Chapter Ten

PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Introduction
Concern about the quality of higher education is rising in Nigeria. It comes at a time of increasing rate of tertiary education growth, public perception that educational quality is being compromised and growing complaints by employers that graduates are poorly prepared for the workplace (Dabalen, Oni & Adekola, 2000). Over time, these issues have become central to higher education, and quality assurance has assumed prominence nationally and globally in higher education. Quality assurance in education is the ability of educational institutions to meet the need of the users of work force. The quality of an academic programme becomes a universal concern because the product of one university invariably becomes an employee in various sectors of economy. In addition, a degree certificate obtained at the end of training in a university is intended to ascertain the level of academic and professional competency (Ijeoma & Osagie, 2005).

In this paper, concept of quality assurance, National Universities Commission (NUC) as a quality assurance agency, parameters and challenges of quality assurance were discussed. The paper also highlighted measures towards ensuring quality in Nigerian universities.
Concepts of Quality and Quality Assurance

Stakeholders in education have defined quality differently. This is because it is multi-dimensional and it means a different thing to different stakeholders. Also, different countries may tend to define this term differently. The British Standard Institution (BSI) defines quality as “the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs” (BSI, 1991).

Quality technically refers to fitness for purpose. It encapsulates the concept of meeting commonly agreed precepts or standards. The standards may be defined by law, an institution, a coordinating body or a professional society. Quality in the context of higher education refers to fitness for the purpose of meeting or conforming to generally accepted standards as defined by institutions, quality assurance bodies and appropriate academic and professional communities. In the diverse arena of higher education, fitness for purpose varies tremendously by field and programmes. A broad range of factors affect quality in tertiary institutions including their vision and goals, the talent and expertise of the teaching staff, admission and assessment standards, the teaching and learning environment, the employability of its graduates (relevance to the labor market), the quality of the library and laboratories, management effectiveness, governance and leadership (Marjorie, 2004).

Quality assurance is a planned and systematic review process of an institution or programme to determine whether or not acceptable standards of education, scholarship, and infrastructure are being met, maintained and enhanced (Hayward, 2001). Quality assurance in education is geared towards attainment of education targets and improvement in the process of education delivery. To Stand (2008), quality assurance is a continuous process by which an institution can guarantee that standards and quality of its educational provisions are being maintained. It is a key component of successful internationalization; a mechanism for building institutional reputation in the competitive local and global arena and a necessary foundation for consumer protection (NUC, 2004). A tertiary institution is only as good as the quality of its teaching staff; they are the heart of the institution that produces its graduates, its research products, and its service to the institution, community, and nation.
Middlehurst (2001) described the scope of quality assurance as including the following dimensions:
- Regulation (legal frameworks, governance, responsibilities and accountabilities etc).
- Educational process (admissions, registration or enrolment, curriculum design and delivery, support for leaving, assessment etc).
- Curriculum design and content (validation and approval frameworks, levels and standards etc).
- Learning experience (consumer protection, students’ experience, complaints and appeals etc).
- Outcomes (qualifications, certificates, transcripts, security, transferability, recognition etc).

Quality assurance therefore involves a systematic procedure of verifying that education is meeting the specified conditions requisite to the actualization of its goals. More attention is being paid today to the issue of quality assurance in higher education than ever before. This is not surprising as stakeholders in higher education are now aware of the fundamental and global importance of quality and quality assurance in higher education. Jibril (2006) identified stakeholders who are interested in quality assurance to include:

a) the students, who are the primary recipients of higher education and who the quality of training they get defines their potential performance in later life;
b) parents, who often pay for the studies of their wards and consequently demand value-for-money education for them;
c) governments that demand accountability from their higher education institutions;
d) the employer who demands well-trained graduates with competences to effectively operate in the 21st century;
e) the institutions themselves, cognizant of the keen competitiveness in the global higher educational system, and
f) the society, that benefits or suffers the effect of good or poor quality education.

Therefore, quality issues have taken the centre stage in global higher education.
Concept of Accreditation
Accreditation is a process of self-study and external quality review used in higher education to scrutinize an institution and/or its programmes for quality standards and need for quality improvement (Obadara & Alaka, 2013). The process is designed to determine whether or not an institution has met 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. The process usually includes a self evaluation, peer review and a site visit. Accreditation is the establishment of the status, legitimacy or appropriateness of an institution, programme or module of study.

Accreditation exercises have been carried out in Nigeria after the Federal government had approved the Minimum Academic Standard (MAS). The first exercise was conducted in 1990 and 1991 and this involved 836 academic programmes across Nigerian Universities (NUC, 2002a). A second comprehensive exercise conducted between January and March 2000 according to Okebukola (2002) led to the accreditation of more than one thousand academic programmes in all Nigerian universities. The National Universities Commission also accredited 1,343 programmes in 2005 in 53 Universities (NUC, 2005). This has helped each institution to evaluate its internal efficiency. Programme ranking was also aggregated into a ranking of all universities and using what is called the mean academic quality index scores, which resulted in aggregating the ranking of individual programme (NUC, 2002b).

A more comprehensive ranking system at the institutional level was used in 1999/2000 and in 2005. It employed a combination of variables namely: percentage of academic programmes with full accreditation status, compliance with enrolment guidelines, proportion of academic staff who are full professors, proportion of foreign academic staff and proportion of foreign students. It also includes proportion of academic staff with outstanding academic achievements, internally generated revenues, research output, students completion and drop-out rates, Ph.D output, stability of university calendar and students to personal computer (PC) ratio (Jubril, 2006). The ranking of universities helped to promote healthy rivalry as each university made
efforts to meet the criteria for accreditation. It has also helped universities to focus energies on improving their internal efficiency.

**National Universities Commission: A Quality Assurance Agency in Nigeria**

National Universities Commission (NUC) was established in 1962 as a non-statutory body to coordinate orderly development of university education in Nigeria. It was reconstituted in 1974 by Decree No.1 as a statutory body with the primary objectives of ensuring the orderly development of University education in Nigeria, maintaining its high standards and to ensure its adequate funding (Adeogun, 2002). The promulgation of Decree No. 16 of 1985 gave the Commission the responsibility to lay down Minimum Academic Standards (MAS) of all universities academic programmes and power to enforce standards.

The Commission through the expertise from the universities prepared the Minimum Academic Standards (MAS) in respect of major disciplines. The Federal Government approved the document for the disciplines in 1989. The Minimum Academic Standard (MAS) provides minimum floor space for lecture, laboratory facilities per student, minimum laboratory space, library, minimum ratio for effective teaching and learning in any particular discipline.

The Commission as part of its responsibility has been carrying out accreditation exercise in order to achieve objectivity in the accreditation exercise. Certain criteria are used to assess the discipline or programme. Okebukola (2002) outlined them as follows — philosophy and objectives of the programmes, curriculum content, academic regulations for admission into the programme, evaluation of students' work, practical work/ degree project, standard of test and examination, students' course evaluation and external examination. They also include staffing — academic and non-academic staff, administration of the department and staff development programme; physical facilities which include laboratories, classroom facilities and staff office, as well as safety and environmental sanitation, funding of the programme by the university, library facilities and employer's rating of graduates of the programmes.

The National Universities Commission's (NUC's) Department of Quality Assurance was created in 2005 to monitor and ensure the quality of academic programmes in the Nigerian university system. The
Department was later given the mandate of programme and institutional accreditation. The National Universities Commission (NUC, 2006) defined quality assurance as the systematic review of educational programmes to ensure that acceptable standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure are being maintained. As part of the efforts to ensure qualitative university education in Nigeria, the NUC was particular about ensuring accreditation of academic programmes in Nigerian universities in order to produce graduates who are relevant to the Nigerian economy. Emphasis was laid on the quality of academic staff and students to be admitted and employed respectively. The Commission is committed to improving the quality of university programmes through injection of requisite inputs as well as assuring quality process and outputs based on the decree 49 of 1988 that widen its scope. The National Universities Commission is charged to embark on accreditation of quality assurance in Nigerian universities.

Accreditation in the Nigerian University system as stated on the National Universities Commission’s website has three stated objectives namely to:

- Ensure that at least the provisions of the Minimum Academic Standards (MAS) documents are attained, maintained and enhanced;
- Assure employers of labour and other members of the community that Nigerian graduates of all academic programmes have attained an acceptable level of competence in their areas of specialization; and
- Certify to the International community that the programmes offered in Nigerian universities are of high standards and their graduates are adequate for employment and for further studies.

Programmes are evaluated and scored based on the following criteria:

- Staffing 32%
- Academic Content 23%
- Physical Facilities 25%
- Library 12%
- Funding 5%
- Employers’ Rating 3%

Total 100%

Source: www.nuc.edu.ng
Each criterion has component indices with varying weightings as contained in the Manual of Accreditation Procedures for Academic Programmes in Nigerian Universities.

According to the National Universities Commission in Nigeria, the accreditation status for a programme is determined after a summary of the scores awarded by each panel member is entered into the Accreditation Panel Report Form (NUC/APRF) which becomes the accreditation panel’s recommendation. The criteria for award of accreditation status to a programme are as follows:

A. Full Accreditation Status: A total overall score of 70% and above in addition to scoring at least 70% in each of the core areas of Staffing, Academic Content, Physical Facilities and Library.

B. Interim Accreditation Status: An overall score of 60% or more but less than 70% or an overall total score of 70% and above but with a score of less than 70% in any of the four core areas identified in (A) above.

C. Denied Accreditation Status: An overall score of less than 60%.

The Commission also noted that there has been a significant increase in the number of programmes with full accreditation status in the Nigerian University System (NUS). In November 2006, only 54.45% of programmes evaluated, earned full accreditation compared to 68.7% in November 2007 (NUC, 2007).

Analysis of the results of the November 2007 exercise revealed that 74.9% of programmes evaluated in the Federal Universities earned full accreditation status compared to 69.7% and 49.6% of programmes in State and Private Universities respectively. In the denied accreditation status category, Private Universities had relatively more denied programmes (6.7%) than their Federal (2.5%) and State (2.1%) counterparts (NUC, 2007).

It is however noteworthy, that on a system-wide basis, there has been a slight decline in the number of academic programmes earning denied accreditation status. This may be because NUC has started to apply the sanction applicable to programmes with denied accreditation status. NUC advises universities admission body to place an embargo on admission into unaccredited programmes until such a time when the Commission is able to confirm, through a re-visitation,
that the deficiencies, which caused the programmes to fall short of the Minimum Academic Standards, have been remedied by the university concerned.

A trends analysis of the performance of academic programmes in the NUS indicates a progressive improvement in the quality of the programmes over the years. For instance, the percentage of programmes with full accreditation status increased from 11.45% in 1999/2000 to 68.7% in 2007 while the percentage of programmes with denied accreditation status declined from 17% to 3.0% during the same period.

Table 1: The accreditation performance of academic programmes in the Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Accreditation</th>
<th>Number of Programmes Accredited</th>
<th>Accreditation Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990/91</td>
<td>836</td>
<td>185 (22.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/2000</td>
<td>1,119</td>
<td>128 (11.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/2006</td>
<td>1,670</td>
<td>748 (44.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>872</td>
<td>599 (68.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>174 (42.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4905</td>
<td>1834 (37.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NUC Accreditation 2011

Impact of Accreditation

There are no formal studies regarding the impact of external quality assurance schemes. Therefore, the following paragraphs reflect the informal assessment of the charges within the higher education system. The external quality assurance has helped to ensure that universities authorities comply with minimum standard. Okebukola (1998) also noted that “there are instances where the proprietors have injected unprecedented amounts of money into their universities in order to remedy the deficiencies identified during accreditation exercises”. He stated this in Kogi State University, Nigeria where more than three
quarter of its programmes presented for accreditation earned denial accreditation status in one of the accreditation exercises.

External quality assurance has also helped to improve the ranking of Nigerian Universities at global level. With the enforcement of minimum standard on universities and compliance by universities, there has been tremendous improvement in the ranking of Nigerian Universities in Africa. Presently, as reported by an international online universities ranking system (www.4icu.org), six Nigerian Universities feature in the top 100 Universities in Africa and three Nigerian universities feature in the top 3,000 in the world.

**Quality Assurance Measuring Parameters**

Oladipo, Adeosun and Oni (2009) opined that the quality of education could be measured in terms of quality of resource input, quality of output, quality of content and quality of process.

*Quality of Resource Input:* It is often said that no education can rise above the quality of its teachers. The teacher is the most important of all the inputs that go into educational provision. This is because education of the highest quality requires teachers of the highest quality (Okebukola, 2002). He further stated that education in Nigeria today seems to lack not only quality programmes but also quality and dedicated teachers. Most of the teacher education institutions including Faculties of Education turn out teachers that are deficient in content and methodology. As a result, they are unable to teach effectively which takes its turn on the quality of education imparted.

There is thus, the need for the Government to review and overhaul the curriculum for Teacher education at all levels in order to meet the demand of 21st century. Government, as a matter of urgency, needs to embark on Quality Teacher Programmes. Special attention needs to be paid to the quality of candidates being admitted to the teacher education programme. According to available statistics, there are about 762,864 primary school teachers and approximately 23,945,567 pupils enrolled in 42,876 primary schools utilizing 756,512 classrooms (Federal Ministry of Education, 2011). It is highly imperative to know that all these are affected by the quality of the products of the universities, simply because university products serve as teachers, administrators, planners, heads and supervisors at the lower level of education.
Quality of Output: The quality of education does not depend only on resource inputs, but also on the output, which include academic achievement on tests, scores and progression and pass rates, thus, the internal and external efficiency. The Monitoring of Learning Achievement (MLA) project, is a nationwide study conducted between 1994 – 1996 and the report published in 1997 by the Federal Ministry of Education, with the support of UNICEF and UNESCO. Three learning areas were selected for the MLA studies namely:

- Numeracy;
- Literacy; and
- Life skills (a combination of science, social studies and general knowledge).

The MLA study in Nigeria gives considerable insight into the quality of output especially at the lower level of education in Nigeria. The result of the study indicates that an average public primary school child in Nigeria can neither read, write nor calculate properly. Several reasons have been given to explain this:

- Lack of textbooks and writing materials. The National Situation and Policy Analysis (SAPA) survey conducted under the auspices of UNICEF and the Federal Government in 1992 showed that 77% of public primary pupils had not textbooks while 36% had no writing materials, and science equipment were lacking in the majority of the schools.
- The poor quality of instruction; among others. Generally, it is believed that poor quality education exists at all levels of education in the country because similar problems exist at all levels.

If the consequence of the above scenario is to be reversed, in order to meet the challenges of globalization, Nigeria must therefore, begin by giving greater attention to the entire sector, i.e our pre-school, primary, secondary, vocational foundation and tertiary levels. All stakeholders in education should endeavour to play their roles doggedly to ensure qualitative education in Nigeria.

Quality of Process: This implies student/teacher interaction, level of learner participation and engagement in learning. In an earlier study, Ali and Akubue (1998) found that teachers in public schools dominated
the lessons and posed few open-ended questions. Group work which encourages discussion is rarely encountered, and only 10% of teachers used continuous assessment. Okebukola’s (1998) observational studies showed that boys are given greater opportunities than girls to ask and answer questions, to manipulate materials and to lead groups. In science classroom interaction, girls were also given less time on practical work than boys.

**Quality of Content:** The curriculum content of our educational system had been criticized as being overloaded, and does not sufficiently attend to the needs of the Nigerian learner. The data from the Monitoring of Learning Achievement (MLA) project has also shown that there is a wide gap between the intended curriculum and the achieved curriculum. However, this criticism had been challenged because the curriculum content of our institutions compares favorably with those in other countries. What is needed in our system is a re-ordering of the curriculum content i.e. the intended curriculum and an enrichment of the achieved curriculum and the implemented curriculum with focus on relevance and functionality. The achieved curriculum is the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are achieved or learned while the implemented curriculum is the translation of curricula intentions into reality in classrooms, laboratories, workshops, playgrounds and other settings for learning, not losing sight of the language provisions in the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004). Sequel to this, there should be flexible curriculum. Curriculum rigidity must give way to “curriculum liberality”. Such curriculum must be relevant to both individual learner’s needs and societal needs at large.

**Challenges of Quality in Nigerian Universities**

In the early years in Nigeria, it was glaring that the university was regarded as the single most important industry for the production of high-level manpower and the capstan of the entire educational system. University training according to Ume (1979) aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, cultivating the public mind, purifying the national taste, supplying the principles of popular aspirations and giving enlargement and sobriety to ideas of the age. It is not surprising then that stakeholders in University education tend to guard jealously the integrity of the university and the quality of graduates produced.
It is on record that Nigerian Universities have been producing high quality graduates in the past. As affirmed by Daisi (1997), many graduates from the nation's universities have distinguished themselves in their areas of specialization so much that some of them are now professors in the best universities across the globe. This attestation is quite resounding, more so that quality entrants transformed into quality graduates. Due to declining quality in recent years, however, the accolade attached to Nigerian Universities seems to have faded away. This is informed by the flood of criticisms that becloud the admission procedures and quality of graduates produced. In his keynote address delivered at the first education summit of Oyo State held in Ibadan, Okebukola (2006) decried the quality of graduates produced in Nigerian Universities especially in the last four years and thumbed down the quality of those that would graduate in the next three years. Similarly, Adebayo (2007) commented that the non-inclusion of any of the nation's universities in the world best 500 universities is unsavoured and worse still, Nigeria ranked number 44 after Ghana, Kenya and South Africa in the ranking of African Universities.

Previous studies in this area (Nwokocha, 1997; Ige, 1997; and Jemibewon, 1997) have pointed out that many entrants into the Nigerian Universities are deficient in academic quality. Indeed Nwokocha (1997) called the attention of the stakeholders in University education in Nigeria to the purported letter written by the British Council alerting the British Universities in general terms that Nigerian degrees are no longer comparable to honours in the United Kingdom no matter which university has awarded the degree and in what discipline. Ige (1997) revealed how he stumbled on the examination scripts of some undergraduates in one of the nation's universities and described the performance of such undergraduates as deplorable.

In another development, the NUC (2004) assessment study on labour market expectations of graduates from Nigerian Universities revealed that there were scores of unemployed graduates roaming the streets and more embarrassingly, those who were lucky to secure employment had to undergo remedial training in order to bridge the huge knowledge and skills gaps left over from university training. This tends to negate the tenet of University education which is essentially
an industry established to produce quality workforce for national development.

Nigeria has unilaterally opened its doors to foreign programmes and commercial presence of institutions and benefited from such arrangements for a long time. The negative impacts of the foreign educational providers in some cases are provision of poor quality programmes, insufficient commitment and monitoring of the delivery by partner institutions, different quality standards, indifference or general ignorance to national criteria, local needs and policies, issues in comparability of quality of education, faculty staff, and lack of clear information, cultural differences and issues relating to recognition of qualifications.

Recent development in the Nigerian university system seems to indicate that all is not well as expected with the quality assurance in Nigerian universities system. The scenario appears worrisome when viewed against the background that Nigeria once served as the hub of university education in the West-African sub-region. This development revolves round a lot of factors ranging from the collapse of essential infrastructure to explosion in students’ enrolment without corresponding increasing in funding.

Nigerian universities cannot meet their expectations especially in terms of the quality of teaching and research. Lack of adequate funding has clearly impaired the performance and standard of Nigerian universities as the vicious circle of inadequate funds, helplessness, frustration and recriminations is continually fed in a mutually reinforcing manner (Kayode, 2002).

Babalola (2001) reported that Nigerian universities are currently in crisis. He further stressed that there is less money to spend on teaching, research and community services. Libraries are ill-equipped, laboratories lack essential apparatus, classrooms are dilapidated and office accommodations are mirage. Many of Nigerian universities even lack lecturers in their right quality and quantity. Other militating factors against quality assurance in Nigerian Universities are:

**Underfunding:** One of the greatest challenges that appear to face the Nigerian universities is that of underfunding. Finance is so crucial to any organization as it continues to dominate discussions on state of
university education in Nigeria. The establishment and the running of tertiary institutions are capital intensive. Running an institution, therefore, requires significant investment in providing and maintaining a basic level of infrastructure — such as facilities, staff salaries, and residential housing. Universities in Nigeria have been supported largely by government funds in the time past, but with economic down-turn, these universities have been grossly underfunded and this has invariably led to the quality being adversely affected. Some of these institutions are characterized by poor infrastructures, overcrowded classrooms, incessant strike and students’ unrest.

*Enrolment Explosion:* Over-enrolment has become a common feature in the Nigerian universities. Many of the facilities on ground are being overstretched. Okebukola (2005) released the list of some overcrowded universities recently where Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye topped the list with excess enrolment of 24,628 students. A development that surely will affect the quality of university education in Nigeria, since excess enrolment usually leads to overcrowded classrooms, ineffective teaching and examination malpractices.

*Inadequate Physical Facilities:* The state of physical facilities in many of the Nigerian universities is revealed by the NUC (2006) report that facilities in Nigerian universities are in poor shape, the available physical facilities are severely overstretched and ill-maintained. Hence, with this development, quality seems not to be guaranteed in such universities.

*Poor Management:* The way and manner some of the Nigerian universities are being managed by the university administrators also have consequential effect on quality assurance in the universities. For most of the universities, management means little more than playing the role of “caretaker”. This vital function has been largely reduced to the maintenance of the status quo. This unfortunate development significantly negates the concept of a university, particularly in a developing country like Nigeria. It seems certain that as long as management continues to play this non-challant role, the quality assurance will continue to be jeopardized in the universities.
Inadequate Staffing: One of the reasons for low level of quality assurance in Nigerian universities is a severe shortage of teaching staff. Report from NUC (2006) shows that only 16,856 out of 72,704 staff in the federal universities are academic staff. Many universities in Nigerian are bottom heavy in terms of academic staff mix.

Quality Control Measures for Sustainable University Education

Leadership/Administration of Higher Education: Individuals appointed as vice-chancellors of universities must possess administrative qualities and must lead by example. The leader must have integrity, be knowledgeable, and be flexible in management of the institution. The performance of the administrator should be sustained through the proper utilization of materials and human resources for the achievement of institutional goals and objectives.

Internal Quality Assurance: The Commonwealth of Learning (1999) defines quality assurance as an approach to organizing work that sets in place system to check that the programmed activities are carried out according to its plan. To ensure internal control and quality assurance, student intake and quality of university products must be controlled right from admission stage. The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) in Nigeria has demonstrated integrity in conducting her examinations, while the various universities have come up with the POST-JAMB screening. It is expected that, the POST-JAMB policy will prevent morally bankrupt students from gaining admissions.

Teaching and Learning: The National Commission for Colleges of Education (2002) stated that, the teacher is the King-pin of quality in education. There are situations where students with bright academic performance fail to actualize their life ambitions because of the incompetent and ineffective teachers within the system. It is expected that academic staff perform their role through proper teaching, guidance and counseling of students to gainfully learn from them and their personal positive examples in the areas of character and learning. Supervision and Inspection: Adeogun (2002) maintains that supervision creates the awareness of sound education philosophies in teachers and makes them to be aware of educational policies and reforms. Thus, supervisors are to play leadership roles that would stimulate and
encourage both staff and students in the system to perform their duties so as to achieve the institutional task or objectives. Also, the effective supervision of instruction will help administrators to identify the quality of lecturers in the institution. It will also check and balance the academic staff, non-academic staff and students.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Through constant monitoring and evaluation of system activities in terms of effective control by the different heads of units or departments, and constant feedback to management and good utilization of reports, the standard in the system would be raised high and sustained. The role of National University Commission (NUC) in system performance cannot be overlooked. As an external quality assurance agency of the Nigerian University Systems, it has the following role:

- Advising the Federal Government on the establishment and location of universities, creating new facilities and post-graduate units in the universities.
- Advising Government on the fundamental needs of the universities.
- Carrying out periodic plans on the general programme to be pursued by universities staff.
- Preparing periodic plans on the general programme to be pursued by the universities.
- Receiving and disbursing Federal grants to Federal universities.
- Establishing and maintaining the minimum academic standards.
- Accrediting the degrees and other academic programmes awarded by the universities (Lassa, 1992). The audit role and the supervisory functions of NUC has indeed contributed to the quality and sustainability of higher education in Nigeria.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

In the last three decades, higher education in Nigeria has witnessed a significant growth in terms of expansion of access through increase in enrolment and establishment of additional higher educational institutions. However, it is saddening to note that many of the indices that can guarantee qualitative higher education are not taken into consideration in the country’s quest to meet quantitative target. It has been observed that political factors are the main motives behind many
of the expansion policies, especially in the University system. Adedipe (2007) noted that the supply of education services in Nigeria is market-blind. Admission policies of university education, he observed, are not related to labour demand requirements, nor to individual student interest, but mainly to secondary school grades.

Policy-making and management of higher education have traditionally been concerned with maintaining and enhancing academic standards and processes. To do so, they used different instruments according to the administrative set up of each system. External quality assurance mechanisms can address the shortcomings of traditional mechanism for quality assurance found in both administrative realities. Indeed, national authorities are often far away and not able to judge fairly the quality of academic programmes and institutions.

It is therefore recommended that the quality control measures identified above should be strictly adhered to by Nigerian universities, their governing bodies and the quality control institutions in order to ensure a sustainable university education system in the country.

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