous resource persons. The exercise gave the nation the opportunity to have data-backed information on the state of education delivery in Nigerian universities. Between 1999 and 2000, a second comprehensive accreditation exercise of academic programmes in Nigerian universities was conducted. This was followed in 2002 with the accreditation of those programmes that earned denied accreditation status in 1999/2000. Programmes of first generation private universities were also accredited in 2004, while newly matured programmes were evaluated at the beginning of 2005. In November, 2005, 1,343 academic programmes in 48 universities were evaluated for accreditation, (Okojie,2008).

There are three different Proprietors of University education in Nigeria. These include the Federal Government, the State Government and the Private or Corporate bodies. It is pertinent to note that irrespective of Proprietorship, government is responsible for the licensing of Universities in Nigeria, although the procedures are different. Okojie (2008), explained the following procedures/criteria for operating and licensing of Universities:-
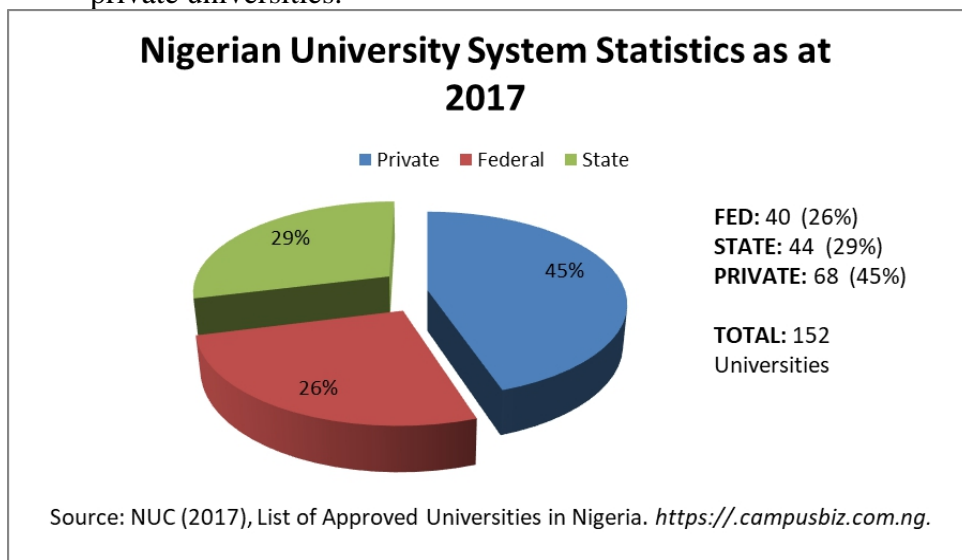
Federal Universities

- The old regional governments in Nigeria licensed the Universities.
- The Universities are later taken over by the Federal Government.
- The Federal Government established Universities based on the need to have a balanced spread across regions and states of the Federation.
- Government through the National University commission carry out the necessary assessments and resource verification for the establishment of Federal Universities while the government work out the financial

Implication and release take off grants to the University to begin its operation.

State Universities

- State governments have the legal banking to establish their own Universities, since Education is on the concurrent list in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- Once the law is promulgated by the State House of Assembly to establish the University, the Governor ascents to the bill, the law is passed to establish a state university.
- The National University Commission ensures that laid down standards are strictly followed and qualitative education is ensured private universities.
- The legal backing for the establishment of private universities is provided by Act No. 9 of 1983.
- The Standing Committee on (the establishment of) Private Universities (SCOPU) was constituted on 27th May, 1993 to ensure through evaluation of all application forms received by the commission from individuals, organizations and corporate bodies wishing to establish private universities.

Nigerian University System Statistics as at 2017

■ Private ■ Federal ■ State

29%
45%
26%

FED: 40 (26%)
STATE: 44 (29%)
PRIVATE: 68 (45%)

TOTAL: 152 Universities

Source: NUC (2017), List of Approved Universities in Nigeria. *https://.campusbiz.com.ng.*

The Concept of Accreditation and Quality Assurance

It is pertinent to note that licensing of Universities is not just a yardstick to set up and operate a University system. Some quality indices set standards, operational guides and discipline needs to be ensured for a University to take off effectively. Therefore, to ensure quality assurance, accreditation of such university must be put into consideration and embarked

upon. A Standard Dictionary would define accreditation as the act of granting approval to an institution of higher learning by an official review board after the School has met certain requirements. A forward looking government, no matter what it cost, will ensure that its citizens are educated, not just with any kind of education but focus on qualitative one.

A system that grows needs to embark on set standards and discipline to attain them. Accreditation of Universities, therefore, be it institutional or programme is a way of examining the state of the institution in relation to where it ought to be. Based on legal framework for NUC accreditation section 10 of Act No. 16 of 1985, section 4 (m) NUC amended Act No. 49 of 1988 empowered NUC to lay down Minimum Academic Standard (MAS) for Universities in Nigeria and to accredit their degrees and other academic awards. (Okojie, 2008).

Accreditation of degree and other academic programmes by the NUC is a system of evaluating academic programmes in Nigerian Universities to determine whether they have met the conditions in the minimum academic standard documents. Woodhouse (1999) defined accreditation as a yes or no decision while Oladosu (2011) defined accreditation as a measure of academic programmes.

Obadare and Alaka (2013) described accreditation as a process of self-study and external quality review used in higher institution and its programmes for quality standards and need for quality improvement. It is designed to know whether an institution has satisfied the published standards (for accreditation) and whether it is achieving its mission/stated objectives, set by an external body, such as government, national quality assurance agency or professional bodies.

Quality refers to the degree of excellence, standard or worth of something or a phenomenon when it is compared to other things. It describes how excellent, good, poor or well made something is fit for a particular purpose. Quality in the production or manufacturing lines is the extent to which a product or service meets the designer and customer's specification.

Quality assurance on the other hand refers to the practice of managing the way goods are manufactured or the way services are provided to ensure high standard. Agih and Christian-Epe (2004) claimed that the concept of quality assurance originated and is designed by manufacturing industries to ensure customers satisfaction, commitment to excellence, quality of service, performance, standardization and continuous improvement. In the education sector, quality assurance has been an issue of concern for decades past. It is a global term that is used to ensure that quality policy, quality management and quality control are encouraged as the best practices in any social system especially the educational system.

Okebukola (2012) described quality assurance as an umbrella concept for a lot of activities that are designed to improve the quality of input, process and output of the educational system. It involves monitoring, accessing and evaluating all the aspect of the education activities and communicating the outcome to all concerned with a view of improving the products of the education system.

In the University system, accreditation and quality assurance are two sides of the same coin, both concepts go pari parsu. Since accreditation is a way of evaluating the academic programmes in Nigerian Universities to ensure that they meet the conditions in the minimum academic standard, Quality Assurance can equally be described as the ability of the Universities to meet certain criteria relating to academic matters, staff-student ratios, staff mix by rank, staff development, physical facilities, and funding and adequate library facilities.

Adequacy of various inputs in the University system, in terms of quality and quantity, exercises tremendous influence on quality assurance in the University System. (Obadare and Alaka, 2013).Several studies have revealed the role of accreditations of academic programmes on university quality assurance. A study carried out by Ibijola (2014) revealed that the NUC performance of accreditation role was at a moderate level with 63% of the respondents adjudging the NUC performance in accreditation as moderate. It also supports the findings of Obadare and Alaka (2013), that accreditation of universities be it institutional or programme is a way of examining the state of the institution in relation to where it ought to be.

Similarly, the findings Okebukola (2002) reveled that more than 1,000 academic programmes were accredited in all Nigerian universities. It also supports that of NUC (2005), that 1,343 programmes in 48 Nigerian universities and 5 colleges were also accredited. The findings however contradicts the report of Okwonfu and Aminu (2013) in Obadare and Alaka (2013) that the National University Commission (NUC), has failed to reposition the nation's universities as shown by the NEEDS assessment report carried out by genuine academics, which contradicted the NUC'S accreditation exercise.

Accreditation and Quality Assurance: The Role of NUC.

Higher education no doubt is the key to national (development) and technological development of any nation, a good government therefore, would not expose its citizens to just any kind of education, but a qualitative one, not minding the cost. It is pertinent to note that in Nigeria, the National University Commission (NUC) is the recognized regulatory body that ensures quality assurance in the University system through accreditation exercise.

NUC is the agency tasked by the Nigerian Federal Government to regulate and act as a catalyst for positive change and innovation for the delivery of quality University education in Nigeria. The agency has always warned the general public to verify if a University is approved before patronizing them (NUC, 2017). The NUC comprises experts who are Professors in various academic disciplines. The commission is established to ensure the orderly development of a well co-ordinate and productive University system that will guarantee quality and relevant education for national development and global competitiveness (NUC 2009).

Since one of the major objectives of University education is to produce qualified, skilled and (globally) competent manpower into the labour market, the quality of University education would invariably determine the quality of University output (graduates) in a nation. The NUC therefore is charged with the responsibility of ensuring quality assurance in Nigerian University through accreditation programmes.

Obadare and Alaka (2013), explained that decree 4a of 1988 had helped to widen the scope of NUC, as a result the commission is committed to improve the quality of University programmes through injection of requisite inputs as well as assuring quality process and outputs. On the contrary, the findings contradicts that of Okebukola (2010) that quantity/quality of academic staff is a major concern and that the teacher/student ratio is not encouraging especially in disciplines like humanities and science.

Ibijola (2014), that the university staff perception of the quality of Nigerian University education was moderate and that there was a significant difference between the quality of the educational inputs and NUC;S performance of accreditation role. These findings also supports that of Okojie (2008) that the role of NUC over the years in accreditation exercise had been so credible and as such has greatly improved the Education process. This may be as a result of the improvement in the academic standards of undergraduate programmes in the universities and the extension of these accreditation exercises to the postgraduate programmes too.

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.

Components of Accreditation

S /N	C O M P O N E N T S	S U B - C O M P O N E N T S
	Academic Matters	The programme philosophy and objectives. The curriculum. Admission requirements Academic requirements Course Evaluation Student course evaluation External examination system
	Staffing	Academic Staff Non-Academic Staff Head of Department/Discipline Staff Development
	Physical Facilities	Laboratory/Clinic/Studio-Facility/equipment. Classroom Facilities and Equipment Laboratory Size (area per student) and equipment. Safety and Environment.
	Financing of Programme by the University	
	Books, Journals and other resource materials for the programme.	
	Employer's rating of graduates, if any	

(Source:*Okojie, 2008)*

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 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 is 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).

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the emphasis placed on ensuring quality assurance, 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 especially those with Ph. D still needs to be adequately ensured, 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.

Purpose of the Study

This paper examined academic programme and quality assurance in public universities in southwest Nigeria.

Research Question

  I.   What is the impact of accreditation on University quality assurance?
 II.   What is the level of participation of academic staff in accreditation exercise?
III.   What is the level of accreditation of academic programmes?

Research Hypothesis

  I.   There is no significant difference between male and female lecturers' perception of the impact of accreditation on university quality assurance.
 II.   There is no significant difference between the perceptions of the impact of accreditation by academic staff based on status.

Methodology

 A research instrument titled "Questionnaire on Academic Programme and Quality Assurance in Nigerian Public Universities: (QAPQANPU)" was administered to elicit information from respondents. The population of the study comprises all academic staff in public Universities in Southwest, Nigeria. The sample of the study comprises three hundred and fifty-one (351) respondents. Purposive sampling technique was used to select four public universities in Southwest, Nigeria.

Results
Question 1

What is the impact of accreditation on university quality assurance?

Table 1: Impact of accreditation on university quality

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	SD
1	When curriculum follows the minimum NUC benchmark	176 (50.1)	163 (46.4)	10 (2.8)	2 (0.6)	3.46	0.58
2	When infrastructure have improved tremendously	182 (51.9)	158 (45.0)	8 (2.3)	3 (0.9)	3.48	0.59
3	Laboratories have upgrade with adequate provision of chemicals	182 (51.9)	146 (41.6)	16 (4.6)	7 (2.0)	3.43	0.68
4	Laboratories are well equipped	190 (54.1)	139 (39.6)	17 (4.8)	5 (1.4)	3.46	0.66
5	Improvement in the numbers of academic personnel over the time	176 (50.1)	150 (42.7)	19 (5.4)	6 (1.7)	3.41	0.67
6	Quality of staff is ensured with PhD as the standard	168 (47.9)	143 (40.7)	37 (10.5)	3 (0.9)	3.36	0.70
7	Students entry requirement is adequate	152 (43.3)	174 (49.6)	21 (6.0)	4 (1.1)	3.35	0.65
8	Improvement in staff participation in development programme.	149 (42.5)	177 (50.4)	22 (6.3)	3 (0.9)	3.34	0.64
9	Adequacy of library facilities	184 (52.4)	141 (40.2)	24 (6.8)	2 (0.6)	3.44	0.65
10	E-library are now available to both students and staff	145 (41.3)	153 (43.6)	48 (13.7)	5 (1.4)	3.25	0.74
11	Improvement on quality of lecture theatre	189 (53.8)	121 (34.5)	37 (10.5)	4 (1.1)	3.41	0.72
12	Improvement on quality of library facilities	184 (52.4)	125 (35.6)	39 (11.1)	3 (0.9)	3.40	0.72

Percentages are enclosed in parentheses

Table 1 presents the impact of accreditation on university quality assurance. The result revealed that, with cutoff mean score of 2.50 for the rating scale, all the items had mean scores above the cutoff mean. This implies that accreditation has positive impact at enhancing university quality assurance.

Question 2

What is the level of participation of academic staff in accreditation exercise?

Table 2: Level of participation of academic staff in accreditation exercise

Ever participated in NUC accreditation as an accreditor	Universities								Total	
	A		B		C		D			
	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Yes	57	64.0	39	42.4	9	9.3	22	30.1	127	36.2
No	32	36.0	53	57.6	88	90.7	51	69.9	224	63.8
Total	89	100.0	92	100.0	97	100.0	73	100.0	351	100.0

Table 2 presents the level of participation of academic staff in accreditation exercise in Southwest Nigerian universities. The result showed that 127

respondents representing 36.2% of total sample had participated in NUC accreditation exercises while 224 respondents representing 63.8% of the sample had not been involved accreditation exercise. This implies that the level of participation of academic staff in accreditation exercise is low. Analysis of the respondents' level of involvement in accreditation exercise on institutional basis revealed that the level of participation in accreditation exercise in all the selected universities were low except University A where 64% of the academic staff had participated in the exercise. The level of participation of academic staff in NUC accreditation is further presented in Figure i.
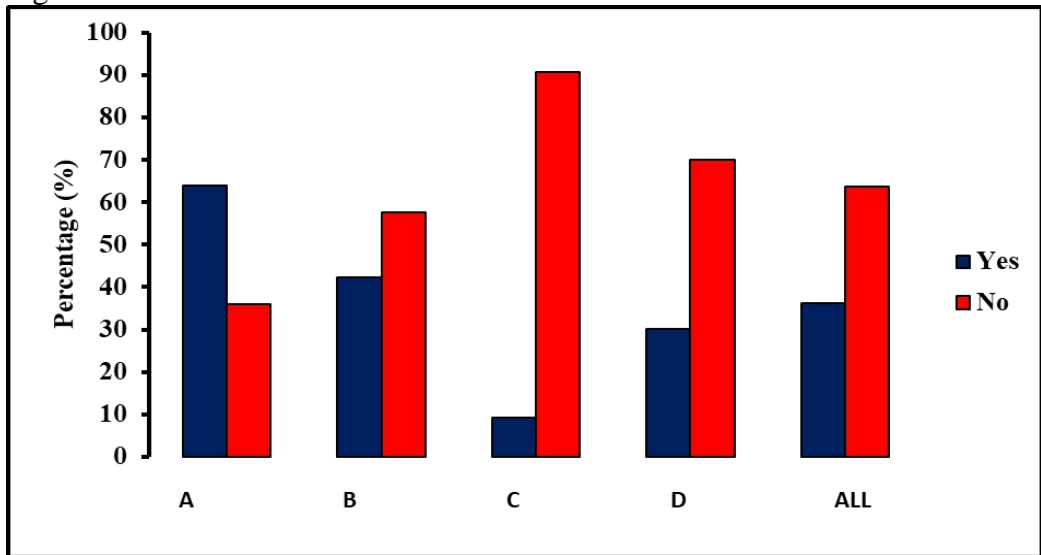

Figure i: Level of participation of academic staff in accreditation exercise

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference between male and female lecturers' perception of the impact of accreditation on university quality assurance.

Table 4: t-test showing lecturer's perception of the impact of accreditation on university by gender

Sex	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Male	259	40.91	5.343	349	0.657	0.511
Female	92	40.49	5.143			

p>0.05

Table 4 present the difference between male and female lecturer's perception of the impact of accreditation on university quality assurance. The result showed that t tab 1.645 was greater than tcal 0.657 at 0.05 level of significant. This implies that the null hypothesis was not rejected, therefore was no significant difference between male and female lecturer's perception

of the impact of accreditation on university qualify assurance. Hence, male and female lecturers have equal perception of the impact of accreditation on university quality assurance.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between the perceptions of the impact of accreditation by academic staff based on status.

Table 5: ANOVA showing academic staff perception of the impact of accreditation by status

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	183.712	3	61.237		
Within Groups	9600.328	347	27.667	2.213	.086
Total	9784.040	350			

p>0.05

Table 5 present the difference between the perceptions of the impact of accreditation by academic staff based on their status. The result showed that Ftab 2.60 is greater than Fcal 2.213 level of significant. This implies that the null hypothesis was not rejected; therefore, there was no significant difference between the perceptions of academic staff on the impact of accreditation based on status.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that accreditation of academic programmes had positive impact on University quality assurance. This perhaps is as a result of the University meeting the criteria for accreditation. This findings support that of Ibijola (2014) that the NUC performance of accreditation role was at moderate levels with 63% of the respondents adjudging the NUC performance in accreditation as moderate. It also supports the findings of Obadare and Alaka (2013) that accreditation of universities whether it is institutional or programme is a way of examining the state of the institution in relation to where it ought to be. It is a quality assurance process and a primary means through which universities and programmes assure quality to student and the public. On the contrary, the findings of this study contradicts that of Okebukola (2010) that quantity/quality of academic staff is a major concern and that the teacher/student ratio is not encouraging especially in disciplines like humanities and science.

It was also revealed that the level of participation in accreditation exercise in all the selected university were low, this may be due to the fact that some of the academic staff may not be qualified to participate in NUC accreditation as an Accreditor. Also the level of accreditation of academic programmes is was high. The findings of this study support that of Okebukola (2002) that

more than 1,000 academic programmes were accredited in all Nigerian University. It also supports that of NUC (2005) that 1,343 programmes in 48 Nigerian university and 5 colleges were also accredited. It further supports the findings of Obadare and Alaka (2013) that accreditation exercise in Nigerian Universities has helped to improve the facilities and quality assurance report which indicates the situation analysis of the Universities and has invariably helped Universities to work on areas where there are challenges.

The study revealed that there was no significant difference between male and female lecturer's perception of the impact of accreditation on university quality assurance this may be due to the fact that both male and female lecturers equally perceive the impact of accreditation programme from the same perspectives. This findings supports that of Ibijola (2014), that the university staff perception of the quality of Nigerian University education was moderate and that there was a significant difference between the quality of the educational inputs and NUC's performance of accreditation role. These findings also supports that of Okojie (2008) that the role of NUC over the years in accreditation exercise had been so creditable and as such has greatly improved the Education process. This may be as a result of the improvement in the academic standards of undergraduate programmes in the universities and the extension of these accreditation exercises to the postgraduate programmes too.

Furthermore, the findings of this study revealed that there was no significant difference in the perceptions of the impact of accreditation by academic staff based on their status. This finding supports that of Obadare and Alaka (2013) that there was no significant relationship between accreditation and the quality content. This may be unconnected with the fact that measure of the content demands many factors and requirement, which may not be adequately assessed. It also support that of Ibijola (2014) that there was no significant difference between the perception of federal and state Universities staff on NUC performance of accreditation role, the findings however contradicts the report of Okwonfu and Aminu (2013) in Obadare and Alaka (2013) that the commission (NUC), has failed to reposition the nation's universities as shown by the NEEDS assessment report carried out by genuine academics, which contradicted the NUC accreditation exercise.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study revealed that accreditation had positive impact at enhancing quality assurance, with cut-off mean score of 2. 50 for the rating scale, all the items had mean scores above the cut-off mean. Also the levels of participation of academic staff in accreditation exercise in all the selected universities were low with 36. 2% of the respondents indicating low participation while the level of accreditation of academic programmes is very

high with 63.8% indicating high level of accreditation of academic prograrmmes. Furthermore, the study also revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female lecturer's perception of the impact of accreditation on university quality assurance. Also, there is no significant difference between the perception of the impact of accreditation by academic staff based on their status.

The implication of the findings of the study is that the accreditation of academic programmes needs to be embarked upon from time to time to ensure quality assurance and to satisfy the minimum academic standards (MAS). This will improve the quality of the educational inputs and overall quality of the educational process of the universities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that the academic programmes in Nigeria universities should be accredited from time to time through the Nigeria university commission (NUC) to ensure quality assurance and to satisfy the minimum academic standards (MAS). Moreover, more academic staff should participate in the accreditation exercise once they have the experience and are qualified to encourage wider participation in various discipline/fields of study. Also government who are the proprietor of these public universities should provide adequate funds to improve the academic standards in Nigerian Universities.

References:
1. Agil, A.A. and Christian-Epe, E (2004). Developing the Culture of Academic Excellence in the Secondary Education System: The Total Quality Management Approach. *African Journal of Education and Developmental Studies. 1(1): 131-138.*
2. Ibijola, E. Y. (2016). Accreditation role of NUC and the quality of Educational input into the Nigerian University system. *Universal journal of Education Research. 2(9). Retrieved 1/8/18.*
3. National University Commission (2009). Weekly Bulletin. 4(46) November.
4. NUC (2017), *List of Universities in Nigeria. https://. Campusbiz.com.ng.*
5. Obadare, O.E and Alaka, A.A. (2013). Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Nigerian Universities. *Journal of Education and Practice 4(8) ISSN 2222-1735 (Paper) ISSN 2222-288x(online). www.liste.org. Retrieved 1/8/18.*
6. Okebukola, P.A.O. (2010). *Fifty years of Higher Education in Nigeria: Trends in Quality Assurance. Presented at the International*

Conference on the contribution of Nigerian Universities to the 50th Independence Anniversary of Nigeria.

7. Okebukola, P.A.O. (2012). *The Future of University Education in Nigeria.* Lagos. Okebukola Science Foundation.
8. Okojie, J.A.(2008). *Licensing, Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Nigerian Universities. Achievements and Challenges. Paper presented at the 2008 CHEA Summer Workshop. 26-27 June, 2008. Retrieved 1/8/18.*
9. Oladosu, A.G.A.S. (2011). *Accreditation in Nigerian Universities. The Role of the Academic Planning Officers in Nigerian Universities. Abuja. 12th-15th, July.*
10. Woodhouse, D. (1999). Quality and Quality Assurance. *In Jane Knight and Hansde Wit (Eds).1999. Quality and Internalization of Higher Education*. Paris. OECD.