

## ACCREDITATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIAN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS: BETWEEN POLICY FORMULATION AND REALITY

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Accreditation is the process of certifying academic programmes in institutions of learning. It often involves the comparison of statutory provisions and the reality, sadly in Nigeria, the provision of the statutory documents as regards accreditation is largely at variance with the results of accreditation exercises carried out by the regulatory bodies in charge of accreditation. However, the magical means through which most higher learning academic institutions gain accreditation leaves much to be desired.

**Purpose:** This paper therefore attempted an examination of the provisions of statutory documents as regards accreditation, comparing the provisions of the NUC's BMAS; NCCE's minimum standard and accreditation toolkit with the results of the needs committee set up to do on the spot assessment of the Universities on one hand and the NUC's accreditation results published recently on the other hand.

**Methods:** A short survey was conducted to answer fifteen questions, related to such listed as requirements for accreditation of Early Childhood Education in Colleges of Education. Heads of Departments or their lieutenants, in the Colleges, were asked to fill out the answers to the questions using the Google form platform. The convenience sampling technique was used to select ten public owned colleges of education five each from the southern and northern parts of Nigeria out of a total of seventy five public owned colleges of education.

**Results:** It was discovered that the accreditation results of the various colleges of education and universities offering early childhood education may not be said to be fully a reflection of reality on ground in these colleges of education and universities.

**Conclusion:** This paper therefore postulated based on available information that the accreditation results often published or announced may be at variance with the reality in those schools. Academics and other players in the subsector may be culpable alongside the accreditation bodies, at giving non accurate accounts of the true situation of things during the accreditation of programmes, early childhood education inclusive.

**Keywords:** Accreditation, Early Childhood Care Education, Universities, National Universities Commission, National Commission for Colleges of Education



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## **PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT**

The study is expected to benefit the government, in that the government may become more aware of the situation of accreditation of higher education, in general, and teacher (early childhood) education, in specific. By extension, the government would become better informed about the dichotomies that exist between accreditation results and the reality of the conditions of higher education in Nigeria. The lecturers, staff and other stake holders would also be better informed of the situation of things in the tertiary institutions in relations to the true situation of standards and need of the said higher institutions to run some programs especially early childhood education. And subsequently likely refuse to get involved in sharp practises especially as regards accreditation and in turn improve higher education in Nigeria.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Historically, accreditation is said to have originated from the United States of America in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1890), when accreditation associations started to organise, this was after about two hundred and fifty years of university education was introduced to the united states with the setting up of the Harvard College, now Harvard University (Brittingham, 2009). Kumar et. Al. (2020), defined accreditation as the process of examining the programmes of higher institution, making sure that they conform to pre-determined standards. According to Obadara and Abayomi (2013) 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. The process is designed to determine whether or not an institution has met or not stipulated standards set by an external body. It majorly measures whether an institution is achieving its mission and stated purpose of creation. To Akomolafe and Adesua (2019), accreditation refers to the process of a higher institution of learning subjecting itself to an official review board for the purpose of granting approval to the institution after it has met the criteria set by the approving body; it could also be seen as the process of examining a higher institution, to ensure it is where it ought to be in terms of standard.

Furthermore, Obadara and Abayomi (2013), are of the opinion that accreditation is a process of self-evaluation and validation of evaluation by external bodies, used for standardization

of programmes, ensuring the achievement of the institution's set goals and objectives. Such validation is usually carried out by government bodies, national quality assurance or professional bodies. Going by the opinion of scholars, the essence of accreditation is validation and standardization of academic programmes and institutions of higher learning. According to (kumar et. al 2020), there are two types or levels of accreditation, the programme based and institutional accreditation. While the institutional accreditation often looks at the whole institution, vis-à-vis the aims and goals of setting it up, programme accreditation are programme specific and based on the measurement of students' success and programme fulfilment of requirements in a specific discipline. The importance and gains of accreditation can never be over emphasized, in a world of competition, universities are even adopting it as a means of priding their goods and gaining more relevance (Ferran, 2016).

The importance of accreditation exercise to the higher educational sector can never be over emphasized. Aad (2019) summarizes succinctly the importance of accreditation, when she noted that the ultimate goal of accrediting agencies is to improve the education level of education offered by higher education institutions. An increasingly viable question is how to deduce whether the educational institution has effectively graduated qualified students who are deemed as effectively capable of entering the job market and pursuing a particular profession. Furthermore, gaining programme accreditation is supposed to

be a marketable product for institution of higher learning who should rightly claim excellence as a result of accreditation success. It is further supposed to be carried out by impartial umpires. A good accreditation should in the long run; recognize achievements and innovations; facilitate continuous improvements of the higher institution; help to develop content or curriculum of the institutions further and finally ensure that the institutions are committed to excellence (NAAC, 2019).

In Nigeria, there are various types of early childhood education higher education programmes. This paper focuses on two major teacher education institutions in Nigeria, they are the universities and college of education. The main mandate of the colleges of education is to produce teachers with the Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE). The NCE is a three year sub degree programme that qualifies the holder to register as a teacher; being the lowest level attainable to register as a teacher in Nigeria (TRCN 2008). All Federal Colleges of Education in Nigeria were mandated to mount the early childhood education department by year 2008. The early childhood education degree programme on the other hand is a four year university degree programme. While the colleges of education produce NCE holders, the universities produce first degrees, post graduate diplomas, master's degree and PhD degrees in early childhood education.

#### **HISTORY OF ACCREDITATION AND STATUTORY ACCREDITATION BODIES**

Statutorily, the accreditation of early childhood education of NCEs, as other NCE programmes, is guided by the policies and regulations set by the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) for the purpose of accreditation and supervision. Although the university accreditation is based on the policies and directions of the National Universities Commission (NUC). Historically accreditation of programmes in colleges of education started around 1989, when colleges of education had yet to transform from higher teacher training

colleges attached to faculties of education in universities. Later on in 1989 the National Commission for Colleges of Education was established and it started the process of accrediting the NCE programmes, issuing guidelines and directions, the first guideline to be issued by the NCCE (minimum standard) was issued in 1990 (Alumode & Onuma 2016). The journey to accreditation of university programmes officially started with the establishment of the NUC and the production of the first minimum academic standard (MAS) to accommodate the then 13 faculties operated in Nigerian universities as of 1989 (NUC, 2012). Some of the provisions with regards to university accreditation are contained in the NUC publication of 2012 manual for accreditation procedures of academic programmes in Nigerian universities (MAP) and the Benchmark minimum academic standards (BMAS) of 2007.

#### **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES OF EDUCATION**

The bodies saddled with the accreditation of the early childhood programme at the college of education and university in Nigeria are the NCCE and NUC respectively. These bodies have at various times instituted minimum criteria for accreditation of these institutions. That means that before a course is (re)accredited it should meet or surpass the standards as contained in the policy documents.

#### **The Nigerian Certificate in Education**

There are two major policy documents that contain the conditions and criteria for the accreditation of NCE early childhood education programmes are contained. They are contained in the minimum standard for early childhood care and education and primary education and the guide and implementation strategy to the criteria stated in the minimum standard are further broken down and explained in the accreditation

tool kit, both by the NCCE year 2012 edition. According to the NCCE minimum standard (2012 p.13) as corroborated by Alumode and Onuma (2016), there are three aspects or sections on which accreditation focuses. The accreditation toolkit, which serves as the guide and source of information what the colleges of education are to provide however further divided the areas to be accredited into five sub-areas which include: 1. Leadership, management and organization 2. Curriculum organization and implementation 3. Infrastructure and learning resources 4. Assessment and evaluation 5. Students support and progression.

The key areas identified above and the items found below are as follows:

1. *Leadership, management and organization:* These primarily refer to the number of lecturers available for the programme, the headship appointed to coordinate the department/programme and the Organisation of the department. Here at least eight lectures are recommended with at least one each specialising in science education; arts/music education, one in computer/ICT; while six are recommended to be masters holders in early childhood education. Furthermore the recommended lecturer/student ratio is put at 1; 25. Furthermore the policy recommends that the head of the department should hold a master's degree in early childhood education. Under this aspect also the accreditation team inspects various files and documents comprising communication with the superior authority, committees set up, reports of departmental committees, minutes of meetings and evidence of consultative decision making process in the department for at least three past academic sessions in the case of programme re-accreditation. The scoring under this area is stratified into aspects which are Good, Satisfactory and Fail. A

programme that possesses all the above stated qualities in terms of human resources is to be adjudged and rated good or satisfactory, while those with inadequate manpower shall be awarded failure. The leadership, management and organizations are regarded as a core areas of requirement for the early childhood education programme to be accredited in the college of education, meaning any programme that fails in this aspect is to be denied accreditation (NCCE, 2012b).

2. *Curriculum organization and implementation:* Here items to be examined include the availability and usage of minimum standard, content of courses thought. Also the lesson notes of lecturers are to be certified in accordance with the format provided by the commission. Here, the methodology and strategies adopted should be such that is child centered and activity based. The scoring under this section is also in three grades. The good, satisfactory and fail. While good and satisfactory is to be awarded to institutions whose programme meet up and thus accredited, fail to be awarded to institutions that lack in this core area. And it should also be noted that all programmes to be granted accreditation of early childhood education must scale this aspect, meaning that the aspect is also regarded as a core area of accreditation, failure of which denies a college of education an accreditation in the programme (NCCE, 2012b).
3. *Infrastructure and learning resources:* this include items such as number of classrooms, availability of well stocked library, resource room(s) and the general learning environment. This aspect of accreditation is not regarded as a core area of need and a college of education which presents

inadequate infrastructure may be granted an interim accreditation and not denied accreditation because of inadequacies in this area. The aspect is scored on a scale of four comprising; fail awarded zero mark; need to improve awarded one mark; satisfactory awarded two marks and good awarded three marks (NCCE, 2012b).

4. *Assessment and evaluation:* under this section the accreditation exercise focuses on past and present records of students' continuous assessment and examination, the moderators' reports, the examination questions bank, test scores and question samples, marking guide for examination and continuous assessment, examination raw scores, past examination and continuous assessment moderated/ non moderated scripts. This aspect is also regarded as a non-vital aspect of the accreditation exercise and thus a college of education which scores a fail in this aspect may also be granted an interim accreditation by the accrediting body. This aspect is further scored on a Likert like scale of grading. With failure, need to improve, satisfactory and good, attracting 0, 1, 2 and 3 scores respectively (NCCE, 2012b).
5. *Students support and progression:* this has to do with student statistics, state of origin, and general demographic distribution of students by sex, number in each level other related information. It also has to do with the advisory functions and responsibility of students. Here students are also questioned on the adequacy and their satisfaction with the content of the programme and the general administration of the programme. This aspect is also regarded as a non-essential aspect of accreditation exercise

with the four item grading system and fails not compulsorily denying a department an interim accreditation status (NCCE, 2012).

The accreditation team is expected to score the different aspects as identified above, do the summation of the marks and decide where the programme falls. While a failure in the first two aspects (leadership/personnel and curriculum implementation) known as core concern of accreditation the programme a denial. Apart from these, the existence of a close by early childhood development center is also a pre-condition for getting accreditation. The ECDC is regarded as the laboratory for the programme and some of the qualities to be observed before an ECD center is accredited are hereby presented below:

#### **THE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTER (ECDC)**

The centre is recommended to be the primary demonstration centre of the department and the following are recommended among other conditions, for its approval as being up to standard:

1. The ECD centre is recommended to be under the control of the early childhood education centre
2. The ECD centre is recommended to be at least 16 square meters, which should contain 10-15 children at a time.
3. The room is required to be well ventilated and illuminated with multiple windows and doors which are netted and open outwards.
4. The centre is stipulated to have a playground with lots of play materials.
5. A specification of statutory and non-statutory documents to be kept in the school was listed including child protection documents like the child rights act and others.
6. The furniture specification for the children was given as conference style seating arrangement of child sized furniture.

7. The availability of clean and safe water and also toilet facilities is made mandatory.

Health and nutritional materials, such storage of expressed milk and food items are also listed as requirements (NCCE 2012).

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The situation of tertiary education calls for concern. The College of Education sector is said to be the fulcrum and flagship of (early childhood) teacher education in Nigeria. Most sectors in the Nigerian polity including education have become plagued with corruption. Accreditation, which ordinarily should be a source of measurement of the wellness of the tertiary education, is widely believed to have become jamboree, feast and often times an avenue of enriching the participants. The need to investigate and reveal the true situation of tertiary education, especially the early childhood/teacher education vis-à-vis the scenario often painted in the public becomes expedient in order to uphold or debunk these wild beliefs.

### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In view of the foregoing, this paper therefore aims to carry out a quantitative study in order to ascertain the level of compliance of departments of early childhood education in colleges of education to the key provisions of the statutory documents as regards conditions for granting approval/accreditation to colleges of education to run courses in early childhood education.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the generated responses on leadership, management and organization as core aspects of accreditation exercise on early childhood education programmes in Colleges of Education in Nigeria?
2. What are the responses generated on curriculum organization and implementation as core aspects of accreditation exercise on early childhood education programmes

in Colleges of Education in Nigeria?

3. What are the generated responses on infrastructure and learning resources as core aspects of accreditation exercise on early childhood education programmes in Colleges of Education in Nigeria?
4. What are the generated responses on assessment and evaluation as core aspects of accreditation exercise on early childhood education programmes in Colleges of Education in Nigeria?
5. What are the generated responses on students' progress and progression as core aspects of accreditation exercise on early childhood education programmes in Colleges of Education in Nigeria?

What are the responses generated about the ECD centre as core aspects of accreditation exercise on early childhood education programmes in Colleges of Education in Nigeria?

### METHODOLOGY

#### The situation of the colleges of education

Although the Colleges of Education regulatory body, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) does not publish the accreditation results of colleges of education like its university counterpart. To get an on the spot situation of the colleges of education this report, the researchers adopted what is akin to qualitative research design by making use of a fifteen item questionnaire which sought to ascertain the level of adherence of some selected colleges of education to the set standard set by the NCCE for colleges of education as highlighted above in comparison to the accreditation status of the early childhood education programmes in these institutions.

#### Population and Sample

The total population of publicly owned colleges of education stands at seventy five, while ten of them were

selected (five each from south and northern parts of Nigeria). The convenience sampling technique was used and the heads of departments of early childhood care education departments or their appointees were made to give answers to the raised questions through the Google form platform. All the colleges of education sampled offer early childhood education on a full time basis, without prejudice to the part time programme in early childhood education they may also run.

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

The instrument used to collect data was an instrument generated by the researchers. The items included in the questionnaire are as follows: How many lecturers does your department have? How many of them have a master's degree in early childhood education? Does the head of the department have a master's degree in early childhood education? How many students are on your fulltime programme? Does your department have a well-stocked resource room? Does your department keep adequate record of moderators' reports? How many students does each of your classroom contain? How many classrooms are available for the running of the programme? Do you have an ECD centre attached to the programme? Is the control of the ECD centre under your department? Other questions raised from the items in the questionnaire are: Do you have adequate students' demographic records of the last three sessions by age, sex state of origin distribution? Does the department keep adequate record of students past examination? Is there a question bank in the department? Does the department have a separate library or section in the college library? Do lecturers in the department write and teach with lesson notes according to the NCCE guidelines?

### **RESULTS**

The responses of the ten colleges of education sampled are hereby presented and arranged in six sections of focus of the accreditation exercise including the setting up and running of

the ECD centre. The results are presented as categorised in the research questions.

**Research Question 1:** What are the generated responses on leadership, management and organization as core aspects of accreditation exercise on early childhood education programmes in Colleges of Education in Nigeria?

Leadership, management and organization: under this heading, it was discovered that 7 colleges of education, representing 70% of the schools sampled had up to the minimum eight lecturers which was recommended for the running of the early childhood department. Also 70% of the colleges were also discovered to have minimum required qualification (M.Ed in early childhood education) to run the programme. 7 out of 10 schools were found to have responded that their heads had a masters degree in early childhood education. Furthermore, the lecturer student ratio was found to be within the recommended 1:25 ratio in 70% of the colleges sampled.

**Research Question 2:** What are the responses generated on curriculum organization and implementation as core aspects of the accreditation exercise in early childhood education programmes in Colleges of Education in Nigeria?

Curriculum organization and implementation: under this heading 5 of the sampled schools representing 50% asserted that there are provisions for library services in their department while 5 of the respondents, representing 50% are of the opinion that the library services available under the programme was grossly inadequate. While all of the respondents (100%) asserted that they do not write lesson notes as directed by NCCE using the provided format.

**Research Question 3:** What are the generated responses on infrastructure and learning resources as core aspects of the accreditation exercise on early childhood education programmes in Colleges of Education in Nigeria?

Infrastructure and learning resources: 80% of the respondents asserted that they have adequate resource rooms while 20% of respondents said they do not have. 60% of the respondents gave figures indicating that their classroom provisions were fairly adequate, while 40% of respondents' responses indicated that their classroom provisions were inadequate.

**Research Question 4:** What are the generated responses on assessment and evaluation as core aspects of accreditation exercise on early childhood education programmes in Colleges of Education in Nigeria?

*Assessment and evaluation:* Half of the respondents indicated that they had adequate records with respect to moderator reports of questions and results. 9 respondents representing 90% of respondents opined that they keep adequate records of students' past questions while 10% of the respondents are of the opinion that they do not keep such adequate records. Also 90% of respondents are of the opinion that they keep have adequate question records (question banks).

**Research Question 5:** What are the generated responses on students' progress and progression as core aspects of accreditation exercise on early childhood education programmes in Colleges of Education in Nigeria?

Students' progress and progression: 90% of the respondents opined that they have adequate students' demographic records, while 10% of respondents opined that they do not have such records.

**Research Question 6:** What are the responses generated about the ECD center as core aspects of the accreditation exercise on early childhood education programmes in Colleges of Education in Nigeria?

The ECD centre: 80% of the respondents are of the opinion that there

is an ECD centre attached to department while 2 respondents, representing 20% of respondents are of the opinion that they do not have a functional ECD centre are required by the law. Also, only 30% of the respondents opined that the control of the ECD centre was under the direction of the department as required by the statute.

### **The presentation of the result at a glance**

As stated earlier, three aspects of the above discussed sections are regarded as the core aspects of accreditation exercise they are the leadership, management and organization; curriculum organization and implementation and the ECD center set up. 30% of the colleges of education were found not to be qualified to run early childhood education programmes by the virtue of manpower availability and qualification. Also, half of respondents agreed they had poor library services meaning that they should not be accredited to run the early childhood programme. Also, none of the respondents opined that they teach according to the requirements of the NCCE, as regards writing of lesson notes and teaching with same. This surprisingly means that all the respondents are not qualified to run the early childhood education programmes at least by the criteria set by the accreditation agency, NCE.

### **The University**

The documents detailing the minimum requirements for accreditation of academic programme are contained in the manual for accreditation procedures of academic programmes in Nigerian universities produced by the NUC in 2012. The document stipulates that the programmes granted full accreditation lapse after six academic sessions, with a mid-term accreditation after three sessions. Full accreditation is granted to academic programmes that meet the full requirements established. Interim accreditation on the other hand lasts for two academic sessions and is granted to academic programmes that have minor



deficiency in stipulated requirements. However, a fresh round of accreditation will be needed after the expiration of two academic sessions in the case of interim accreditation. Programmes that do not meet the accreditation criteria would be denied interim or full accreditation. The NUC sets a lecturer mix of 65% to be from senior lecturer to professorial cadre, while 35% of the lecturers are expected to be of the rank lecturers 1 and below. The policy document also recommends a 1; 30 lecturer-student ratio for education courses including early childhood education accreditation (NUC 2012). By implication universities that do not meet up with the above may not be granted full accreditation. Good library facilities with up to date materials and book are also recommended as pre-requisite for approval of the programme.

#### **The reality in the Universities in Nigeria as reported by the Needs Assessment Committee**

The reports of the 2012, needs assessment is a 181 paged document. It chronicles the situation in universities in Nigeria and presents a comprehensive assessment of the situation in universities on the spot in the country. It may be described as a critical and realistic representation of the reality in the universities, supported with pictorial evidence to show the decay condition the university sector is. Some of the key findings of the committee are hereby presented.

High indication of infrastructure and manpower wrath in the public university system in Nigeria, for example, pages 16–31 classroom and lecture theater; laboratory and workshop libraries 32- 54, over 75% are ongoing developmental projects while 25% are abandoned, 60% ongoing are Tetfund projects, pages 55-62. Pages 63---, talks about the staff strength and ratio, while the government recommends a mix of 20;45 and 35 for professorial senior and lecturer 1 below mix, the reality showed a preponderance of lower cadre, 65% in the lower cadre while senior lecturers and professor constituted 35%. Most schools had lecturers who were greatly under

qualified only 43% of university lecturers had PhDs and a very heavy dependence on part-time and visiting lecturers. Most universities also had closed homogenous ethnic coloration. Also, only 7 out of the over 70 public universities had up to 60% of their academic staff qualified to teach in universities (with PhDs). The lecturer student ration found in some universities was as high as 1:360, while some universities in Nigeria had only a single professor, while only 25 PhD holders working in the university. The team further reported that a certain university in Nigeria also has two professors and only 5 PhD holders. Furthermore, a university in Nigeria has 72 lectures on the professorial cadre on its payroll, only four of which are fulltime staff, leaving a whopping 68 as adjunct staff. Also, a certain university in Nigeria has more teaching staff in the registrar cadre of the university, compared to the number of professors. This means there are more Deputy Registrars, Senior Assistant Registrars, Principal Assistant Registrars and so on in the university than there are professors in the university (needs assessment committee 2012). This represents a very modest situation of the university sector, as not approved by the committee.

However, in reality, a summary of the latest conditions of universities offering degree courses in early childhood education in Nigeria has been published at least in the last five sessions (since the 2014 session). The jamb brochure listing of universities with early childhood education and related courses were considered for examination. According to the document, 15 full-time universities run the programme on full time basis, as at year 2014. The following findings were revealed:

Fifteen out of the twenty-six early childhood education degree awarding institutions are universities and autonomous institutions, the remaining eleven are other degree awarding institutions affiliated to faculties/institutes of education in various universities, this analysis however excludes other degree awarding

institutions of early childhood education, aside the universities.

Most universities have undergone accreditation exercise for early childhood education on average only two times, with three accreditations being the highest accreditation attempted for the 24 years under consideration. No single early childhood education programme in a Nigerian university has ever earned denial status in the last 24 years, and even till date. 11 out of 15 of universities representing 73.3%, running undergraduate degree programmes in early childhood education had accreditation to run the programme, 8 representing 53.3% had full accreditation while 3 universities representing 20% had interim accreditation. 4 out of 15 institutions representing 26.6% listed early childhood education as undergraduate courses they offered in the brochure, while the NUC accreditation result showed that they had never presented the accreditation programme for before.

## DISCUSSIONS

A comparison of the findings from the accreditation result for 2014 and the needs assessment report; an on the spot assessment of reality in these universities shows that the accreditation exercise carried out in most universities are either a product of connivance between the university authorities or a false representation of the reality in the various universities running the early childhood education and other courses. The paradox situation the accreditation result and on the needs assessment result paint is supported by many research findings and informed opinions. Those who should know that accreditation exercises carried out in Nigerian higher institutions often report vague and falsified situation. The NCCE in its 2012 accreditation toolkit, while explaining the rationale for the development of the toolkit asserted that, "What is observed during accreditation lacks objective reality, in that institutions can and often engage in window dressing for the purpose of accreditation" (NCCE p.6) 2012(b). This is a height of

indictment and admittance of guilt by a regulatory body which is supposed to see to the accreditation of almost a hundred colleges of education; coincidentally however, oftentimes the leaders of the accreditation teams are traditionally seasoned academics (from the higher institution system), who themselves know what they left in their home institution and what obtains in reality in the institution they are to accredit.

Furthermore, more informed opinions about the obvious inaccuracies of reported accreditation results abound. The NUC itself in 2005 released a memo, detailing the obvious over bloated student situation in most state universities; wherein most state universities disregard the allotted carrying capacities and admit far more number of students, above their carrying capacity, in terms of availability of human resources and facilities available to cater for the said student population (NUC 2005). A glossary look at the NUC report of accreditation of early childhood education in universities (for the 2005 in contention) also revealed a similar trend to what was obtained in 2014, with almost a hundred percent accreditation of early childhood programmes, irrespective of the information at the disposal of the commission regarding the over bloated student population in relations to the available human and material resources; albeit a very key reason to deny the universities accreditation, if the results of accreditation exercise were a reflection of the reality and not active connivance on falsification of reality.

## INFORMED OPINION ABOUT INADEQUACIES IN ACCREDITATION REPORT IN THE UNIVERSITIES

In recent times, there have been lots of protests from the public regarding the accreditation exercise of the NUC and criticisms are obviously pointing towards the lack of genuine supervisory or regulatory scheme within the Nigerian university scheme as typified by the failed NUC accreditation system (Aboderin, 2012). Also, (Okwuofu and Aminu 2013) reported that the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities

rightly observed that the NUC accreditation exercise, which gave a disputed clean bill of health to most universities in Nigeria is nothing but the misrepresentation of reality in the universities, going by the findings of the needs assessment committee set up to give an on the spot assessment of the situation in the various universities. According to him the re-accreditation of the NUC's pseudo accreditation over the years has proven the NUC unworthy of regulating or rejuvenating university education in Nigeria. (Amaka 2012) also added to the debate by noting that fraud was the order of the day in the accreditation process of the NUC, noting that many states who have no proper plan or wherewithal to run universities derived joy in setting such up, assured that the regulatory body (NUC) would always grant them approval. Corroborating this view further, Professor Akinyanju (2012 p17), a renowned retired academic in the medical sciences while airing his opinion on the accreditation in Nigerian universities asserted that, "the level of fraud that the NUC is involved over the years is evident in situations when Department of Microbiology for instance is granted full accreditation in three different universities where there were 26 microscope available for a practical class of 150 students in ratio (1:6), 10 microscope to 220 students (1:22) and four (4) microscopes to a class of 100 students (1:25) respectively". This further shows that the accreditation of the NUC is characterized by unrealistic reportage of the situation on ground.

The lecturer-student ratio recommended by the regulatory body for early childhood education is 1: 30, one ratio of lecturers to 30 students. However, the needs assessment report identified a federal university that had as high as 1:360 lecturer student ratio. A further check at the result of this same university accreditation revealed the university one session later (2013/2014) had 90% of her programmes fully accredited including her early childhood education degree programme. The big question however is; whether or not the

university had performed any magic to remedy the 1:360 lecturer student ratio reported by the needs assessment in 2012 year ending (needs assessment report 2012; NUC 2019). Realistically, the resources (human and material) presented to the accrediting body were either "Ajaguntas" (mercenaries), or the active connivance of the NUC in perpetrating the fraud was sought and secured.

Also in December 2019, the national assembly responding to the 'national cry' under matters of national urgency passed a motion on its floor on the need to investigate the NUC accreditation exercise, noting that there were claims from some quarters that the commission was responsible for the increase in school fees to compensate for or the increase in gratifications that members of the accreditation panel usually demand from universities (vanguard news, 2019).

#### WHO IS TO BLAME?

A closer look into the process of accreditation in the colleges of education and universities however leaves much to be desired. The accreditation team in a typical accreditation in a university setting has at least three home grown professors, drawn from similar academic background (similar to what is to be accredited), with the three of them granted the sole power to evaluate score and recommend the class of accreditation result (full-partial or denial) to be granted the programme by the NUC; with only a single NUC staff per team serving as the scribe of the committee. The scribe is usually without any powers or authority to change the outcome of the results agreed upon by the professors. There is also a peer review mechanism that takes a second look at the team's recommendations; the review panel is also populated by Nigerian professors (NUC, 2020). Also, the NCCE is said to replicate the same three professionals and one secretariat personnel in the accreditation team sent to any college of education. To cap it up, the chief executive at the helms of affairs in these accreditation bodies are usually seasoned

academics who have reached the pinnacle and peak of their careers as academics, the NUC and NCCE are traditionally headed by professors, who coincidentally are home grown and part of the system. This implies that the academics may be said to be at fault in the whole scenario.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the above, it has become abundantly clear that the accreditation exercise which is supposed to be a means of standardization of higher education quality, may not serve that purpose well in Nigeria. Culpability of the institutions' administrators, accrediting agencies' connivance and the active role the academics in these institutions play in the accreditation process is not helping our situation nor improving the provision of higher education in Nigeria. Therefore, the following recommendations are hereby put forward to assist remedy the situation:

1. A complete overhaul of the accreditation process, to reporting the reality found in these schools instead of covering the inadequacies in the name of securing the jobs of those who work in those institutions.
2. A stop to the tendencies of "Ajagunta" (mercenaries), lecturers being employed on temporary basis just for the purpose of accreditation of higher education programmes, this will indeed put the visitors of the universities on their toes and the needless multiplication of higher institutions of learning without proper funding may stop.
3. The eradication of connivance and active participation of academic staff in cover up during accreditation in the name of not wanting to become jobless.
4. The provision of realistic needs, sufficient to run early childhood programmes and ensure the fair accreditation of the programmes in higher institutions of learning

by the visitors to the various institutions of higher learning.

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### Authorship and Level of Contributions

**Seun Sulaiman Folorunsho** developed the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions and the analysis and interpretation of the results. In addition, he came up with the conclusion and recommendations for the study.

**Takipi Esther Lawrence** contributed to the development of the instrument used for the study. Necessary observations and corrections were made in the methodology adopted for the study. He came up with some useful points for recommendations to the study.

### Disclaimer Statement

We declare that this paper is a new developed research work. This study has not been submitted to any other authority or institution. All texts quoted directly or paraphrased have been indicated by in-text citations and full bibliographic details are given in the references.

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