ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF NUC ACCREDITATION EXERCISE ON ACADEMIC CONTENT IN BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMMES OF UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

The paper sought to determine the impact of National Universities Commission accreditation exercise on academic content in the business education programmes of the universities in the south-east geopolitical zone of Nigeria. One research question and one null hypothesis guided the study. The survey research design was used for the study. The population comprised 66 respondents made up of 6 directors of academic planning and 60 academic staff of the departments of business education of the six universities in the zone. There was no sampling since the population was not too large. A researcher-developed instrument duly validated by three experts was used for data collection. Test re-test method was used for testing the reliability of the instrument. With the use of the Pearson Product Moment, the reliability co-efficient correlation was found to be 0.86 which was considered adequate for the study. The mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question while t-test was used to test the null hypothesis. The findings of the study indicated that NUC accreditation exercise had high extent of impact on the relevant academic content in business education programmes of the universities in the south-east geopolitical zone. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that NUC should continue to pay closer attention to academic content of business education programmes. NUC needs to undertake periodic reviews of business education curricula; it should ensure that business education curricula consistently meet the needs of industry and society.

Keywords: Business Education, NUC, Accreditation and Academic Content

Introduction

Business education has remained an invaluable academic programme in tertiary institutions. The programme is designed to inculcate in students business competencies, skills, attitudes, knowledge and understanding necessary to perform and progress effectively in the business world. For the goals and objectives of the programme to be realized, there must be a mechanism put in place to ensure proper standards and quality.

Quality control in universities is vested on the National Universities Commission (NUC). The agency was established in 1964 and it has vast powers to ensure quality of process, products and services. NUC as a quality assurance agency, among other things, sets standards for Nigerian Universities. The key NUC activities towards assuring quality include programme accreditation, periodic monitoring and evaluation. According to Okebukola (2010) NUC examines the effectiveness and efficiency of input, process and output elements of the teaching, learning, research and service activities of a higher institution programme. Duties of this regulatory body include to ensure that quality is maintained in the academic programmes of universities, to lay down minimum academic standards for universities, to carry out the accreditation of degree and other academic awards of universities as well as carrying out other higher education-related investigations (Okojie, 2010). The NUC is responsible for drawing up the basic curricula for all courses. It is also responsible for setting minimum standards in academic content, personnel, library and information, physical facilities, and administration.

Accreditation

Accreditation is the process whereby a professional group judges its educational programme against a set of consensually derived norms (Ademiluyi & Okwuanaso, 2013). Accreditation can be broadly defined as a process leading to the granting of approval or authority to a programme or institution after meeting a set of minimum standards or criteria (Okebukola, 2010). Accreditation could also mean the process by which the quality and standard of educational institutions are assessed. Accreditation is an evaluation of whether an institution or programme meets a threshold standard and qualifies for a certain status (Ediagbonya, Agbaje & Suberu, 2012).

Accreditation focuses on the quality of education. Standards set are demanding but realistic thresholds, which challenge educators to pursue continues improvement. Accreditation does not create quality learning experience. Academic quality is created by educational standards, implemented by the individual faculty members in interaction with students (Militzer, 2004).

The process of accreditation begins with the establishment of a set of minimum standards against which programmes are evaluated. Secondly, a panel of experts evaluates the performance of the programme against the standards. Thirdly, a decision is taken based on the accreditation status whether to permit continued operation of the programme, make minor adjustments to it or cause the programme to be suspended.

NBTE (1993) defined programme accreditation as the means by which the Board grants public recognition to a diploma programme offered by an institution which has met its established educational standards and qualifications as determined through initial and periodic evaluations. The implication is that institutional accreditation precedes programme evaluation. Programme evaluation can take place only in an accredited institution. The NBTE (1992) further explained that programme accreditation involves the evaluation of the quality of a programme offered in an institution by the Board to confirm that the competence and number of teaching and administrative staff and the necessary physical and other facilities are available. This is necessary to ensure that the curriculum is adequately preparing students to be able to perform satisfactorily in their chosen field.

Academic Content

Academic content is the minimum content load which is specified for the curriculum. Curriculum is the head and blood of all academic endeavours. According to Goolad (1996) curriculum is a systematic group of courses or sequences of subjects and planned experiences required for graduation or certification of a learner under the guidance of a teacher in a school. The Oxford Learners Dictionary defined curriculum as the subjects that are included in a course of study or taught in a school, college, or university. It is the regular or a particular course of study in school, college, or university career. Anioke (2014) posited that curriculum is the planned guided learning experiences and learning outcomes formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experience under the auspices of the school, for the learners. Curriculum is the totality of experiences of each learner under the influence of the school. Curriculum should be all the planned experiences and courses (comprising general/liberal studies course, professional/technical courses and foundation/basic course), which are provided and given to learners for certification. A good curriculum must fulfil the following vital functions: diagnose societal needs, have sound and tested objectives, select appropriate learning content, organize the learning content, select appropriate learning experiences, organize the learning content, select appropriate learning experiences, organize the learning experiences; and determine what to evaluate and the ways and means of doing it (Ohakwe and Njoku, 2009).

In addition to academic content of the University, NUC accreditators also concern themselves with the process of admission, retention and graduation of students. According to NUC Minimum Academic Standard (2007) for students' admission into the programme, the minimum qualification should be similar to those laid down by the commission, every full-time student shall register for not less than 15 (fifteen) credit units and not more than 24 (twenty-four) credit units per semester except for students of field experience/industrial attachment. For graduation, students should have fulfilled the requirements including teaching practice and SIWES. Oriazowanlan and Umunna (2012) stated the objectives of SIWES to include: to provide opportunity for students to supplement the theoretical learning with practical industrial activities in their various disciplines; to expose and prepare students for industrial work situations they are likely to meet after their graduation; to expose students to work methods and experiences in handling equipment and machinery that may not be available in their various educational institutions etc. This is in line with the views of Ekpenyong (2008) who observed that SIWES provides an avenue for evaluating participating students both as students and as prospective employees, and where defects are found in a student's job performance or attitude to work the student could be guided to correct such defects through proper supervision prior to taking up permanent employment.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of the study was to assess the extent to which NUC accreditation exercise has impacted on providing relevant academic content in business education programmes of universities.

Research Question

The following research question guided the study.

To what extent has NUC accreditation exercise impacted on provision of relevant academic content in business education programmes of universities?

Hypothesis

One null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance, thus: male respondents do not differ significantly from their female counterparts in their mean rating of the impact of NUC accreditation exercise on provision of relevant academic content in business education programmes of universities.

Method

The study adopted descriptive survey design. The study was carried out in universities in the south-east geopolitical zone. The population of the study comprised 66 respondents made up of 6 directors of academic planning and 60 academic staff of the departments of business education of the six universities in the zone. The instrument for data collection was structured on a 4-point rating scale of very high extent (VHE) 4, high extent (HE) 3, low extent (LE) 2 and very low extent (VLE) 1. The questionnaire was validated by three experts in business education from Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. A total of 61 copies of the questionnaire were produced and administered by the researcher with the help of two research assistants.

Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the research question while t-test statistic was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. Items with mean rating of 3.50 to 4.00 were regarded as very high extent, those that ranged between 2.50 to 3.49 were regarded as high extent, and those that ranged between 1.50 to 2.49 were regarded as low extent while those that ranged between 0.50 to 1.49 were regarded as very low extent. The null hypothesis was rejected where the calculated t-value was equal to or greater than the critical t-value otherwise the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Results

The data collected in respect of the research question for this study are presented in Table I.

Table 1: Respondents' Mean Rating on the Impact of NUC Accreditation on Provision of Relevant Academic Content in Universities in South-East Geopolitical Zone.

(N=61)

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S/N	Minimum Standards for Academic Content	$\bar{X}$	SD	Remarks
1	Effect on Up-to-date curricula	3.50	0.25	Very High Extent
2	Periodic review of business education curricula	3.50	0.25	Very High Extent
3	Flexibility in implementation of curricula	3.16	0.48	High Extent
4	Current Curriculum that meets the demands Of industry and society	3.16	0.48	High Extent
5	Adequate ICT offerings in current curricula	2.66	0.56	High Extent
6	Adequate offerings on entrepreneurship Education	3.16	0.48	High Extent

Table 1 Continued

S/N	Minimum Standards for Academic Content		X	SD	Remarks
7	Effective academic regulations		3.33	0.21	High Extent
8	Compulsory 3 months teaching practice for Business education students		4.00	1.00	Very High Extent
9	Compulsory 3-months SIWES for business education students		3.16	0.48	High Extent
10	Fair assessment of quizzes		3.00	0.33	High Extent
11	Fair assessment of examinations	3.00	0.33	High Extent	
12	Availability of strictly followed marking schemes		3.16	0.48	High Extent
13	Admission of only qualified candidates into business education programme		3.00	0.33	High Extent
14	Use of appropriate methodologies in supervising Students' projects.	2.83	0.81	High Extent	
15	Effective external moderation examinations.		3.16	0.48	High Extent
16	Competent external moderators.	3.16	0.48	High Extent	
	Grand Mean		**3.19**		**High Extents**

The data in Table 1 showed that items 1, 2 and 8 had means that ranged from 3.50 to 4.00 which were interpreted as very high extent of impact. The other 13 items on the minimum standards for academic content were rated high extent by the respondents and their mean ratings fell within the real limits of 2.50-3.49. The grand mean of this category is 3.19. This shows that NUC accreditation exercise had high extent of impact on the relevant academic content in business education programmes. The SD in Table 6 revealed that only item 8 had 1.00 as SD which indicates that the respondents have different opinions. The remaining 15 items had SD that ranged from 0.21 to 0.56 indicating that the respondents have a common opinion in all items.

Table 2: t-test Analysis of the Mean Ratings of Male and Female Respondents on the Impact of NUC Accreditation Exercise on the Relevance of the Academic Content.

Variable	N	X	S^2	Df	α	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Male Respondents	23	161	0.24					
				59	0.05	0.16	1.960	Not Rejected
Female Respondents	38	1.60	0.23					

The results presented in Table 2 showed that the calculated t-value is 0.16 at 59 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated t-value (0.16) was less than critical value of 1.960, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This showed that male and female administrators did not differ significantly in their mean ratings on the impact of NUC accreditation exercise on the relevance of the academic content.
Discussion of findings

The results in Table 1 showed the respondents' mean ratings on the impact of NUC accreditation exercise on the relevant academic content. The results indicated that all the items on minimum standards for academic content were considered by the respondents as high extent meaning that NUC accreditation exercise had impacted on the relevant academic content in business education programmes. It was found that NUC accreditation exercise had impacted on effect on up-to-date curricula, periodic review of business education curricula, flexibility in implementation of curricula, current curriculum that meets the demands of industry and society and adequate ICT offerings in current curricula. This finding is in agreement with the views of Ohakwe and Njoku (2009) that a good curriculum must fulfill the following vital functions which include: to diagnose societal needs, have sound and tested objectives, select appropriate learning content, organize the learning content, select appropriate learning experiences, organize the learning experiences; and determine what to evaluate and the ways and means of doing it. Also, it was found that NUC accreditation exercise had impacted on adequate offerings on entrepreneurship education, effective academic regulations, compulsory 3 months teaching practice for business education students, compulsory 3-months

SIWES for business education students. This was in line with the views of Oriazowanlan and Umunna (2012) discovery that SIWES provided opportunity for students to supplement the theoretical learning with practical industrial activities in their various disciplines; expose and prepare students for industrial work situations they were likely to meet after their graduation. The study indicated that NUC accreditation exercise had impacted on admission of only qualified candidates into business, fair assessment of quizzes, fair assessment of examinations, availability of strictly followed marking schemes, use of appropriate methodologies in supervising students' projects, effective external moderation of examinations and competent external moderators. This is in agreement with the NUC stipulated minimum qualification for entry into degree programmes in the universities which is five credits including English and mathematics.

The study also found that male and female respondents did not differ significantly in their mean rating of the impact of NUC accreditation exercise on the relevance of academic content.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it was concluded that NUC accreditation exercise had impacted on provision of relevant academic content in business education programmes.

Recommendations

In view of the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. There is need for NUC, through its accreditation exercise, continue to pay closer attention to academic content of business education programmes.
2. NUC needs to undertake periodic reviews of business education curricula; it should ensure that business education curricula consistently meet the needs of industry and society.

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