

## Perceived Influence of Lecturers' Rating of Accreditation Exercise on Quality Assurance in Universities in South East States, Nigeria

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### Abstract

This study examined perceived influence of lecturers' ratings of accreditation exercise on quality assurance in universities in south east states in Nigeria. The study was carried out using two research questions and two hypotheses. The research design adopted for the study is a descriptive survey design which involved inferential approach. The population of the study comprise 3,843 members of academic staff of the five public state owned universities in south east geo-political zone of Nigeria. The sample for this study is 384 academic staff from the five state universities in the South East Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. Proportionate cluster random sampling technique was used as the sampling technique for this study. The instrument used for collecting the data for the study is a rating scale titled: "Extent of Accreditation Exercise Influence on Quality Assurance Scale (EAEIQAS)". The instrument was validated by two experts in Measurement and Evaluation and three experts in Educational Management. The reliability index of 0.80 was gotten for the instrument using Cronbach alpha statistics. The research questions were answered using mean score and standard deviation statistics while the hypotheses were tested using one sample t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The major findings are that the lecturers' ratings of accreditation exercise on academic content of state universities in South East is high and significantly above average, and the ratings of accreditation exercise on staffing of state universities in South East is high and significantly above average. Based on the findings, it was

recommended among others that the universities should improve more on their academic content as this will help to inculcate the required academic knowledge and skills to her graduates as a sign of quality indicator.

**Key words:** Perceived influence of accreditation; Accreditation exercise; Quality assurance; Higher education; National universities commission

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### INTRODUCTION

Education in Nigeria is viewed as an instrument for national development and social change. It is essential for the enhancement of quality life. Perhaps, it is on the basis of this that the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013) states 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

and Enemesit-Edet, 2014). 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 actually achieves its purpose. 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 (Akwegwu, 2014). 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. Accreditation involves the evaluation of programmes to improve upon excellence, to enable higher institutions face competition and attract client, to provide relevant profile for better result achievement, and to provide the rationale for funds granted by government and external donors (Oladosu, 2011).

Obadare and Alaka (2013) opine that accreditation of universities is it institutional or programme is a way of examining the state of the institution in relation to where it ought to be. The opinion 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 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. Obadare and Alaka (2013) describe 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.

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.
- Ensure employers of labour (both local and international) that Nigerian graduates possess required competence in requisite areas of specialization, as well as,
- Assure the international community that programmes offered in Nigerian universities are of acceptable standards and their graduates are qualified for further studies.

Accreditation is an evaluation of institutions' offerings against the minimum academic standard and qualities of a given standard (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 other words, quality of education means the relevance and appropriateness of the education programme to the needs of the community for which it is provided. The quality and effectiveness of academic programmes of a university are measured, in part, by the quality of education provided. This is essential because, a university's integrity is determined by its ability to attain, maintain and sustain its established character, process and purpose of its academic pursuit as an institution of higher education.

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) opines that the concept of quality assurance obtain and 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. Okebukola (2012) describes 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 towards ensuring 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. 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 & Alaka, 2013). Many scholars have revealed the role of accreditations of academic programmes on university quality assurance. The NUC performance in accreditation was at a moderate level with 63% of the respondents adjudging the NUC performance in accreditation as moderate (Ibijola, 2014).

The agency has always warned the general public to verify if a University is approved before patronizing them (NUC, 2017). The NUC comprises specialists 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. To the best knowledge of the researcher, although a lot of studies have been done on this topic in the western countries and in some parts of Nigeria, but little or no research has been carried out on this topic in South East Nigeria universities. This study therefore sought to fill this gap. It is against this backdrop that the researcher is motivated to find out the rating of accreditation exercise influence on quality assurance in the South East State owned universities. The study examined the level of influence of accreditation exercises on the quality assurance on these universities in terms of high positive influence, moderate positive influence low positive influence and very low positive influence in the areas of academic content, staffing, and physical facilities.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to examine perceived influence of lecturers' ratings of accreditation exercise on quality assurance in universities in south east state. Specifically, the study ascertained the:

- ratings of accreditation exercise influence on academic content of state universities in South East;
- ratings of accreditation exercise influence on staffing of state universities in South East;

### **Research Questions**

Two research questions guided the study.

- What are the mean score ratings of accreditation exercise influence on academic content of state universities in South East?
- What are the mean score ratings of accreditation exercise influence on staffing of state universities in South East?

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 levels of significance:

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** The mean score ratings of accreditation exercise influence on academic content of state universities in South East is not significantly greater than the criterion mean of 18.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** The mean score ratings of accreditation exercise influence on staffing of state universities in South East is not significantly greater than the criterion mean of 18.

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### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

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In a university system, accreditation exercises are required to maintain quality improvement and productivity. Okebukola (2006) described accreditation as a process of examining the availability and adequacy of resources, merit rating of resources and programmes in order to enhance quality of output. This means that accreditation involves the process of ensuring that curricula, physical facilities, personnel, funds and so on meet the needs of the university to achieve its stated philosophy and objectives. Obadara and Alaka (2013) pointed out further that accrediting bodies assemble a group of peers to review the self-study report, conduct site visits and render judgements used in the accrediting process. Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA 2018) informs that accreditation exercise is an agreeable process of self-review and peer review for the improvement of academic quality and public accountability. According to the Commission, accreditation exercise shall initially cover all undergraduate degree programmes being taught in all Nigerian universities. In other words, the process allows for improvement upon the content of academic programmes, the quality of staff members, physical facilities, library holdings as well as funding. Amaechina, Briggs, & Inemesit-Edet, (2014) noted that the process usually involves preparation and self-examination, peer review, visits and examination and continuous review. Success results in the accreditation of a programme or an institution. Cheung in Akhemonkhan and Raimi (2014) was of the view that there are seven areas of improvement that is often targeted. These include: Improvement of Teachers, Learners, Curriculum, Evaluation, Classroom, Environment, School Management and Teacher Education Improvement. Oladosu (2012) submits that, quality may also be considered on the basis of how good and efficient the teachers are, how adequate and accessible the facilities and materials needed for effective teaching and learning are and how prepared the graduates are for meeting the challenges of life and for solving the problems of society. However, a number of studies had been done on the concept and context of accreditation and quality assurance in Nigerian Tertiary institutions, none known to the researchers had been done within the context of

State owned universities in South-East of Nigeria. Also, most stakeholders would agree that accreditation has proved beneficial for higher education in Nigeria but no systematic study has been done on lecturers' ratings of accreditation exercise influence on quality assurance in south east state owned universities, and thus created a gap in literature. Effort to fill in the above identified gap necessitated this study.

## METHOD

The research design adopted for the study is the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprise 3,843 members of academic staff of the five public universities in south east geo-political zone of Nigeria. The zone has five state universities. The stated figure is made up of 3,843 members of academic staff from the State Universities. The distribution of the population of the study in the state universities are as follows: IMSU 534, ABSU 625, ANSU 592, ESUT 1200, EBSU 892 (The number of academic staff were obtained from the Personnel Units of the various universities in the south east geo-political zone of Nigeria). The sample for this study is 384 academic staff from the five state universities in the South East Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. Proportionate cluster random sampling technique was used to draw out 10% of the population of the academic staff from each university proportionately based on their population strength. Cluster sampling is a method that is often used to study large populations, particularly those that are widely geographically dispersed. The instrument used for data collection is a rating scale prepared by the researcher titled "Extent of Accreditation Exercise Influence on Quality Assurance Scale (EAEIQAS)" which was based on NUC scoring criteria during accreditation exercise. The rating scale contains 4 clusters of 24 items structured along a five (5) point scale scoring guide of Very High Extent (VHE) = 5; High Extent (HE) = 4; Moderate Extent (ME) = 3, Low Extent (LE) = 2 and Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1. See appendix A for a copy of the instrument. The instrument was subjected to face validation by five specialists; two from the Department of Educational Measurement and Evaluation Unit, two from Educational Management and Planning, Imo State University, Owerri and one from Educational Management and Policy Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Copies of purpose of the study, research questions, and hypothesis were given to them to check the appropriateness of the instruments. To establish the reliability of the instrument, the rating scale was administered to a group of 30 academic staff in a university in South-South of Nigeria using one administration approach to determine the internal consistency reliability of the items in the instrument. The scores were collated and scored and further computed using Cronbach alpha to determine the

internal consistency of the items which gave an index of 0.80, and 0.84. 384 copies of the rating scale were administered to the academic staff of the universities by the researcher with the help of four research assistants. The research questions were answered using mean score and standard deviation statistics while the hypotheses were tested using one sample t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS

### Research Question 1

**RQ<sub>1</sub>:** What are the ratings of lecturers regarding extent of accreditation exercise influence on academic content of state universities in South East?

**Table 1**  
**Descriptive statistics (Mean & Standard Deviation) results of the ratings of lecturers regarding extent of accreditation exercise influence on academic content of state universities in South East**

S/N	Items	n	$\sum X$	$\bar{X}$	S	Remarks
1	Philosophy and Objectives of programmes	384	1644	4.28	.851	VHE
2	Curriculum of programmes	384	1531	3.99	1.061	HE
3	Admission requirements	384	1284	3.34	1.634	ME
4	Academic regulations	384	1437	3.74	1.388	HE
5	Tests and examinations	384	1467	3.82	1.210	HE
6	Practical/ Project works	384	1183	3.08	1.492	ME
	Cluster/Pooled Mean				22.26	HE
	Mean of Item Means			3.71		

Sample Size (n), Summation ( $\sum X$ ), Mean ( $\bar{X}$ ), Standard Deviation (S), and Remarks

Table 1 shows mean scores and standard deviations used in answering research question one in order to ascertain the ratings of lecturers regarding extent of accreditation exercise influence on academic content of state universities in South East. Laying emphasis on the item criterion decision mean, the result points out that item 1 was considered to be on a very high extent, items 2, 4 and 5 are high extent while items 3 and 6 are moderate extent. The values of standard deviations are seen to be small and are far from the mean, indicating that the scores in the distribution are homogeneous. The cluster mean is 22.26, revealing that the extent of accreditation exercise influence on academic content of state universities in South East is high.

### Hypothesis 1

**H<sub>01</sub>:** The mean ratings of lecturers regarding extent of

accreditation exercise influence on academic content of state universities in South East is not significantly greater than the criterion mean of 18.

**Table 2**  
**Inferential (one sample t-test) results for testing the ratings of lecturers regarding extent of accreditation exercise influence on academic content of state universities in South East**

n	$\mu$	S	S.E	df	$t_{cal}$	$t_{tab}$	Decision	
384	22.26	18	2.961	0.151	383	28.165	1.645	Reject $H_{01}$

Sample Size (n), Mean ( $\bar{X}$ ), Standard Deviation (S), Standard Error (SE), degree of freedom (df), one sample t-test statistics and Decision

Table 2 shows the result of the test for hypothesis one to establish the significance of the ratings of lecturers regarding extent of accreditation exercise influence on academic content of state universities in South East. The outcome indicates that the t-calculated value of 28.165 is greater than the t-tabulated value of 1.645. Hence, rejecting the null hypothesis, revealing that the mean ratings of lecturers regarding extent of accreditation exercise influence on academic content of state universities in South East is significantly greater than

the criterion mean of 18. This indicates that the extent of accreditation exercise influence on academic content of state universities in South East is high and significantly above average rating.

**Research Question 2**

**RQ<sub>2</sub>:** What are the ratings of lecturers regarding extent of accreditation exercise influence on staffing of state universities in South East?

**Table 3**  
**Descriptive statistics (Mean & Standard Deviation) results of the ratings of lecturers regarding extent of accreditation exercise influence on staffing of state universities in South East**

S/N	Items:	n	$\sum X$	$\bar{X}$	S	Remarks
7	Staff/student Ratio system in your department	384	1395	3.63	1.322	HE
8	Adequacy of the teaching staff	384	1354	3.53	1.377	HE
9	Staff Mix by Rank	384	1263	3.29	1.464	ME
10	Number of teaching staff with PhDs	384	1187	3.09	1.493	ME
11	The number of non-teaching staff	384	1345	3.50	1.412	HE
12	Development programmes for staff	384	1304	3.40	1.438	ME
	Cluster/Pooled Mean			20.44		HE
	Mean of Item Means			3.407		

Sample Size (n), Summation ( $\sum X$ ), Mean ( $\bar{X}$ ), Standard Deviation (S), and Remarks

Table 3 shows mean scores and standard deviations used in answering research question one in order to ascertain the ratings of lecturers regarding extent of accreditation exercise influence on staffing of state universities in South East. Laying emphasis on the item criterion decision mean, the result pointed out that items 7, 8 and 11 were considered to be high extent while items 9, 10 and 12 are moderate extent. The values of standard deviations are seen to be small and are far from

the mean, indicating that the scores in the distribution are homogeneous. The cluster mean is 20.44, revealing that the extent of accreditation exercise influence on staffing of state universities in South East is high.

**Hypothesis 2**

**H<sub>02</sub>:** The mean ratings of lecturers regarding extent of accreditation exercise influence on staffing of state universities in South East is not significantly greater than the criterion mean of 18.

**Table 4**  
**Inferential (one sample t-test) results for testing the ratings of lecturers regarding extent of accreditation exercise influence on staffing of state universities in South East**

n	$\mu$	S	S.E	df	$t_{cal}$	$t_{tab}$	Decision	
384	20.44	18	3.676	0.188	383	12.995	1.645	Reject $H_{02}$

Sample Size (n), Mean ( $\bar{X}$ ), Standard Deviation (S), Standard Error (SE), degree of freedom (df), one sample t-test statistics and Decision

Table 4 shows the result of the test for hypothesis one to establish the significance of the ratings of lecturers regarding extent of accreditation exercise influence on staffing of state universities in South East. The outcome indicates that the t-calculated value of 12.995 is greater than the t-tabulated value of 1.645. Hence, rejecting the null hypothesis, revealing that the mean ratings

of lecturers regarding extent of accreditation exercise influence on staffing of state universities in South East is significantly greater than the criterion mean of 18. This indicates that the extent of accreditation exercise influence on staffing of state universities in South East is high and significantly above average rating.

## Discussion of Findings

It was revealed in this study that the extent of accreditation exercise influence on academic content of state universities in South East is high and significantly above average rating. This shows that accreditation exercise has affected the academic content of state owned universities to a high extent in the following aspects; philosophy and objectives of programmes, curriculum of programmes, admission requirements, academic regulations, tests and examinations and practical/ project works. Hence, it can be concluded with the present study that accreditation of university programmes based on the academic content had high positive impact on the universities in the South East Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. These areas of academic content are crucial for any programme accreditation of universities as the form the basis for university goal attainment. Such plans must take cognizance of the essential elements of university education. All these are crucial for effective teaching and learning. Good planning and management are essential ingredients in the enthronement of quality in an educational establishment. This finding buttressed the findings of Alani and Iusanya (2008) who revealed that accreditation status of most academic programmes improved in subsequent accreditation exercises, meaning that the deficiencies noticed were remedied. But contrarily, Obadara and Alaka (2013) findings revealed that there is no significant relationship between accreditation and quality of academic content. The discrepancies in the two findings might be as a result of changes in the period when the two studies were carried out. It was also revealed in this study that the extent of accreditation exercise influence on staffing of state universities in South East is high and significantly above average rating. This finding shows that to a high extent, staffing variables have improved in the universities as a result of accreditation exercises therein. This is true because new staff is now employed by some universities and many of the staff of the universities are now giving opportunities to go for in-service programmes like conferences, workshops and further their education in order to have more qualities necessary for their universities to pass accreditation exercises. The number of qualified staff for both academic and non-academic cadres affects the productivity of staff. Where the number of academic staff is not sufficient, the available staffers are over-loaded thus leading to poor productivity. The staffing of every institution is the key manpower which helps to actualize the dream of quality assurance. Therefore their adequacy is crucial and helps universities to attain the stated objectives. Since no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers, the quality of teachers employed to teach at the educational system is therefore very crucial. In view of the above, Obadara and Alaka (2013) indicated that human capacities should be built in the area of quality assurance so as to ensure quality in Nigerian university education system. Contrary to

this study, the study of Oribabor (2008) on the impact of National Universities Commission (NUC) accreditation exercise on university administrative structure of four selected Nigerian Universities between 1995 and 1999 revealed that accreditation exercise had no impact on administrative structure and efficiency of university staff.

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the lecturers' rated that accreditation exercise has high influence on quality assurance in south east state owned universities on the aspect of academic content, and staffing. Quality assurance and educational quality are no longer luxuries in today's world where quality education has become a universal goal and can only be neglected or ignored by higher education institutions at the risk of stagnation or worse. Through accreditation the reciprocity of recognition of qualifications and facilitation of the mobility of academic personnel are ensured. Accreditation also contributes to the unity of the professions by bringing together practitioners, teachers and students in an activity directed at improving professional preparation and professional practice. Striving for quality education has become critical for any nation that would not be content to be an underdeveloped dependent nation; for it is a demonstrated fact that economic growth is determined not so much by the growth of physical capital and labour as by the stock of knowledge and its rate of growth. To aspire to higher standards of educational quality is no longer a luxury

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- The universities should improve more on their academic content as this will help to inculcate the required academic knowledge and skills to her graduates as a sign of quality indicator.
- The provision of physical facilities by the state government to the state universities should be taken seriously as this will help in ensuring quality assurance to the development of the universities.
- The state governments should endeavour as an urgent need to provide their university libraries with quality and adequate journals, periodicals, computers, internet and improve the seating capacity in the libraries in the universities.

## Suggestions for Further Studies

The researcher suggests that:

- Challenges encountered by state owned universities in conducting accreditation exercise in south east universities in Nigeria.
- A study on impact of regular accreditation by NUC on development of universities in South East, Nigeria should be carried out by future researchers.

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## APPENDIX

**Table 1**  
**Distribution of the Population of the study university by university**

S/N	Institutions	Academic Staff
1	IMSU	534
2	ABSU	625
3	ANSU	595
4	ESUT	1,200
5	EBSU	892
	Total	3,843

**Source:** Director of Academic planning office (DAP) and Personnel units of the various universities (August, 2019).

**Table 2**  
**Distribution of the sample of the study using equal proportion of 20% from each University**

S/N	Institutions	Academic staff population	10% of the population
1	IMSU	534	53
2	ABSU	625	63
3	ANSU	595	59
4	ESUT	1,200	120
5	EBSU	892	89
Total		3,843	384

Mean ( $\bar{X}$ )

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{n}$$

Standard Deviation (S)

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{\sum (X - \bar{X})^2}{n-1}}$$

Standard Error

$$S.E = \frac{s}{\sqrt{n-1}}$$

One Sample t-test

$$t_{cal} = \frac{x - \mu}{S/\sqrt{n-1}}$$

df = n-2

**Descriptive Statistics**

S/N	n	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
RQ1				
01	384	1644	4.28	.851
02	384	1531	3.99	1.061
03	384	1284	3.34	1.634
04	384	1437	3.74	1.388
05	384	1467	3.82	1.210
06	384	1183	3.08	1.492
RQ2				
07	384	1395	3.63	1.322
08	384	1354	3.53	1.377
09	384	1263	3.29	1.464
10	384	1187	3.09	1.493
11	384	1345	3.50	1.412