

THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN THE ACCREDITATION OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES IN FUT MINNA.

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this study is to find out the role of academic libraries in the accreditation of undergraduate programmes in Federal University of Technology Minna. The specific objectives are to: identify undergraduate accreditation requirement for various departments compared with library holdings, identify university accreditation requirements compared with library holding, find out if current materials available in academic libraries for accreditation of undergraduate programmes are adequate and determine the relevance of the materials that are in stock in the academic library for accreditation requirements. This study is limited to Federal University of Technology, Minna with all categories of librarians as target respondents. The study adopted census design method called total enumeration as means of gathering data with a target population of 97 staff of the library. The questionnaire was used as instrument of data collection, the finding reveals that libraries are actively involved in all accreditation process since they provide information resources needed by the university to be accredited. It was concluded that a number of constraints such as inadequate funding and erratic power supply affect library role in accreditation. The study recommended provision of adequate financial support for academic libraries to enable them function effectively. Alternative power supply should also be constantly available for the library.

Introduction

As the number of Universities continue to increase in Nigeria, it becomes increasingly important to streamline inspection and supervision of Universities and their activities in order to maintain acceptable quality (National Universities' Commission, 2009). The numbers of Nigerian Universities have increased since the establishment of the first University in 1948 in Ibadan. The number of courses offered by these Universities (State, Federal and Private) and the corresponding student population have also increased. According to Bello (2014), accreditation of programmes offered by Universities is key to ensuring standards across the institutions.

The accreditation of degree and other academic programmes is an acknowledgement process in which standards, guidelines and procedures are evaluated to ascertain the quality of a particular programme by accrediting authorities which are either government agencies or specialised and professional bodies. Okebukola (2006) opined that accreditation of undergraduate programmes in Nigerian Universities is to ensure that the provision of minimum academic standard documents are attained, maintained and enhanced. Accreditation is a process of examining departmental capability of maintaining programmes with adequate resources, merit rating of resources so as to enhance the quality of student output. Accreditation as a process ensures that the curriculum, personnel, infrastructure, learning materials as well as the learning environment satisfy the needs and relevance of a University to achieve their predefined objectives. The process is usually undertaken to assess academic standards of various undergraduate programmes in various higher institutions of learning. In Nigeria accreditation function is administered by the National Universities Commission (NUC) for all Universities (including Federal, State and Private Universities) whereas the National Board for Technical education (NBTE) handles that of Polytechnics and Mono-technics and finally, the National Commission for Colleges of Education. They are concerned with the accreditation of other higher educational institutions like colleges of education and other institutes that are responsible for training teachers. It is also important to know that some professional or specialised courses are assessed by separate body or agencies. Some of these professional and specialised courses include: Law, Medicine, Engineering and Accounting.

Nkiko and Yusuf (2007) assert that accreditation is a recognition process in which standards, policies and procedures are evaluated to ascertain the quality of a particular programme by accrediting authorities, which are either government agencies or specialised professional bodies. Over the

years, various developments have been taking place relative to the monitoring, assessment and improvement of the quality of different components of higher education. Accreditation bodies therefore operate to ensure that students receive education continually with standards for entry into practice in their respective fields or disciplines. Accreditation process is an opportunity for schools to examine their programmes and take note of progress made as well as gaps to be filled, thus acting as a veritable feedback mechanism, as well as quality assurance.

Akomolafe (2009) refers to benchmarks for accreditation of academic programmes as: examining adequacy of admission requirements, resource assessment, examining philosophy of the programmes and academic status of academic personnel. She further identified adequacy of office accommodation and curriculum in line with National University Commission Benchmark, budget allocation to departments: external moderation of scripts, results, scores reports of student's work capability, and library facilities. Physical facilities consisting of number of library staff members, volumes of the collection, currency of information resources, physical structure of the library and budget allocation. Librarians as Principal Officers of the University, are actively involved in the accreditation primarily in consideration of the need for quality of the student's educational attainment and experience. The Library's acquisition policy reflects the specialisation and priorities of the institution, the educational goals and methods of faculty. Adegbesan (2011) submits that the future of accreditation exercise is essential since the criteria that are formulated and applied may affect the proportion of the institutional resources that are available to libraries and the prospects for their performance.

Obadara and Abayomi (2013) define accreditation as a process of self-study and external quality review used in higher education to scrutinise an institution and its programmes for quality standards and need for quality improvement. Similarly, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) in Washington, US defines accreditation as a method of external appraisal by higher education to examine Colleges, Universities and educational programmes for quality assurance and quality improvement. The process is planned to determine whether an institution has met or exceeded the published standards (set by an external body such as a government, national quality assurance agency, or a professional association) for accreditation, and whether it is achieving its mission and stated purpose. Accreditation process usually involves a self-assessment of the programme by the institution, a site visit by peer reviewers, a report of that review, and a decision to accredit, deny accreditation, or put it on

interim. However, the extent to which each University accepts and fulfils the responsibilities inherent in this process is a measure of its concern for freedom and quality in higher education and of its commitment to strive for and achieve excellence in its endeavours. The library and its University has symbiotic relationships, therefore the library is expected to pass the accreditation of its resources.

The academic or University library is an integral part of a University, which exists to meet the information needs of students, staff, researchers and other users in the community. Onwudinjo (2015) posits that the main function of academic library is to serve as an auxiliary to its parent institution in carrying out its objectives. He also noted that the library is an important intellectual resource of an academic community, and helps the University of fulfil the curriculum requirements and promote studies and research. Relevant books and other information materials are provided by stressing the academic library as a learning centre for the students, as it functions to provide materials that are needed for learning all courses. Abubakar (2011) concurs that library is the learning centre to the undergraduates as it provides materials that are needed for learning all potential courses that may be offered. This is why all academic library collections, are setup to meet the information and research need of any academic programme offered by the institution.

Afolabi (2014) revealed that accreditation is awarded to higher education programmes whose libraries and human resources meet the educational requirements. It centres on a review of a programme's content and delivery that includes area such as relevance, coherence, challenge, assessment, staffing, quality assurances and resources. He emphasised how indispensable the University and its library is. This view was further shared by Edem, Ani, and Ocheibi (2008) as they expressed the idea that University libraries function as partners in supporting the University in teaching, learning and research, thus making them the "heart" of the Universities. Since the University and its library have a symbiotic relationship, it is necessary for the University to stock its library with the necessary human and materials resources in preparation for any accreditation process.

Statement of the Problem

The academic library is the centre-point of focus in Quality Assurance assessment. The quality of service rendered by the University library is an important factor among other considerations during accreditation. Accreditation of undergraduate programmes are supposed to be a process

of measuring progress and quality assurance through continuous evolution of academic standards of which the quality of library services, funding, information resources, physical infrastructure, number of staff are determinant factors. In spite of this important role played by academic libraries during accreditation, some undergraduate programmes fail to gain accreditation. Could this negative outcome be attributed to factors like irrelevant library information resources, inadequate funding of the library and lack of standard library building?

It is against this backdrop that the researchers embarked on this study to investigate the role academic libraries play in the accreditation of undergraduate programmes in the Federal University of Technology Minna.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to find out the role of academic libraries during accreditation of undergraduate programmes in the Federal University of Technology Minna. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify undergraduate accreditation requirement for various departments compared with library holdings.
2. Identify University accreditation requirements compared with library holding.
3. Find out if current materials available in academic libraries for accreditation of undergraduate programme are adequate.
4. Determine the relevance of the materials that are in stock in the academic library in relation to accreditation requirement.

Research Questions

1. What are the undergraduate accreditation requirements for various departments as it relates to library resources?
2. What are the University accreditation requirements as regards library resources in FUTMinna.
3. Are the current materials available in FUT Minna library for accreditation of undergraduate programmes adequate?
4. How relevant are the materials that are stocked in the FUT Minna library for accreditation requirement?

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis will be tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between academic libraries and accreditation of undergraduate programmes.

Significance of the Study

This paper examines the role of academic libraries in accreditation of undergraduate programmes in Federal University of Technology. The findings of this research will significantly assist Government, governing council of institutions, library managements, students and researchers to streamline standards in the education system. For Librarians, the study will help them with required information by acquiring relevant resources in meeting accreditation demands. This study will serve as guide for academic libraries to implement policies, enabling them to function effectively.

This study specifies Federal University of Technology Minna as an addition to the already existing literature on the role of academic library in accreditation of undergraduate programme in other Nigerian Universities.

Scope of the Study

This study is centered on examining the role played by academic libraries in accreditation of undergraduate programmes and is limited to Federal University of Technology Minna. This is due to financial constraints and time. Therefore, every research effort will be based on the library under study.

Methodology

This study adopted the census design of total enumeration. It is considered appropriate to gather relevant data on the role of University library in the accreditation of undergraduate programmes in Federal University of Technology, Minna. Lohr (2009) avers that it allows the researcher to focus data gathering on the identified case study and carry out in depth study of the total population.

Population of the Study

The population of the study covered all the academic library staff of Federal University of Technology, Minna. There are 97 members of staff. This include professionals, para-professional and non-professional. The break down is shown on the table 1.

Table 1: Population Distribution Table

Category	Numbers of Staff
Professionals	28
Para-professionals	19
Non-professionals	50
Total	97

Sample and Sampling Technique

The population for this research study covers all library staff of Federal University of Technology Minna, which is ninety-seven (97). The research involved the use of total enumeration otherwise called census.

Research Instrument

The instrument used during the course of this research was questionnaire. The questionnaire was selected because it provides high anonymity for the studied population and gives a very sincere response for academic research. It was designed into two (2) sections. Section A asked personal (Demographic) data such as: category of staff, gender, unit and working experience. Section B asked structured research question to find out the role of academic libraries in accreditation of undergraduate programmes.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Onwukanjo and Okwilagwe (2016) citing Nwaorgu (2001) opines that validity of the instruments implies adopting procedures to ensure the instrument measure what they are supposed to measure. Therefore to ensure face and content validity of the questionnaire, they were served to Senior Lecturers and Associate Professors in the Department of Library and Information Technology (LIT) FUT Minna. It was corrected and pretested on the undergraduate students of Faculty of Social Sciences University of Ibadan.

The Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine the reliability coefficient of the instruments. The values obtained were 0.87 for Accreditation of Undergraduate Programmes Questionnaire (AUPQ) and 0.79 for Role of Academic Libraries Questionnaire (RALQ).

Methods of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics off requeryency tables and simple percentages was used in the data analysis for the socio-demographic information and to answer the research questions, while T-test was used to test the hypothesis.

Data Analysis based on the Research Question

Research question 1: What are the undergraduate accreditation requirements for various departments as they relate to library resources?

Library's role in departmental accreditation requirement

On the issue of library staff's awareness of library's role in accreditation, 57(88%) respondents were in the affirmative while 8(12%) scored negative.

Table 2: Target volumes for the University library by NUC

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	48	74
No	17	26
Total	65	100

Table 2 reveal that 48(78%) of the respondents indicated that the library is given a target number of resources to meet up with before accreditation while 17 (26%) responded in the negative for any given target number of information resources.

Table 3: Required resources according to library standard

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	53	80
No	13	20
Total	65	100.0

Table 3 shows that 13(20%) of the respondents negated the view that the library has a set standard to meet while 53(80%) of the population studied indicated positively that the library has a set standard to meet for accreditation.

Table 4: Kinds of information resources necessary for accreditation

Resources	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Books	13	20
Serials and Journal	-	-
Electronic resources	-	-
Books, serials and journals	14	22
All of the above	38	58
Total	65	100

On the kinds of information resources necessary for accreditation 13(20%) of the respondents indicated books, 14(22%) of the respondents indicates books and serials while, 38(58%) of the studied population indicated all of the above.

Research question 2: what are the University accreditation requirements are regards library resources?

Table 5: Number of volumes of information resources libraries stock for accreditation

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
0-200	14	22
2000– 4000	17	26
4000– 6000	10	15
6000 and above	24	37
Total	65	100.0

Table 5 shows that 14(22%) of the respondent indicate 0-2000 volumes of books as requirement for accreditation, 17(26%) of the respondents are of the opinion that 2000 – 4000 volumes of information resources are required for accreditation, 10(15%) of the population studied indicated that 4000 – 6000 volumes while, 24(37%) of the respondents indicated 6000 and above as requirement for accreditation resources libraries should stock for accreditation.

Table 6: University library meeting accreditation requirements

A response of 65 (100) scored yes to the library meeting the accreditation requirements.

Table 6: Factors considered by NUC for library accreditation

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Space	13	20
Size of collection	9	14
Sources of fund	-	-
Space and size of library	19	29
All of the above	24	37
Total	65	100

According to Table 6 13(20%) respondents indicated space, 9(14%) indicated size of library, 19(29%) respondents indicated space and size of library while 24(37%) selected all of the above.

Table 7: Challenges libraries face in meeting necessary accreditation requirements

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Inadequate funding	39	60
Inadequate skilled personnel and E-resources	-	-
Erratic power supply	7	11
Inadequate funding and erratic power supply	13	20
All of the above	6	9
Total	65	100

Analysis shows the challenges hindering libraries from providing necessary accreditation requirements which indicate that 39 (60%) of the population studied selected inadequate funding, 7(11%) selected erratic power supply, 13(20%) selected inadequate funding and erratic power supply while 6(9%) selected all of the above.

Research question 3: Are the current materials available in FUT library for accreditation of undergraduate programmes adequate?

Table 8: Adequacy of resources

On adequacy of resources 62(95%) of respondents indicated Yes that the information resources available in the library are current and up-to-date while, 3(5%) of the population indicated No.

Table 9: Currency range of information materials

Currency by year	Frequency	Percentage (%)
One year	19	29
Two years	24	37
Three years	22	34
Four and above	-	-
Total	65	100

The data for Table 9 is as indicated.

Table 10: Level of adequacy of information resources

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very high	14	22
High	49	75
Low	2	3
Very low	-	-
Total	65	100

Table 10 shows level of adequacy of information materials in the library. It shows 14(22%) of the respondents selected very high, 49(75%) of the respondents selected high while 2(3%) of the respondents selected low.

The data for currency shows that 56(86%) of the respondent are of the opinion that currency of information materials is necessary for accreditation while 9(14%) did not consider it necessary for accreditation.

Research question 4: How relevant are the resources that are stocked in the FUT library for accreditation.

Relevance of resources for accreditation

The relevance of the available information resources stocked in the library for accreditation shows that 35(54%) of the population studied considered relevant while 4(6%) of the respondent indicated that the materials are irrelevant.

Relevance as essential requirement

Data scored indicated that 61(94%) of the respondent indicated that relevance of information resources is essential requirement for accreditation while 4(6%) of the respondent are the opinion that it is not an essential requirement for accreditation.

Table 11: Responsibility of ensuring relevance of resources

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Library staff	20	31
Academic planning unit	-	-
Department representative	4	6
Library staff and departmental representatives	24	37
All of the above	17	26
Total	65	100

Table 11 show that 20(31% of the respondents indicated that library staff are responsible for ensuring relevance of information resources while 4(6%) of the respondent are of the opinion that departmental representatives are responsible for ensuring relevance of information resources, 24(37%) of the respondents indicated that library staff and departmental representative are responsible for ensuring relevance of information resources while 17(26%) of the respondents selected all of the above.

Table 12: Coverage of the available information resource as regards curriculum

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Excellent	17	26
Good	46	71
Average	2	3
Poor	-	-
Total	65	100

Analysis on Table 12 indicates coverage of information materials stock by library for accreditation which indicate that 17(26%) of the respondent scored excellent, 46(71%) of the respondent are of the opinion that coverage of available information materials stock are good while 2(3%) of the respondent are of the opinion that the coverage of information materials is average.

Discussion of finding based on research questions.

Research question 1: what are the undergraduate accreditation requirement for various departments as it relates to library resources?

The study revealed that the academic librarians were aware of the fact that library plays a major role in supporting accreditation of departmental courses. The library is given a target volume of resources to meet up with before accreditation, and that the library has requirement set by itself for accreditation. The study reveals that the kind of information resources necessary for accreditation are: books, electronic resources, serials and journals.

The library is responsible for acquiring information resources in various formats in order to meet up with accreditation requirements, this is further supported by the fact that, staff are aware of the role library play in supporting accreditation. However, the findings is in line with ACICS (2016) who observed that quality assurance does not only involve evaluation of institutional management facilities but over library resources (which include books and non-book materials). Nkiri and Yusuf (2007) concur that academic libraries serve as major gateway to accreditation.

Research question 2: What are the University accreditation requirements as regards Library resources?

Findings revealed that University's requirement to meet up with accreditation should be from six thousand volumes (6000) and above as the range of required volume of information resources necessary for accreditation. The University library fulfils accreditation requirement in this respect. Space, size of collection and source of funds are factors considered by NUC before granting accreditation based on Main Library assessment. Challenges libraries face in meeting up with necessary requirements are inadequate funding, inadequate skilled personnel, erratic power supply and inadequate electronic resource among others are the greatest challenges hindering the library from carrying out its accreditation functions effectively. These findings are in agreement with Nkiko and Yusuf

(2007) who emphasized that the volume of collection and fund given to libraries to allow acquisition of library resources is essential in the assessment process.

Research question 3: Are the current materials available in academic library for accreditation of undergraduate programmes adequate?

Findings reveal that the information resources available are current and the currency range is from one to three years. Majority of the respondents also indicated that the level of adequacy is high for the accreditation of undergraduate programmes. Oseghale (2008) reveals that the currency of information resources are among others factors considered when academic library embark on collection building for accreditation purpose.

Research question 4: How relevant are the information resources stocked in FUT library for accreditation?

Based on earlier data analysis, majority of the respondents revealed that the information resources are very relevant. The stakeholders responsible for ensuring relevance are University management, professional library staff, departmental representatives and academic planning unit staff. Investigation also revealed that the available information resources covers all the University's curriculum as majority of the respondents scored positively on the item. The information resources in the library that was found to be relevant to users curriculum, in addition to the wide and pervasive coverage it has on the curriculum of users is in agreement with the study of Bello (2014) who maintained that the role of University libraries is indispensable in the recognition of the set objective of the parent institution by supporting the University programmes through operative planning, acquisition of current and relevant information materials and making them readily available as required by the University community.

Discussion

Investigation revealed that the T-test table indicates the relationship between Academic Libraries and Accreditation of undergraduate programmes. A statistically significant relationship was found from the result between Academic Libraries and Accreditation of undergraduate programmes in Federal University of Technology, Minna. ($P(T \leq t) = 0.509106$, $P < 0.05$). Since there is a significant relationship between Academic Libraries and Accreditation of undergraduate programmes, it implies that academic libraries have positive impact on Accreditation of undergraduate programmes. Consequently, the

hypothesis was rejected, which means that there is a significant relationship between Academic Libraries and Accreditation of undergraduate programmes. The significant positive relationship revealed by hypothesis is in line with the questionnaire statements that the library plays important roles in supporting the accreditation of undergraduate programmes and that there are requirements the academic library must meet before accreditation. This is in line with Bello (2014), who opined that academic library played an inspiring role in accreditation process of any undergraduate programme as they guarantee provision of up-to-date information resources needed for learning and teaching with assurance of easy access and also in agreement with Nkiro and Yusuf (2007) who posited that accreditation will suffer if the academic library is not well stocked.

Conclusion

Accreditation of undergraduate programmes do not only fall on staff development, funding, physical facilities and so on, but also on adequacy of library facilities and services. The NUC BMAS relates the curriculum to library services that should be available to student and staff. Therefore, University libraries are considered as one of the fundamental factor required for accreditation of any academic programme in Nigerian Universities.

Recommendation

We recommend as follows:

1. That sufficient financial support should be given to academic libraries to enable them function effectively
2. That alternative power supply should always be available for the library for stability of the system.
3. That sufficient skilled personnel with professional qualification in librarianship should be put in charge of the library
4. It is considered beneficial that academic libraries should invest in adequate acquisition of electronic resources and subscription to databases in streamlining with global practice.

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