



RELEVANCE OF LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS IN ACCREDITATION EXERCISE IN NIGERIA ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Musa, Hussaini

Bosso Campus Library, University Library Service, Federal University of Technology, Minna, Niger State

Abstract

This article is built on the notion that most libraries and librarians in the higher institutions of learning play significant role in helping the institutions to achieve accreditations. An overview and functions of the higher institution accreditation bodies in Nigeria was identified. Example of the NUC evaluation instruments used for universities accreditation to verify and measure minimum standards were identified to include personnel, libraries and funding were highlighted along with the percentages allocated for measuring each item. The library was showcase as a mirror image of the true value and placement of an institution of higher education within the ranking scheme of the institution. The library and librarians roles in accreditation exercise expalined in this paper includes: curricular aspects, teaching, learning and evaluation, research, innovations and extension, infrastructure and learning resources, institutional values and best practices among others were also discussed. The paper concluded that professional librarians' involvement in the accreditation exercises of higher institutions of learning would lead to tremendous success.

Keywords: Accreditation; library Professionals; Higher Institutions of Learning Libraries; Quality Assurance

Introduction

One of most significant traits that developed to address the issues of globalization and commercialization of higher institution of learning was the establishment of regional quality assurance organizations round the world. These organizations are integrating regional, nation-wide and world initiatives to operate quality assurance practices in the world and among them includes the African Association of Universities, the World Bank, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and UNESCO (Nguyen, Marshall and Evers 2021; Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley 2009; Sanyal and Martin 2007).

The African Union recognized quality assurance as an area of attention in its Proposal of Action for the Second Decade of Education in Africa. The Union has designed a framework for harmonizing higher education programme in Africa. The reason for the harmonization was to establish an African scheme that would ensure that the performance of higher education institutions ought to be in contrast against a set of standards that takes into account the special context and challenges of higher education delivery on the continent. The African Association of Universities (AAU), with assistance from UNESCO, has furthermore stimulated the placing up of national, sub-regional and regional quality assurance structures (Nnorom 2021; Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley 2019; AU 2007 and UNESCO 2010).

Accreditation is usually conducted by means of accrediting agencies set up through the government by the Ministry of Education or by using professional establishments. In Nigeria, this quality assurance responsibility is carried out through the National Universities Commission (NUC) for federal, state and private universities; National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) for the polytechnics and similar allied science and technology institution running diploma, HND programs, whilst the National Council for Colleges of Education (NCCE) oversees the accreditations for the Colleges of Educations in Nigeria. Accreditation is essentially about best practices, quality and standard. It is also imperative to recognize that some specialized or professional programmes or courses are evaluated by professional accreditation bodies. Examples of such programmes or field of study include: medicine, law, accounting and engineering. In Nigeria, specialized accreditation is a regular procedure and it is choice

of institutions to apply for accredited status. If accredited, such an institution agrees to abide by the ethics and principles of their accrediting agency and to standardize itself by taking obligation for its own improvement.

The significance of accreditation to institution of higher learning as opined by De Wit and Altbach (2021) emphasized that accreditation exercise strengthened institutions to put in place the essential human and physical resources on ground. The influence of accreditation body to institution of learning as described by Ademiluyi and Okwuanaso (2018) it gives public recognitions to a programme offered through an institution which has met its recognized instructional standards and qualifications as determined through preliminary and periodic evaluations. The consequence is that institutional accreditation comes first before programme evaluation. Programme evaluation can take place only in an approved (accredited) institution. The NBTE (1996) similarly explained that programme accreditation includes the assessment of the quality of a programme obtainable in an institution by the Board to confirm that the competence and number of teaching and administrative staff and the essential physical facilities and other services are available. This is vital to make sure that the curriculum is adequately organized for the students to be able to operate satisfactorily in their chosen field.

Ademiluyi and Okwuanaso (2018) asserted that accreditation if well carried out would have to be the one which compels innovations in educational curricula, carefulness in instruction, truthfulness in assessment, adequacy in infrastructures and facilities; and sufficiency in the level of funding. This is why (NCCE, 1996) noted that improved programme quality is the most important achievement of programme accreditation, accreditation assists in deciding if an institution meets or surpasses the minimum quality standards. Israel (2020) asserts that accreditation helps students decide suitable institutions for admission. Formulates objectives for institutional self-improvement, make available a self-regulatory option for government oversight duties.

Accreditation Appraisal Tools

For the purpose of this paper, the authors use the NUC evaluation instrument which is usually deploys to universities for accreditation to verify and measure minimum standards in order to attract full, provisional or denied accreditation.

- 1) **Personal:** Areas that are considered consist of the quality and adequacy of staff, non-teaching staff, staff-student ratio, workers mix, experience, qualifications, competence, and workers development programmes. The complete score available is 32%.
- 2) **Programme content:** This comprises the philosophy and goals of the programme, entry requirements, curriculum, academic regulations, conducts of assessments and examination, practical and experiment work, valuation of students' work, external examination system. The entire mark score obtainable is 23%.
- 3) **Physical infrastructures:** The NUC requires verifying the educational facilities such as laboratories, office space, classrooms and educational equipment. The whole mark attainable is 25%.
- 4) **Library:** The NUC evaluates the quantity, quality, and the recency of the library's collections. The complete mark obtainable is 12%.
- 5) **Funding:** The NUC considers the adequacy of finance for the programme. The complete score attainable is 5%.
- 6) **Employers' ranking:** This has to do with the accomplishments of graduates of the institution in their work place. Their institutions/companies are anticipated to appraise them. The whole rating accessible is 3% (National Universities Commission 2017)

7

The Library and Accreditation Exercise

Institution's libraries are involved in accreditation activities mainly for the provision and use of library resources and services to guide the learning, research and teaching conditions of the higher education institutions. According to Dalrymple (2001), accreditation presents a chance for librarians to contribute to institutional self-assessment and continuous development. The libraries have extensively and globally acknowledged as the hub of information, the nerve-centre, the moving force, the heart of institutions activities; the convergent factor for all the academic activities in the institution and one of the important indices for assessing the value and worth of any institution. No institution of higher education survives in a vacuum and autonomous of the institution's library.

Furthermore, the institution of higher education's library is a mirror image of the true value and placement of an institution within the ranking scheme of the institution of higher education. No important study can take place devoid of appropriate use of the library. The institution library helps in research, teaching and community service for which the institution is actually established to achieve. Left without this support, the purpose of institution of higher education cannot be accomplished. Henceforth, its anticipation as a tool for economic expansion, national development, social emancipation, political nurturing and sensitisation will be in trouble. This now led us to discussion on some of the roles the librarians and the libraries plays in ensuring that accreditations status the institution is influence.

Roles of Library and Library Professional's in Higher Institutions of Learning Accreditation

The library and Library professionals play many roles which differ according to institutions and the persons. He/She is usually part of the institution's Management board, works in the institution facing accreditation and mostly they are also part of the accreditation team.

A. Role in Curricular Aspects

Library professionals in this generation of smart technology, helps in supporting curriculum of different programs and its backup documents which is added to the library or the institutional website to make the resources more visible and easily accessible. If the institutions' program curriculum wishes to be reviewed to meet the accreditation requirements or restructured regularly, the library professionals being intermediate makes contribution to the review of the institutions accreditations processes with its rich print and on-line sources to every department about the new concepts, rules and regulations of the authorities and the on-line studying tools. Library professionals in institution of higher learning can introduce/Support Certificate courses/Diploma courses which make the users conversant and skillful in the ICT world. Librarians in Higher Institutions of Learning are Senate member, Council member, member of many boards in the institution do make contribution to decision making processes, therefore, library professionals can add to the accreditation's weightage of the institution (Kulkarni, 2018).

The institutions of higher learning can add more value in accreditation if the library professionals introduced a courses on "Research and Publication Ethics" as a requirement for all the postgraduate college students for their course work regardless of department, who else is expert to impart this proposed program of study (Research and Publication Ethics) other than Library professionals, who are more knowledgeable with their theoretical and robust expertise to impart the research skills to the students. For example, the Syllabus can be as - "Research and Publication Ethics" (2 credit and 30 hours). The library professionals' help with student's assignment, course projects/ research projects/ practicum most especially with sources in figuring out research problem, literature reviews, statistical tools etc., also in directing college students to other universities/ research institutes of relevance to carry out Practicum, which is one of the important components of postgraduate programme.

Library serves as central facility of the institution of higher learning which is equipped with computer systems in network settings, Librarians partake in remarks system to get feedback from the students as he is in contact with many students, by creating pre-determined accreditation body questionnaire, the usage of instruments like Survey Monkey, Google survey tools etc., which may help the institution

in collecting, analysing and interpreting data for more advancement in the curriculum and knowledge outcomes.

B. Role in Teaching, Learning and Evaluation

Library professionals guide students, research scholars and faculty fellow in their learning, instructing and research undertakings with their print and on-line information sources mostly books, journals, reference sources, e-resources, citation databases and annual analysis and reports these activities culminate in fast-tracking accreditation of program in higher institution of learning.

Quality of instruction provided in the institution relies on instructors' readiness to seek help with the aid of technological know-how and embrace the initiative to enrich teaching-learning. Library professionals direct and actively assist in creating on-line teaching space/ class rooms with the present on-line studying facilities using any Learning Management Systems such as:

- Zoom Classroom (<https://zoom.us/>),
- Microsoft Teams (<https://teams.microsoft.com/start>),
- Hypersay (a platform for live interactive presentations) <https://hypersay.com/live-presentations/>
- Google Form (For on-line Quiz/Test) (<https://www.google.com/forms/about/>),
- Google Classroom Teaching and Learning Platform (<https://classroom.google.com>) etc.

Teachers use library ICT enabled facilities such as on-line facilities for normal instruction and investigation (research) which are mostly aided by the University management and free local/online resources the library make them more visible and accessible to accreditation bodies. Developing Institutional repositories with the aid of the library and in sustaining the course resources and makes them accessible to the student's community in the network environment.

Library and librarians help in developing database. Library has centralized membership database of users, they will be in a position to create the database of enrolled students and researchers containing name, class, gender, ID, mobile, e-mail and share this information with accreditation body for on-line submission.

C. Role in Research, Innovations and Extension

Documentation of research program is important and it serves as a guiding principle for preserving code of ethics for research. This is done by the libraries which major mission is to ensure high-quality of research articles and PhD thesis, through plagiarism analysis for post graduate students pursuing M.Phil and PhD levels in different departments of University to test originality of their research work before submitting using authenticated anti-plagiarism Software. Code of Ethics for research and the implementation of which is ensured via the inclusion of research ethics in the research methodology course work, active involvement in institutional Ethics committees, Plagiarism test and Research Advisory Committee and for this the library professional has important role to play:

The library professionals create 'Academic Commons' and host some popular software's like SPSS, Statastika etc., and reference managing instrument like Mendeley, Zotero etc., which assist research exercise of the university.

The Librarians usually put together the list of journals accepted to the University Grants and inform the academic community and encourage the researchers in the higher institutions to publish in the UGC accepted journals and as well the journals indexed in SCOPUS/ Web of Science or National Citation Index databases. Efforts are made to create awareness among researcher to share experience on publication of papers by lecturer in Journals.

Library professionals assist and direct the faculty to boost e-content for e-PG, Under Graduate, MOOCs platform, any new Government Initiatives and Institutional Learning Management System.

The Librarians are properly versed with citation, scientometrics and bibliometric methods and as result they ought to collect normal Citation Index in Scopus/ Web of Science/PubMed Data Requirements of training faculty and as well to detect the h-Index of the university based on Scopus/ Web of Science – h-Index of the University.

D. Infrastructure and Learning Resources

The library is hub of information provide need-based collections, properly organized, maintained with suitable retrieval devices required. The library become relevant to accreditation, due to it centrally appealing and receives good perception from the users, if anything on the contrary the function of Library professional in accreditation exercise will become mockery.

The library is computerized with Integrated Library Management Software program and the library professionals are to ensure that all the activities and services are computerized with suitable OPAC/WEB-OPAC facility to enhance the efficiency of library system.

Proper records are required concerning provision of information sources and sustains use of data with services like distant access, CCTV monitored, Wi-Fi and RFID enabled library machine is tremendously desirable for efficient access and use of the library resources.

The library professionals encourage the institutions to subscribe or be member of any accessible free database which can also help the researchers to access e-books, journals and databases which can boost the collection of the institution.

The Library professionals makes the library a "Popular Place" on campus and one stop-point to gather essential information with ICT services for e-information access, Career education booth with resources, anti-plagiarism software program is used for checking the similarity index of thesis and dissertations, network surroundings to gives access to e-learning/teaching/research facilities and provision for Digital Language Lab; STP (Spoken Tutorial Project), Self-Learning packages, Online E-books, E-journals and Databases in nationwide Consortia, Citation Database and Gateway Portals, Videoconferencing, laptop loan, Online Courseware's and Remote access facility. Further patrons' sensitization and client workshops calendar of activities of the institution for optimal use of library sources, facilities and services.

E. Student Support and Progression

Users' activities are covered by the library professionals because they are important to library and library exists to serve user's Information needs. The library has to conduct consumer sensitization/patron orientation/user workshops at regular intervals concerning;

- ✓ Soft competencies
- ✓ Plagiarism testing instruments
- ✓ Skills improvement program
- ✓ Research output and scientometrics
- ✓ Use of library materials print and on-line
- ✓ New packages or new technological know-how being executed
- ✓ Authors' workshops- Research production and ethics etc.

The library professionals assist students to with practical competencies so as to allow them to get over with competitive exams or job interviews in banking, insurance, railway, Nigerian National Petroleum Cooperation (NNPC) etc. this is achieve by librarian establishing separate collections in the library and if possible, term it as 'Competitive Examination and Information Resource Centre' and make available and accessible with e-resources pertaining to Competitive examinations which can easily be accessible using portable hand mobile apps and there are as well free mobile apps accessible therefore, giving

the school age in accreditation exercise (E.g.,
<https://www.kopykitab.com/index.php?route=account/login>)

The library professionals guide learners with new best practices, by awarding Best patron/costumer award, motivational skill of encouraging studying habits, conducting exhibitions on a range of events like Librarian's Day, Teacher's Day, Women's Day, National events and likewise organize cultural and sporting activities for users which gives the institutions better chance to become prominent.

F. Roles in Governance, Leadership and Management

The library professionals involve in management and make a contribution in accomplishing institutional aspiration as Academic Board Member, IT Coordinator and Statutory Officer. The library professional does the extra responsibility assigned to them, in addition to the other activities.

Library professionals' responsibilities includes to inculcate values (Truth, Righteous conduct, Love, Non-Violence and peace); national values, human values, national integration, communal coherence and social harmony as well as for observance of essential responsibilities through exhibiting essential banner or displays and shape the national temper, e.g., by identifying and curbing the spread of fake information which may cause disharmony among fellow citizens

G. Roles in Institutional Values and Best Practices

Library professionals can exhibit gender sensitivity in offering services such as: Safety and Security, Counselling and Common Room. Library professionals might also assist green initiative on the campus through changing tubes/bulbs with LED bulbs and go for rain water harvesting. Library professionals promote and take part in Green Practices - Students, group of workers using a) Bicycles b) Public Transport c) Pedestrian pleasant roads, Plastic-free campus, Paperless office, green landscaping with shrubs and plants, green library scheme and waste management.

Quality guide of university or institution is the requirement of the hour and there is a need to enhance such best practices indicating documenting of Library Quality Manual. Library Code of conduct guide can be organized for clients and as well enhance a quality Manual which serves as a guide that contain the regulations and policies for collection development, services, penalties and scope for development of libraries.

Library professionals play key function in making accessible Braille Software/facilities, in particular and Physical facilities, provision for lift, Ramp/Rails, Rest Rooms, Scribes for examination and Special talent improvement for differently abled students.

One of the vital practices in addition to the 'Go Green Library' is 'Library News Café' service, whereby the considerable news articles relating to higher education be dispatched to all the faculty and student through creating the social media group e.g., WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook groups.

Conclusion

It is concluded that the Higher Institutions of learning libraries must create "Library Quality and Academic Accreditation unit" headed by knowledgeable library practitioner or expert to works towards development of the library structure by way of focusing on useful resource management, service recognition and by monitoring of the undertaken of library units. Given an enabling environment to operate in this era of information explosion, the users in the institutions of higher learning will have optimal utilization of information resources for quality performance in the output of the institution and will make them achieve better result in terms of institutional or program accreditation. The librarians work in accord with the student, researchers and teachers in the institutions of higher learning to perform their main roles or duties with the support and encouragement from the managements, the accreditations activities will always record sound success.

Reference

- Ademiluyi, L. F., & Okwuanaso, S. I. (2018). Influence of National Board for Technical Education Accreditation on the Quality of Administration and Leadership of Polytechnic Office Technology and Management Programmes. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education (NIGJBED)*, 1(2), 387-396.
- Altbach, P. G., Reisberg, L., & Rumbley, L. E. (2019). *Trends in global higher education: Tracking an academic revolution*. Brill.
- Babatola, J. E., & Babatola, M. M. J. Overview of Tertiary Education in Nigeria (1947-2020): Structural Analysis and Policy Framework.
- Booth, S., & Read, S. (2017). Benchmarking course approval, accreditation, review and third-party arrangements.
- Cullen, R. (2003, August). Benchmarking: overview and context. In *World Library and Information Congress: 69th IFLA General Conference and Council* (pp. 1-9).
- D-e Wit, H., & Altbach, P. G. (2021). Internationalization in higher education: global trends and recommendations for its future. *Policy Reviews in Higher Education*, 5(1), 28-46.
- Ikelegbe, S. (2020). Quality Assurance in Teacher Education in Nigeria. *Quality assurance*, 6(3).
- Israel, P. C. (2020). Assessment of Curriculum Load of the National Commission for colleges of Education's Minimum standard for Nigeria Certificate in Education. *Journal of Research and Opinion*, 7(1), 2599-2605.
- National Board for Technical Education (1992). *Technical Education Report I*. Kaduna: Ade Clear Type Press.
- National Board for Technical Education (1993). *Guidelines and procedures for the establishment of private polytechnics, monotecnics and similar tertiary institutions in Nigeria*. Kaduna: Atman Press.
- National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) (1996). *Minimum standard for vocational and technical education*: Abuja
- National Universities Commission (2017). *Benchmark minimum academic standards for undergraduate programmes in Nigerian universities*, Education. Abuja
- Nguyen, C. H., Marshall, S. J., & Evers, C. W. (2021). Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation Implementation in Several Countries across the World and Lessons Learned for Vietnam. *Vietnam Journal of Education*, 5(1), 11-17.
- Nnorom, S. U. (2021). Politics of National Universities Commission (NUC) Programme Accreditation Practices and Quality University Education in South-east Nigeria. *The Pedagogue: Festschrift in Honour of Professor Chukwuemeka Eleazar Mbanugo*, 1(2).
- Odo, S. N. (2018). Extent of Adoptability of NCCE'S Strategies for Quality Assurance in NCE Business Education Programme by Colleges of Education in Enugu State. *Nigerian Journal of Business Education (NIGJBED)*, 1(2), 1-12.
- Philip, G., Altbach, L., Reisberg, L., & Rumbley, E. (2009). Trends in global higher education: Tracking an academic revolution. In a report prepared for the UNESCO 2009 world conference on higher education.
- Sanyal, B. C., & Martin, M. (2007). Quality assurance and the role of accreditation: An overview. *Report: Higher Education in the World 2007: Accreditation for Quality Assurance: What is at Stake?*
- Ta, H. T. T., Nguyen, H. T. T., & Van Pham, T. (2019). Institutional and programme accreditation. In *Quality Assurance in Vietnamese Higher Education* (pp. 183-212). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.