BENCHMARKING PERIODIC REVIEW, MINIMUM STANDARD AND EXCHANGE PROGRAMME FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS AS PREDICTORS OF QUALITY OF GRADUATES IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Oyekan, O.A.
National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration Ondo, Nigeria.
E-mail: oyekanope@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT: *In recent years, Nigerians have expressed serious concern over the quality of University graduates. In spite of efforts and studies on quality assurance in the Nigerian university education system, the problem of low quality still persists in the system. This raises the question of the use of quality control measures (benchmarking periodic review and minimum standard including exchange programme for staff and students), in ensuring quality within the system. This study, therefore, investigated the influence of benchmarking periodic review and minimum standard including exchange programme for staff and students as predictors of quality of graduates in public Universities in Nigeria. Descriptive survey research of the ex-post facto type was adopted. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 30 deputy vice-chancellors, 225 heads of department and 1125 lecturers and fifteen public conventional Universities spread across the six geo-political zones in the nation. Four research instruments namely Quality Control Measures Questionnaire for Heads of Department (r = 0.83), Quality Control Questionnaire on University Ranking (r = 0.77), Quality Control Questionnaire for Lecturers (r = 0.79) and Quality of Graduate Record Format Checklist were used. Two research questions were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression. Benchmarking periodic review and minimum standards ($\beta = 0.35$): post UTME ($\beta = 0.27$); and exchange programmes for staff and students ($\beta = 0.14$); had significant positive contribution to the quality of graduates. Benchmarking periodic review and minimum standard were fairly adhered to (weighted average = 2.51) that is apart from NUC and senate of universities, other stakeholders such as educational policy makers also participate in the monitoring of quality in the universities. Quality control measures exert great influence on the quality of graduates in public universities in Nigeria. Therefore, the National Universities Commission (NUC) should continually monitor the quality control measures to enhance higher quality of graduates. Adequate facilities and equipment should be provided for the universities to meet the needs of the system and periodic exchange programmes for lecturers and students should be provided.*

Keywords:	**Benchmarking Periodic Review and Minimum Standard, Control Measures, Public Universities, Quality of Graduates, University Education**.

Introduction
Education is the bedrock of development of any nation and the greatest instrument man has devised for progress. Indeed, it is the leading factor out of individual potentials in the society and the acquisition of skills, aptitudes and competence necessary for self-

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realisation and coping with life's challenges (Osokoya, 2003). **An educational system that is worth its sort therefore is one which emphasises quality, relevance and equity, with the products of such educational system being adequately equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and competence required to function effectively in the competitive world and to be able to face the realities of life.**

An Abdul-Kareem (2001) stress that education has been universally recognised as investment in human capital which increases the productive capacity of the people which later yields economic benefits and contributes to future national wealth. Also, Aghanta (2001) argues that education is the most powerful and dynamic instrument for social, political, economic, scientific and technological development of nations. It follows therefore, that no nation can be self-reliant or recognised among the comity of nations without functional and good quality education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

The quality of graduates produced from the nation's universities is undoubtedly a research area of great concern to educationists. In their attempt to investigate what determines academic outcomes of learners, educationists have come up with more questions than answers. In recent times, prior literature has shown that learning outcomes that is, quality of graduates have been determined by such variables as family, school, society and motivational factors (Aremu and Sokan, 2003; Aremu and Oluwole, 2001; and Aremu, 2000). Beyond any doubt, the quality of graduates is important for the successful development and progress of any nation. Research has shown that students who do well in school are better able to make the transition into adulthood and achieve occupational and economic success.

University education in Nigeria like other systems of education worldwide especially in developing countries is experiencing challenges which include competitions and efforts to attain world-class university status (Okebukola, 2006). University education is seen to be the largest repository of certified knowledge. According to Olaleye (2006), the highest concentration of certified experts in different areas of specialisation needed for the improvement, advancement and development of a society are engaged in tertiary institutions. Guobadia (2006) stresses that the qualitative improvement and expansion of tertiary institutions are of great importance because knowledge and skills required in contemporary economic activities can only be effectively imparted and expanded upon at the higher level of education. Also, the major role of tertiary education is to produce the required high-level human resources for sustainable economy. Other benefits, according to Obanya (2002) include the enrichment of the individual through acquisition of intellectual skills for the pursuit of self-development, enculturation, development of affective traits and family inculcation of lifelong learning skills that make one develop the spirit of enquiry and long-term thrust of knowledge.

In view of the fact that universities are meant to produce high level manpower, they are also charged with the responsibilities of:

- Contributing to national development through high level relevant human resources development;
- Developing the intellectual capabilities of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environment;
- Cementing national unity;
- Promoting national and international understanding and interaction;
- Developing and inculcating proper values for the survival of the individual in the society;
- Giving both physical and intellectual skills to be self-reliant and useful members of the society; and
- Encouraging and promoting community service (NPE, 2004).

In this vein, universities have been globally accepted as the citadel of knowledge and development (Ezekwesili, 2006). Today, university education has become a commodity marketed across boarders under the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS). The rapid growth of the global market in universities indicates how things have changed. Increasingly, national concern and expectations are replaced with profit consideration and market forces now decide the purpose and priorities of university education. Multiple providers at the national and international levels have made regulatory system less effective, giving larger scope for fraudulent practices in the universities (Adepoju, 2003). Tertiary education according to the National Policy on Education (2004) is the education link received to train manpower of the nation. It is thus necessary to have a standard in which the objectives as stated by the National Policy on Education will be achieved. **The output of the universities serves as the input of the quality of human resource level of the nation.** Thus, the process of tertiary education matters a lot in the determination of the level or type of graduates produced at this level of education. According to Oshin (1994), quality of education is a judgment made concerning the degree of excellence of the sum of its component parts, the product, learning process and personnel inputs.

The quality of tertiary education in Nigeria has been of great concern to government, individual and corporate bodies for a long time. Several efforts have been made to improve the quality of education in Nigeria. In this regard, the 1969 Curriculum Conference which the National Policy on Education and the 6-3-3-4 system were reactions to was essentially due to the non-functional type of education introduced during the colonial period (Yetunde, 2001). In Nigeria, accreditation of higher institutions involves teams of experts from other institutions engaged by relevant agencies or commissions (NUC, NBTE and NCCE) to visit respective institutions at stipulated period interval for the accreditation or re-accreditation of existing courses and programmes and new programmes and courses. The establishment of the National

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Universities Commission by the Federal Government of Nigeria under Decree No. 1, 1974, to act as a clearing house and a coordinating agency, is to ensure quality control and standardisation of university programmes in Nigeria (Aminu, 1986).

Quality control in higher institutions around the world are now increasingly becoming commonplace. The move from compliance to improvement purpose by means of using self-evaluation is becoming a common phenomenon. In many countries, quality control is based on self-evaluation of one kind or another. Self-evaluation is widely used because of its cost-effectiveness and, more importantly, because of the high degree of ownership inherent in it cultivates and its acceptance by the academics. Indeed, it is widely believed that if quality control has to result in improvement, self-evaluation by the academics is a crucial step in the process. Improvement or accountability is the primary purpose of quality. External quality control agency can determine and enforce these purposes.

The willingness to improve and be accountable is, however, ultimately the responsibility of the institution itself. Thus, the institution is the determinant of its get quality. On the one hand, improvement is a matter of institutional integrity and is only possible with constructive cooperation; on the other hand, accountability involves rendering some form of account that an activity is being carried out effectively and efficiently.

These two purposes - improvement and accountability - are often regarded as incompatible, but are not mutually exclusive. The challenge is to achieve clarity and conformity as to the equilibrium that is sought between accountability and improvement. The extent to which accountability exists within an institution is determined by the organisational structure, its culture and procedure and where decision-making powers lie.

Therefore, quality control can be aimed solely at internal improvement which may then involve some forms of changes. Such changes include building on the positive aspects and eliminating or correcting the weaknesses that have been identified by education policymakers. Such changes are not necessarily linked to increased financial costs, and, in fact, an improvement-based approach can save costs by identifying duplicated or wasted efforts and proposing ways to eliminate or reduce them.

Sometimes, the proposed change does not involve monetary factors but entails changing thinking processes or attitudes about correcting previously unsuccessful activities. The increasing external pressures for accountability in higher education level necessitate that urgent attention be given to the internal quality improvement activities of all higher education institutions.

In an academic context, the question arises as to whether an institution should embark on self-evaluation merely for improvement purposes or driven by the requirements of accountability. Tension is caused between these two purposes, because: responses are

influenced and determined by the purpose of the exercise. The challenge at hand demands open communication, the broad involvement to improvement.

It is well recognised that business education is purely a Western discipline, originated and developed first in the US, crossed the Atlantic and flourished in European institutions. Today, business education is being adopted by many African educational institutions. The demand for graduate business education (GBE) has been growing steadily owing to its importance in adding value to the development of future corporate leaders. Despite the brisk demand for graduates of GBE during the past many decades and the distinctive standing of the degree in the marketplace, voices challenging this high estimate of the value of GBE arc increasingly heard. Most of the criticisms on the quality of GBE programmes confirm lack of responsiveness to market needs and inability to adapt to the changing business environment. Bruce and Schoenfeld, (2006) argue that business schools have remained the same over several years and failed to constantly and continuously respond to the changing needs and practice of modern businesses. Higher education institutions are therefore under pressure to provide unique learning experiences to students so as to capture their market share (Raban, 2007). However, the growing public outcry on the quality and relevance of the programme has attracted the attention of many policymakers, corporate leaders and researchers (Temtime & Mmereki, 2010).

Quality of higher education is seen by the developed and developing nations as the path to competitive advantage in the global context and economic growth at the national level. In order to meet this challenge and fulfill societal expectations, universities across the nations are taking steps to ensure quality education delivery so as to ensure the production of functional graduates who are skilled, knowledgeable and have adaptive capacities to meet the demands of the ever-challenging and changing world of works.

In the same vein, the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) and the Post University Matriculation Examination have been adopted by Nigerian universities in recent times to sieve the quality of intakes. These are based on findings about low quality and wastages evident in the following:

- Failure rates which led to repeating of courses and spending extra years;
- High dropout rate or non-completion of courses;
- Examination malpractices;
- Cult activities and its consequences;
- Poor reading, writing and speech skills;
- Rejection of graduates by some private companies; and
- Low rating of some Nigerian universities' certificates by some advanced countries (Yetunde, 2001).

This situation is confirmed by the UNESCO report where no Nigerian university was listed among the first 500 best universities in the world while only four were listed among the best 100 universities in Africa (Edukugbo, 2007).

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The main message therefore is that quality control is converging on a set of internationally recognised practices that examine overall institutional development of tertiary institutions and their programmes not just students' learning outcomes but its effects. Quality of education with an external peer review in each country therefore is under increasing pressure to develop quality control systems that operate using internationally recognised practices whether to facilitate recognition of credentials or assessment of key competencies of graduates. These pressures bother on provision of more tertiary institutions. While there appears to be a convergence on the practice of quality control, there is wide divergence on the purposes of quality control. The uses of the information produced in the process and the capacity of developing countries to implement quality control to the level of international expectations is the main concern of National University Commission (NUC). Evidence have thus revealed that good practice control should be reconsidered in relation to the context in which tertiary education institutions operate, with respect to what is the appropriate purpose, structure and practice of quality control in countries that have wide ranging needs and disparate levels of capacity to implement (Tawari, 2002).

Many developing countries (including Nigeria) have allowed the private sector of open and operate institutions of higher learning. This is to widen accessibility or create space for intending candidates, reduce the absolute reliance on government funding and to strengthen market forces in university education. It is important, however, to emphasise that all the developments have implications for quality control of university education, it therefore calls for increased public intervention and regulatory policies as well as evaluation of the existing instruments being employed to ensure quality control in higher education. In Nigeria for instance, with a view of ascertaining reliability, validity and efficacy and to provide empirical information in which ones among these instruments are devoid of apprehensions attracted by existing practice. Every input invested on education by parents, lecturers and students are measured by the output that is, academic performance. Oftentimes, outcomes of such performance have shown differences among students even when they are exposed to same or similar learning. Consequently, researchers have focused on what accounts for the observed and measured poor academic performance. Efforts are concentrated on external factors and not much has been laid on quality control.

Fundamentally, the significance of quality control in education is exemplified by the need for society to achieve the purpose for which education is provided at various levels especially; in tertiary institutions. Such purpose, as explicitly defined by its goals and objectives, signifies the desirable ends or outcomes for which quality control measures and processes are adopted as a means of satisfying public expectations. Therefore, quality control measures are more readily factored in to be able to get the targeted quality of graduates from the educational system.

There are several control measures being put in place by the NUC (2002) which is responsible for the management and control of higher education in Nigeria. Some of these measures are:

(i)   Accreditation of programmes and courses;
(ii)   Institutional ranking;
(iii)   Staff strength;
(iv)   Student demographic characteristics;
(v)   Existing facilities and equipment;
(vi)   Benchmarks, periodic review and minimum standard;
(vii)   External moderation system;
(viii) External programmes for lecturers and students; and
(ix)   Post UTME examination.

All these are put in place to improve the standard of higher education to meet set objectives**.**

Statement of the Problem

The research investigated the benchmarking periodic review, minimum standard and exchange programme for staff and students as predictors of quality of graduates in nigerian public universities

Research Questions

The study is set out to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. How relevant are the benchmarks, periodic reviews and minimum standards in the selected Nigeria public universities?
2. To what extent has Nigerian universities embraced exchange programmes as a quality control measure?

Methodology

The study adopts the descriptive survey research design of the *ex-post facto* type. This is because all the variables have already occurred and the researcher did not intend to manipulate the variables. Inferences from the observations are generalised on the study population. The study is correlational in approach. This is to allow for the use of the appropriate analytical method of relating variables.

There are two categories of variables, the independent and dependent variables
Independent Variables include;

1. Benchmarks, periodic review and minimum standard.
2. Exchange programmes for lecturers and students, While the dependent variable is the Quality of graduates in public university

The study adopted a multistage sampling procedure. First, Nigeria was stratified into six geopolitical zones. The proportional to size random sampling technique was then used to

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select university for each zone based on the total number of universities existing in each zone. In all, out of the 44 conventional universities, 15 were selected which represents 35 per cent (ratio 1:3 from zones) of the total number of universities. In all, 15 universities were sampled.

Geopolitical Zone	No of Universities	No. of Universities Selected	Universities
North Central	9	3	University of Abuja University of Jos Benue State University
North West	5	2	Usman Dan Fodiyo University, Sokoto Bayero University , Kano
North East	6	2	University of Maiduguri Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi
South West	11	4	University of Ibadan Lagos State University Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye
South East	9	3	University of Nigeria, Nsukka Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki Nnamdi Azikwe University, Awka.
South South	4	1	Ambrose Alli University
Total	**44**	**15**	

The study used three faculties in each university (Education, Social Science and Arts) from humanities and five departments were then selected from each selected faculty. A total number of five lecturers were selected from each department using the purposive sampling technique. This gives a total of 75 lecturers in each university making a sum of 1,125 lecturers in all the universities. The study also sampled the HODs from each department selected. This makes a total number of 15 HODs from each university and a sum total of 225 HODs in all the universities.

The study also purposively sampled the DVC academics and DVC administration of each university making a total of 3O DVCs from the sampled universities.

Research Instruments
One instrument developed by the researcher was used for data collection in this study. Which is:
1. Quality Control Questionnaire on Universities Ranking and Minimum Standard (QQCRAM)

Quality Control Questionnaire on Universities Ranking and Minimum Standard (QQCRAM)
This questionnaire is for the Deputy Vice Chancellors, academics and administration of

the universities; it centres on the aspects of quality control measures which the central administration controls. There are five sections in the instrument.

Section A is on the socio-demographic information while Section B covers institutional ranking of undergraduate courses/programmes in the universities. Section C poses questions on benchmarks, periodic reviews and minimum standards while Section D is on the universities' exchange programmes for lecturers and students. Section E covers post-UTME and screening exercises.

Validity of Instruments
For validity, face and content validity of the instruments were ensured by giving the questionnaires to experts in educational management and evaluation. Criticisms and suggestions offered were used to improve the draft items of the questionnaires.

Reliability of the Instruments
A field test was conducted in order to establish the reliability of the instruments. This was done by administering 5O questionnaires to lecturers, HODs and DVCs in Nigerian universities which were not part of the selected samples for the study. These were subjected to reliability analysis using Cronbach method. This tool also established the internal consistency of the instruments. This is based on item correlation. It also produced the reliability indices for each of the instruments.

The Questionnaire produces a Cronbach coefficient of O.77. These values depict high reliability indices and good levels of internal consistency.

Procedure for Data Collection
The researcher first collected letters of introduction to the various universities from the Head of Department so as to obtain necessary permission from the selected universities. Once this was done, ten research assistants were trained in form of orientation about the study and specifically on how to administer the questionnaires. This orientation lasted three days.

With the assistance of trained research personnel, records of academic performance of the graduating class for two sessions were collected from the academic records offices. This lasted two weeks. Thereafter, the questionnaires for the various officers of the universities were distributed and collected. All activities took place simultaneously in all the universities. Questionnaires for lecturers were distributed simultaneously. The whole exercise lasted three weeks.

Method of Data Analysis
The data generated for the study were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). The package includes descriptive statistics (frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviations) as well as inferential statistics which includes Pearson

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Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression, Analysis of Variance Pearson Correlation and T-test. Six research questions and five hypotheses were answered and tested in this study. Research questions 1 to 6 were answered through the use of frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation while Pearson Product Moment Correlation, Multiple Regression and Analysis of Variance were used to test hypothesis 1 to 5. T-test analysis was used to test the difference between state and federal universities on the quality of graduates. All these analysis were carried out at O.O5 level of significance.

Results

Table 1:   Benchmarks, Periodic Reviews and Minimum Standards in Nigerian Public Universities.

N = 3O

Item	Statements	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Mean	Std. deviation
1	The NUC monitors the university adherence to the prescribed standard.	1 (2.9)	16 (52.9)	11 (35.3)	3 (8.8)	2.50	.70
2	The university has enough staff as required by the NUC.	2 (5.9)	16 (52.9)	7 (23.5)	5 (17.6)	2.47	.86
3	Courses and programmes are tailored to conform with the NUC minimum standards.	7 (23.5)	7 (23.5)	7 (23.5)	9 (29.4)	2.41	.15
4	The senate ensures the universities compliance with the minimum requirements of NUC.	7 (23.5)	11 (35.3)	7 (23.5)	5 (17.6)	2.64	.04
5	There is a periodic review of courses in line with new policies of government.	4 (14.7)	12 (38.2)	7 (23.5)	7 (23.5)	2.44	.02
6	The courses and programmes are reviewed on the needs of the society.	1 (2.9)	15 (44.1)	15 (44.1)	3 (8.8)	2.41	.70
7	Employers of labour are allowed to advice the university on courses and programmes.	4 (11.8)	12 (38.2)	12 (38.2)	4 (11.8)	2.50	.86
8	Reviewed courses and new programmes are approved by the NUC.	2 (5.9)	15 (50.0)	12 (41.2)	1 (2.9)	2.58	`.65
9	Professional bodies monitor the efficiency of courses and graduate quality.	6 (20.6)	11 (35.3)	4 (11.8)	10 (32.4)`	2.44	.15
10	The alumni of the universities are given a chance to participate in redesigning programmes.	5 (17.8)	13 (44.1)	11 (35.3)	1 (2.9)	2.76	.78
	Weighted Mean = 2.52						

From Table 1, the university administrators' responses produced high mean scores on five items viz: item 1($\bar{x}$ = 2.5O), item 4($\bar{x}$ = 2.64), item 7($\bar{x}$ = 2.5O), item 8($\bar{x}$ = 2.58) and item 1O($\bar{x}$ = 2.76). These reveal that the NUC monitors prescribed standards; university senates ensure compliance with minimum standards, employers of labour are allowed to offer advice, reviewed courses and new programmes are approved by the National University Commission (NUC) and the alumni of the university are given a chance to participate in designing programmes.

Furthermore, Table 1 shows that five items have low mean scores ranging from 2.41 to 2.47. These show that the universities do not have enough staff, courses and programmes are not tailored along with NUC minimum standards, there is no periodic review of courses in line with new policies of government and professional bodies do not monitor the quality of graduates produced in the universities.

The weighted mean of 2.52 indicate that the benchmarks and minimum standards are used and adhered to only to a fair extent.

Research Question 2: To what extent have Nigerian universities embraced exchange programmes as quality control measure?

Table 2: Frequency of Exchange Programmes in Nigerian Universities.
N = 3O

Item	Statements	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Mean	Std. dev.
1	The university embarks on exchange programmes with other universities in Nigeria.	3 (8.8)	10 (32.4)	12 (41.2)	5 (17.6)	2.32	.87
2	Exchange programmes are run with universities outside Nigeria.	2 (5.9)	11 (35.3)	14 (47.1)	4 (11.8)	2.35	.77
3	Academic staff members are sent out on exchange programmes.	1 (2.9)	16 (52.9)	12 (38.2)	2 (5.9)	2.52	.66
4	The university has capacity for accommodating staff of other universities on exchange programme.	2 (5.9)	14 (47.1)	12 (38.2)	3 (8.8)	2.50	.74
5	Lecturers go on sabbatical leave to other universities.	4 (14.7)	8 (26.5)	12 (38.2)	6 (20.6)	2.35	.98
6	Students proceed on exchange programmes to other universities to gain more knowledge.	6 (20.6)	8 (26.5)	12 (38.2)	4 (14.7)	2.52	.99
7	Scholarships and fellowship are available for students and staff of the university.	6 (2.06)	9 (29.4)	15 (44.1)	2 (5.9)	2.64	.88
8	Non-academic staff benefit from exchange programmes of the university.	5 (17.6)	12 (38.2)	9 (29.4)	4 (13.7)	2.58	.95
9	Participation in exchange programmes is based on merit.	5 (17.6)	14 (47.1)	9 (29.4)	2 (5.9)	2.76	.81
10	The university sets some funds apart for exchange programmes.	2 (5.9)	15 (50.0)	8 (26.5)	5 (17.6)	2.44	.85
	Weighted Mean = 2.50						

From Table 2, six items out of ten produce high mean scores. These are: item 3($\bar{x}$ = 2.52), item 4($\bar{x}$ = 2.5O), item 6($\bar{x}$ = 2.52), item 7($\bar{x}$ = 2.64), item 8($\bar{x}$ = 2.58) and item 9($\bar{x}$ = 2.76). From these items, it is revealed that universities' academic staff are sent on exchange programmes, there is capacity to accommodate staff of other universities on exchange programmes, students participate in exchange programmes, scholarships and fellowships are available for students and staff, exchange programmes extend to non-academic staff and merit is used to select staff for exchange programmes.

On the other hand, low mean scores were obtained from item 1($\bar{x}$ = 2.32), item 2($\bar{x}$ = 2.35), item 5($\bar{x}$ = 2.35) and item 1O($\bar{x}$ = 2.44). These show that most universities do

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not exchange with other Nigerian universities and do not run exchange with universities outside Nigeria. Also, few lecturers go on sabbatical leave and the universities do not set funds apart for exchange programmes.

The weighted mean score of 2.5O reveals that on the whole, exchange programmes are not frequently engaged in Nigerian universities but only done occasionally.

Discussion of Findings

The study investigated the influence of quality control measures on quality of graduates in Nigerian public universities. Based on the results, the following findings emanated from the research questions.

It was also observed out that benchmarks, periodic reviews and minimum standards are adhered to only to a limited extent with weighted mean of 2.52. This implies that apart from the NUC and the senate of the universities which stipulate minimum requirement, other stakeholders such as educational policymakers do not participate in the monitoring of quality in the universities. This may be a factor responsible for poor staffing against the number of students, lack of innovation in the courses and programmes offered and poor relevance to societal needs. For instance, in the developed countries, well-established industries and companies assist relevant departments in the universities in the provision of materials and equipment so as to ensure good quality of graduates of such institutions as revealed by Welsh and Dry (2OO2). Tertiary institutions in the United States are expected to promote quality by measuring students; learning outcomes.

Programmes show acceptable levels of quality of graduates based on measures and standard set by accrediting agencies. All institutional accrediting agencies (six in all) and programme/professional accrediting approved as tested by the United States have their higher education boards for public policy, coordination, funding and monitoring of accountability in higher institutions. This has improved the quality of education and this shows in the quality of graduates produced in the United States. Further, in Nigeria exchange programmes for staff and students are only done occasionally as found in this study with a mean score of 2.5O. This portends enormous danger for the culture of development of students and the academic staff and could enhance inbreeding which is not a progressive way of developing academic culture. In practice, academic members as well as students are supposed to be allowed to visit other institutions in other countries to allow comparisons to be made about the system and process of teaching and learning. Indeed, Adepoju (2OO3) expresses this viewpoint earlier, that most Nigerian higher institutions have not established links with foreign institutions either in the field of technology or in other academic matters that could improve the quality of the programmes and students.

Summary

The study investigated the impact of quality control measures on quality of graduates in public universities in Nigeria. The main interest was to find more efficient ways to operate public university system to ensure equity and quality of education for all and to produce graduates that can stand the test of time in the world of work.

The study utilised the input-output model system approach. When applied to education, students, materials, information and symbolic (policies, objectives) are the inputs, the transformation process includes the teaching, learning, planning, organisation and evaluation while the quality of graduates, academic achievement, certificates and diploma form the output of the university system. The descriptive survey research design of the ex-post-facto type was adopted. The study used 15 out of 44 conventional universities which represent 35 per cent of the total number of public Universities in Nigeria. Proportional to size random sampling was used to select the Universities. The study used three faculties in each university (Education, Social Science and Arts) since they are faculties of humanities. Five lecturers were selected from each department making a total of 75 lecturers in each university and a total 1,125 lecturers from all the universities. The study also sampled HOD from each department selected. This makes a total number of 15 HODs from each university and a sum total of 225 HODs in all the universities. Four instruments were developed to generate relevant data from the universities.

The data collected were analysed using the statistical package for Social and Science (SPSS). The package includes descriptive statistics (frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation) as well as inferential statistics Pearson Product Moment Correlation, multiple regression, analysis of variance and t-test.

The results showed that accreditation of programmes and courses were carried out to a large extent in our universities. Similarly, benchmarks and minimum standards were also adhered to in the institutions sampled. Facilities and equipment are grossly inadequate in the universities, exchange programmes for staff and students are not frequently engaged in but done occasionally.

Conclusion

This research examines the extent to which some quality control measures impact the quality of graduates in selected Nigerian public universities. Findings reveal that the eight quality control measures exert a great impact jointly and independently on the quality of academic endeavour in the universities. Indeed, much improvement would be made if each of this quality control measures are appropriately implemented and effectively too.

Therefore, to achieve university education relevance in the rapidly developing socio-economic and technological environment, it is our duty to perform as educational managers and policymakers without failing. The government is implored to increase its efforts along the right path of development in the 21st century by providing adequate

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fund be committed and focus in constant evaluation of educational policy and implementation. The government should therefore make more efforts to implement programmes that will help achieve the goals of the global declarations with respect to university education especially with reference to the quality control measures examined in this study.

The implication of this is that the quality control measures will actually make dramatic change in the university education in Nigeria if addressed effectively. In essence, they are potent change agents for producing better public universities in Nigeria. Therefore to move the country along the right path of development in the 21st century, requires funding, committal, focus and constant evaluation of educational policy and implementation. The government should deepen the effort to implement programmes that will help achieve the goals of the global declarations with respect to university education especially with reference to the quality control measures discussed in this study.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:-

- The NUC should put more efficient machineries in motion to monitor universities based on adherence to stipulated minimum standards and requirements for the award of degrees. Also, sanctions should be enforced where there is disobedience of the rules by universities.

- The management should ensure they circulate all the rules and regulations guiding the award of degrees to all staff, and students to enhance compliance to set rules.

- The government needs to fund universities more adequately so that equipment and facilities will be available in these institutions.

- Lecturers and heads of departments must ensure strict compliance with requirements of standard and quality both academically and morally.

- Adequate funding to help retain qualified good quality lecturers is needed.

- Consistent adjustment in the salary structure and fringe benefits of lecturers to motivate them.

- High quality professional development for lecturers which include workshops, joint lesson plans, seminars, independent classroom based research.

- Continuity of policies and programmes even if there are changes in leadership at the federal and state levels.

- Quantitative curriculum delivery to be achieved and sustained through effective capacity building strategies.

- Institutions must invest in the training of faculty staff to fulfil new functions in the evolving teaching and learning system.

- Exchange programme for staff and students should be included in the university curriculum.

- Quality control criteria that will reflect the overall objectives of higher education, notably, the aim of cultivating in students critical and independent thought and the capacity of learning throughout life. Innovation and diversity should be encouraged.

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