

A Qualitative Analysis of National Universities Commission's Supervisory Role and Infrastructural Development in Nigeria

Ngozi Nwogwugwu¹, Dr. Chibuzor Nwaodike²,
Makinde Adeboye Abiodun³ & Dr. Abiola Makinde⁴

1.Professor, Department of Public Admin & Political Science, Babcock University Ilishan,
Ogun State, Nigeria. Email: nwogwugwun@babcock.edu.ng

2.Department of Public Admin & Political Science, Babcock University Ilishan,
Ogun State, Nigeria. Email: nwaodikec@babcock.edu.ng

3.Department of Business Administration, Babcock University Ilishan,
Ogun State, Nigeria. Email: makindeab@babcock.edu.ng

4.Human Resources Department, Babcock University Ilishan,
Ogun State, Nigeria. Email: makindeb@babcock.edu.ng

Abstract

In our modern era, the development of infrastructure facilities in any university setting is essential to achieving educational aims and objectives that have an impact on the entire world. Despite policymakers' growing emphasis on high-quality education and the learning environment in schools, situational observation has shown that Nigeria lacks adequate infrastructure. This study therefore, examined the supervisory role of National Universities Commission in infrastructural development in selected universities in South-West Nigeria. This study adopted a qualitative approach using an exploratory research design. The target population were lecturers, students, and NUC officials who have been in their present place of employment who met the inclusion criteria of the study. Data were collected using a interview guide. Nvivo for qualitative analysis was used. Research questions were answered using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis on the continued relevance of NUC's role in infrastructural development in showed that NUC plays a crucial role in supervising, regulating, and facilitating infrastructural development in Nigerian universities. Additionally, funding challenges, inadequate facilities, poor maintenance culture, and land encroachment as major issues affecting infrastructure development. It is suggested that sufficient funding be made available to all tertiary institutions in the nation so that they can have the chance to acquire all the facilities, equipment, and chemicals for the laboratories in order to pass the accreditation process without having to borrow money. In conclusion, the National Universities Commission's supervisory role in infrastructure development is good.

Keywords: *Infrastructural Development, Academic Facilities, Recreational Facilities, Residential Facilities, Quality Assurance.*

INTRODUCTION

The development of infrastructural facilities in any university environment is fundamental to the attainment of educational goals and objectives that have global impact in this era of modernity. In Nigeria, despite the increasing focus of policymakers on qualitative education and school learning environment, context observation has revealed a dearth of functional infrastructural facilities. Facilities, such as hostels, classrooms, water system, waste management, laboratory equipment, computers and internet facilities among others, are not only inadequate but oftentimes in deplorable condition. This may have posed some difficulties for both the students and staff to have the benefit of a favorable environment that promotes

effective practical learning and insightful teaching and research exploration. Studies have revealed that the required infrastructural facilities for the production of impactful education are either in short supply or non-existent.

Isi (2022) noted that the state of infrastructural facilities in the Nigerian universities is not only deplorable but equally appalling. Corroborating Isi's (2022) observation, some other authors in their various studies have also expressed their concern of the terrible state of the infrastructural facilities in the Nigerian universities (Ebekozi, Aigbavboa & Amadi, 2023; Ogunode, Yiolokun & Akeredolu, 2019; Osunyikanmi, 2018). In South-West geo-political zone in Nigeria, some studies have also confirmed the deficit nature of infrastructural facilities in the universities (Ogunode, Yiolokun & Akeredolu, 2019; Subair, Okotoni, & Adebakin, 2012).

Several factors have been found to account for infrastructural development in countries and organizations without much reference to the university setting. Meanwhile, extant literature revealed that less attention has been paid to the supervisory role of the regulatory agency (NUC) as antecedent of infrastructural development in universities in Nigeria. In relation to the supervisory role of NUC in the Nigerian universities system, some studies have adduced to lack of funds, effective management of resources and internal supervisory mechanisms as some of the factors that impede infrastructural development in the universities. However, how far these factors obstruct the development of infrastructure in Nigerian universities has not been verified empirically. This has constituted a gap that the study intends to fill. Based on this gap, the present study intends to examine the kind of influence NUC supervisory role wields on the development of infrastructures in the selected Nigerian universities in order to affirm its supervisory role in general.

Research Questions

1. What is the state of infrastructural development in selected universities in South-West Nigeria?
2. How effective has been the role of NUC in the disbursement of grants to Universities for infrastructural development in selected Universities in Nigeria?
3. What effect has NUC's Quality Assurance supervisory role on infrastructural development in selected universities in South-West Nigeria?
4. How has NUC's facilities accreditation affected or influenced infrastructural development in selected universities in South-West Nigeria.

METHODS

Research Design: A qualitative design was adopted for this study as the researchers investigated the effect that National Universities Commission on infrastructural development in selected universities in South-West geo-political zone in Nigeria.

Population: The population of this study comprised all students, non-academic staff, academic staff, and NUC officials who have been in their present place of employment in three selected universities in South-west, Nigeria.

Sample and Sampling Techniques: The sample for this study consisted of 500 respondents. A multi-stage sampling method was used. At the first stage, south west was stratified in six (6) states. From these states three states and three Universities were purposively selected. Thus,

Lagos State was purposively selected because one of the first set of State Universities accredited (Lagos State University) is situated in it. In a similar vein, Oyo State was purposively selected because the first Federal University (i.e., University of Ibadan) is located in it. Finally, Ogun State was purposively selected because the first privately-owned university (i.e., Babcock University) is domiciled in it. It is believed that, based on the experiences of the universities in these states, they are appropriate for inclusion in this study, especially because of their decades of active existence. And lastly, simple random sampling technique was used in the selection of all the participants of this study.

Instrumentation: A self-developed interview guide named "National Universities Commission on infrastructural development Questionnaire" was utilized in this study.

Method of Data Analysis: The research questions raised in this study were tested using thematic analysis

Ethical Considerations: Ethical approval was sought from Babcock University Health and Research Ethics Committee (BUHREC).

RESULTS

Research Question One: What is the state of infrastructural development in selected universities in South-West Nigeria?

The thematic analysis from the interviews show that the state of infrastructural development in Nigerian universities was a recurring theme, with interviewees highlighting funding challenges, inadequate facilities, poor maintenance culture, and land encroachment as major issues affecting infrastructure.

Funding Constraints and Infrastructural Deficit

NUC2 attributed the infrastructural deficit to mismanagement of funds by university administrators, emphasizing that while government intervention exists, the resources are often not utilized efficiently; buttressing this, it was noted that:

The Vice Chancellors of public universities should be committed to developing their various universities. Most of them see that office as a money-making office. If government is funding your institution through your normal subvention and through TETFund, and you are deploying even if it is 75% of that funding to the cause that the money was released for without embezzling it, your institution will grow.

This suggests that while government funding is provided, it is often diverted, leading to persistent infrastructural challenges in the universities. Connectedly, TETFund is projected as a primary source of infrastructural development for public universities. It was noted that TETFund projects account for a significant portion of infrastructure in Nigerian universities, with little being done by the universities themselves. NUC2 elaborated on this, stating that:

Each university over the years gets TETFund assistance in facilities development. Go and check the level of work done there. That is why TETFund is very insistent on, you must do this, you must do that before we fund you. If you don't do it, we will blacklist you.

This highlight how external intervention, rather than internal funding, is the backbone of infrastructure development in Nigerian public universities. To this end, BU1 argued that universities must explore alternative funding models rather than relying solely on government

subventions. It was pointed out that private universities have to be innovative in mobilizing resources to sustain themselves. Exemplifying this debacle, BU1 noted that:

Government as a proprietor was not succeeding in mobilizing all resources needed to run a university. That's why university systems were coming short. If the government could not really...run a university and run it effectively and provide all the resources, how could the private system be expected to bring or to have resources that would make up for the government deficiencies?

This highlights the need for both public and private universities to adopt sustainable financial models.

Maintenance Deficit

A recurring concern is the lack of a sustainable maintenance culture. LASU2 criticized the tendency of universities to neglect infrastructure maintenance until accreditation exercises are due. It was observed that many universities only renovate facilities when an NUC accreditation visit is approaching. This reactive approach prevents long-term infrastructure sustainability. This may lead to worsening dilapidation of the infrastructure in these universities which may be too costly to salvage, having been left for too long. Relatedly, land encroachment further complicates infrastructure planning. LASU2 shared how Lagos State University (LASU) had lost a significant portion of its original land allocation, explaining that, LASU was originally given 859 hectares, but encroachment has reduced it to just 159 hectares, which limits expansion and infrastructural development. This reflects broader governance failures that affect university growth.

Inadequate and Obsolete Infrastructure

UI1 pointed out that the infrastructure in many universities is outdated and does not meet modern academic needs. Buttressing this point, it was further stated that:

In the University of Ibadan, our equipment is obsolete. The university does not have the financial capability of replicating most of the high-level equipment that are obsolete. We have a lot of equipment in different faculties, different departments, and even set up a Central Research Laboratory to house some of the equipment. Equipment are very expensive now, so we find it impossible to replicate them in the different faculties and departments.

This underscores the urgent need for investment in modern academic and research facilities.

The Impact of University Expansion on Infrastructure

LASU1 discussed how the rapid expansion of universities without adequate funding has led to severe infrastructural deficits. It was argued that *"most Nigerian universities frequently bite more than they can chew in admitting more students than their capacity and available resources can hold."* This over-admission of students exacerbates the strain on already limited infrastructure, making it difficult to maintain quality education standards.

Conclusively, the interviews paint a concerning picture of infrastructural development in Nigerian universities, with challenges including funding shortages, over-admission and maintenance issues. While TETFund has played a key role in providing infrastructure, there is a need for universities to be more accountable and proactive in managing resources.

Research Question Two: How effective has been the role of NUC in the disbursement of grants to Universities for infrastructural development in selected Universities in Nigeria?

Based on the research question, the key themes that emerged from the discussions include funding allocation, mismanagement of funds, TETFund intervention, and political influences on disbursement. Below is a thematic analysis with quotations from the transcripts.

NUC's Role in Infrastructure Funding: TETFund as the Primary Source

A significant observation from the interviews is that NUC does not directly fund infrastructure development but the TETFund (Tertiary Education Trust Fund) oversees grant allocations for infrastructural developments in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. NUC2 emphasized that most university infrastructural projects are funded through TETFund, rather than direct university allocations.

Each university over the years gets TETFund assistance in facilities development. Go and check the level of work done there. That is why TETFund is very insistent on, you must do this, you must do that before we fund you. If you don't do it, we will blacklist you.

This suggests that NUC's primary function is oversight, ensuring compliance with minimum academic standards rather than direct financial disbursement. However, it also implies that universities are highly dependent on TETFund for infrastructure rather than generating internal revenue.

Effectiveness of NUC's Oversight and Accreditation Enforcement

It was discussed that NUC uses accreditation as a means to enforce compliance with infrastructural development requirements. LASU2 noted that:

You see massive developments... NUC has done a lot, massive development projects, putting universities on their toes. If you don't do this, you won't get this. This enables universities to work hard and be able to meet the demand of the NUC.

This indicates that while NUC does not disburse funds directly, it indirectly compels universities to prioritize infrastructural development by linking it to accreditation outcomes.

The Need for University Autonomy in Funding

NUC1 emphasized that universities should not rely entirely on government funding but should develop self-sustaining financial models. This was expressed as follows: *Perhaps it's high time we institute a very strong academic bullet to think about a new paradigm, a funding paradigm for the system. We strongly believe if we get the funding right, we will get the responsible autonomy right.* This underscores the need for Nigerian universities to generate internal revenue, rather than relying solely on government disbursements.

The analysis suggests that NUC plays an indirect but significant role in infrastructural development in universities in Nigeria, primarily through enforcement of accreditation requirements. However, mismanagement at the university level and the over-reliance on government funding remain key obstacles.

Research Question Three: What effect has NUC's Quality Assurance supervisory role on infrastructural development in selected universities in South-West Nigeria?

The role of the National Universities Commission (NUC) in ensuring quality assurance and infrastructural development in universities across South-West Nigeria was a subject of

discussion among interviewees. This thematic analysis explores the impact, challenges, and effectiveness of NUC's supervisory role in infrastructural development.

NUC's Role in Quality Assurance and Infrastructural Standards

It was pointed out that NUC plays a critical role in setting minimum infrastructural standards through accreditation and resource verification exercises. NUC2 highlighted that NUC regulates all universities; federal, state, and private, ensuring compliance with minimum requirements before accreditation is granted. For clarity, NUC2 expressed this as follows:

The issue of quality assurance is exclusively on the exclusive list where NUC draws the power from, to regulate both the private and public universities. The state universities come on board by the edict of state assemblies. When they come to NUC for recognition, they must come with that edict, the university law, and the physical master plan before we now give them the letter of recognition

This suggests that NUC's quality assurance function is not only focused on academics but also includes infrastructural evaluation, ensuring that universities meet minimum requirements before being licensed.

Infrastructure Development Linked to NUC Accreditation

NUC's supervisory role has led to reactive infrastructural development, where universities rush to upgrade their facilities only in preparation for accreditation exercises. Encapsulating this, LASU2 noted that:

If the NUC did not come to visit universities after five years, the entire thing in the university would have gone bad. Five years to come and assess your department, how are you preparing? Are you meeting up with the standards? Your consumables, your lecture hall, your laboratories, are they arranged? If they are okay, we'll now give you another five years full accreditation. If...not...we'll give you an interim.

This reveals that NUC's periodic accreditation exercises serve as a check on infrastructure quality, compelling universities to make improvements before assessments. However, it also suggests that some universities only prioritize infrastructure when accreditation is due, rather than maintaining facilities continuously. Furthermore, NUC's role extends beyond assessments to ensuring that infrastructural funding is allocated appropriately. NUC1 emphasized that universities must meet basic infrastructure requirements before accreditation is granted. This was explained as follows:

There are four component areas which collectively form about not less than 80% or 90% where you must score 70% average in the four components. If you score 99% but fail in one of the component areas, you are given what is called 'Interim'

This suggests that physical infrastructure is a non-negotiable criterion for full accreditation, pushing universities to invest in meeting these standards.

Concerns about Objectivity and Overregulation by NUC

While NUC's role in quality assurance is essential, concerns were expressed that its strict regulations might stifle universities. UII (Director of Academic Planning, University of Ibadan) suggested that NUC sometimes oversteps its regulatory role, eroding university autonomy: *"they are playing both very well but playing the supervisory role beyond what is expected of them. Now eroding the powers of the university senate; that is over-supervision."*

This implies that while NUC enforces standards, its intervention may sometimes limit the decision-making power of individual universities with implications on infrastructural development.

The summary of this is that NUC's quality assurance supervisory role has had both positive and challenging effects on infrastructural development in South-West Nigerian universities. The positive effect is in terms of NUC being instrumental for the enforcement of minimum infrastructural standards through accreditation and licensing. In addition, NUC's accreditation visits drive infrastructural upgrades; hence, improvements are often reactive rather than continuous in the universities. Connectedly, TETFund was found to play a significant role in funding infrastructure, while NUC indirectly ensures compliance through accreditation exercises. Consequently, for NUC to enhance its impact, it may need to adopt a more proactive approach to infrastructural maintenance in universities, rather than relying on accreditation cycles for enforcement.

Research Question Four: How has NUC's facilities accreditation affected or influenced infrastructural development in selected universities in South-West Nigeria.

The National Universities Commission (NUC) plays a critical role in ensuring infrastructural development in Nigerian universities through its facilities accreditation process. The accreditation process assesses the adequacy of classrooms, laboratories, libraries, student hostels, and other key facilities as part of a university's ability to offer quality education. The interview responses reveal the effects of NUC's accreditation on infrastructural development in selected universities in South-West Nigeria.

Accreditation as a Driver of Infrastructural Development

NUC's accreditation requirements compel universities to develop infrastructure in preparation for evaluation. It was found that universities often embark on infrastructural development only when accreditation is approaching. LASU1 confirmed this pattern, stating that: *"most cases these repairs are not done until programs within the university are preparing for their NUC Programme Accreditation"*. This suggests that while accreditation triggers development, it also results in a reactive rather than proactive approach to maintaining facilities in universities. Furthermore, NUC places significant emphasis on physical facilities in its accreditation framework, and failing to meet the infrastructural requirements can lead to interim accreditation or outright denial. This was expressly stated by NUC1, who described the scoring criteria for accreditation to have four components where universities must score 70% average, and for those that fail, they are given interim accreditation. This highlights that a university cannot receive full accreditation without meeting the required infrastructural standards, thereby making facilities development a mandatory priority.

Variability in Infrastructural Development Across University Types

The effectiveness of NUC's accreditation is necessary because of varying infrastructural development across federal, state, and private universities. LASU1 observed differences in infrastructural quality across university types, stating that:

If you compare the infrastructure development of the federal, the state, and the private, how would you look at each one of them? Federal universities were actually the most famous universities that started in Nigeria... But now, state universities came up, trying to meet them... you can see the difference... Private... now came on board.

This suggests that federal universities generally have better infrastructure, while state universities struggle due to funding limitations. Private universities, on the other hand, often leverage investments to build high-quality facilities.

In summary, the findings indicate that NUC's facilities accreditation has significantly influenced infrastructural development in South-West Nigerian universities, as follows: it drives infrastructural development, as universities must upgrade facilities to meet accreditation standards. It ensures minimum infrastructural quality across federal, state, and private universities. It encourages external funding, particularly from TETFund, to support infrastructural projects. This study also found that universities adopt a reactive rather than proactive approach for upgrading facilities only when accreditation is due; hence, accreditation does not ensure long-term maintenance, leading to infrastructural deterioration over time.

Research Question Five: Of what continued relevance is NUC's role on infrastructural development in selected universities in Southwest, Nigeria?

Thematic analysis on the continued relevance of NUC's role in infrastructural development in selected universities in South-West Nigeria shows that the National Universities Commission (NUC) plays a crucial role in supervising, regulating, and facilitating infrastructural development in Nigerian universities. The interviews reveal that NUC's influence remains relevant, particularly in standard setting, funding facilitation, enforcement of quality assurance, and adaptation to global best practices. However, concerns regarding overregulation, and political interference also emerged.

NUC as a Catalyst for Infrastructural Development

Several interviewees agreed that NUC's supervisory role has forced universities to prioritize infrastructural development, ensuring that universities meet minimum physical standards. LASU1 emphasized NUC's role in keeping universities accountable:

You see massive developments with this, of course. What do you see as positive and negative impact of NUC on infrastructure development? The positive, they have done a lot, massive development projects, put universities on their toes. If you don't do this, you won't get this. It enables universities to work hard and be able to meet the demand of the NUC.

NUC2 also emphasized that NUC's role helps in keeping universities accountable, similar to the point made by LASU1, the interviewee indicated that:

"If not for NUC, you don't know what Nigerian universities would have looked like. You can't just imagine it, even the few times we go there, our impact is felt. If you just allow them to go on auto-pilot..."

This reinforces the idea that NUC's supervisory role is essential in maintaining standards and ensuring accountability in universities. While LASU1 focused on accreditation compelling universities to improve infrastructure, NUC2 highlighted that NUC's periodic oversight prevents universities from operating without any regulation or standard enforcement. Consequently, NUC's presence compels universities to enhance infrastructure, although this is often done reactively in preparation for accreditation visits rather than through sustained planning.

Furthermore, NUC1 emphasized that NUC's accreditation and quality assurance frameworks enforce minimum standards for university operations:

We have a whole M&E department, inspection and monitoring department going round the universities. We know the bandwidth of each university. We requested the universities to respond to the information on their ICT status, some responded and some have not responded up till now.

This statement suggests that NUC actively monitors universities to ensure compliance with regulations and quality benchmarks, preventing institutions from operating below standard. Additionally, UI1 acknowledged NUC's role in policing universities to maintain minimum standards: *"you need policing and NUC is doing its best...making sure that there is minimum standards in the university"*. Thus, NUC1, UI1, and NUC2 all reinforce the idea that NUC's supervisory role is essential in keeping universities accountable.

Accreditation as an Enforcer of Infrastructural Standards

NUC ensures that universities comply with infrastructure requirements without compromising through its accreditation and resource verification exercises. LASU1 explained that:

NUC doesn't compromise on the availability of structures available to each program during Resource Assessment and Accreditation of each program. In fact, one of the NUC scoring patterns that must not be failed during accreditation is the Physical Facilities available for the program, and these facilities must be clean and provided with safety measures to ensure safety."

This highlights the continued importance of NUC in ensuring that universities do not fall below minimum infrastructure standards.

TETFund and NUC's Role in Infrastructural Funding

While NUC sets the standards, it is TETFund that provides financial support for infrastructural development. However, NUC2 argued that university administrators mismanage funds, limiting the impact of NUC's oversight. This was expressed as follows:

Each university over the years gets TETFund assistance in facilities development. Go and check the level of work done there. That is why TETFund is very insistent: you must do this; you must do that before we fund you. If you don't do it, we will blacklist you.

This reinforces the continued importance of NUC in monitoring how infrastructure funds are used, ensuring accountability in university development.

Overregulation, Bureaucracy and University Development

While NUC is seen as a regulatory safeguard, it was criticized for its perceived rigid regulatory framework, arguing that it sometimes hinders innovation and delays development. UI1 remarked:

"They are playing both very well but playing the supervisory role beyond what is expected of them. Now eroding the powers of the university senate; that is over-supervision."

This suggests that while NUC remains essential for infrastructure development, its involvement should not stifle university autonomy. Conversely, NUC2 refuted claims that NUC's influence is suffocating universities, instead blaming universities for their own inefficiencies:

They are only being mischievous. The universities are established by law, isn't it? ... NUC ensures that quality is maintained throughout the lifetime of the university, how is that suffocation?

This directly contradicts UII's view, showing that while some university officials feel constrained by NUC's reach, NUC itself believes its regulations are necessary for maintaining academic standards.

These findings from the thematic analysis highlight that NUC's role in infrastructural development remains highly relevant but requires continuous adaptation to address emerging challenges. The key contributions of NUC: compels universities to prioritize infrastructure through accreditation and resource verification, ensures physical facilities meet minimum standards thereby contributing to quality education and aligns Nigerian universities with global best practices helping them meet international standards. However, challenges persist in the maintenance of NUC as an arbiter of standards in South-West Nigerian universities. These challenges include: universities tending to develop infrastructure reactively rather than through long-term planning and accusations of overregulation which may limit university autonomy slowing down independent decision-making.

Research Question Six: Is NUC's supervisory role in tandem with the international best practice?

Alignment with Global Best Practices

Some interviewees acknowledged that NUC is evolving to adopt global standards in infrastructure requirements. LASU2 after giving praises to NUC for its supervisory role noted that: "...as of today, I would say NUC has been the savior of most of our programs. If NUC did not come to visit universities after five years, the entire thing in the university would have gone bad." This suggests that NUC's periodic supervision remains necessary to keep universities in check, even as universities push for more autonomy. Apart from LASU2, both NUC1 and NUC2 also addressed NUC's role in aligning Nigerian universities with global best practices. However, their perspectives varied in focus, with LASU1 highlighting NUC's role in ensuring program quality, NUC2 emphasized digital visibility and internationalization, and NUC1 questioned the reliance on global rankings as a metric of academic quality. LASU2 described NUC as a "savior" of standards in the same vein, LASU1 acknowledged that NUC's regulatory oversight ensures Nigerian universities meet international benchmarks. This suggests that without NUC's regulatory enforcement, university programs would decline in quality, negatively affecting benchmarking the universities with international academic standards.

Furthermore, NUC2 emphasized NUC's role in digital visibility and internationalization. NUC2 focused on digital visibility as a key factor in aligning Nigerian universities with global expectations. He argued that the low global ranking of Nigerian universities was not due to academic quality, but a lack of visibility in international databases. This was expressed as follows:

...it is not that Nigerian universities are not doing well. It is a problem of visibility. All the parameters used in the ranking are seen in the cloud, they are seen on the internet. Our universities have not painstakingly committed themselves to dumping their works, researches, and everything they do, even about themselves, on the internet. That is the truth, so we lack visibility.

Unlike LASU1, who credited NUC's physical oversight for upholding international standards, NUC2 placed the responsibility on universities themselves to enhance their digital presence to gain global recognition. Conversely, NUC1 expressed skepticism about global rankings. NUC1 offered a contrasting view, arguing that NUC does not prioritize global rankings as the primary measure of quality. Instead, he suggested that Nigerian universities should focus on internal academic development rather than fixating on rankings. To encapsulate this, NUC1 expressed this opinion as follows:

I don't worry about these rankings because I don't believe they are a measure of quality. [...] For one reason or another, they don't just care about the parameters; those who care are the ones on the rankings. How many universities in Nigeria, especially the bigger public universities, give a damn, care about responses, about students' impressions about them?

Unlike LASU1, NUC1 downplayed the importance of international ranking systems, arguing that the focus should be on educational outcomes rather than external validation.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Higher maintenance unit efficacy was reported by universities that had frequent accreditation visits, indicating that the accreditation process acts as a catalyst for operational effectiveness and infrastructure maintenance. According to the data, maintenance units were judged as more effective by respondents from universities that received frequent accreditation visits than by those that did not. This suggests that accreditation offers a way to hold colleges accountable, which motivates them to uphold standards and upgrade their infrastructure. Additionally, the results show that proactive accrediting procedures put institutions in a better position to rectify infrastructure shortfalls and improve overall service delivery.

The National Universities Commission (NUC) was reported to play a critical role in ensuring infrastructural development in Nigerian universities through its facilities accreditation process. The accreditation process assesses the adequacy of classrooms, laboratories, libraries, student hostels, and other key facilities as part of a university's ability to offer quality education. The interview responses further revealed that NUC facilities accreditation drives infrastructural development, as universities must upgrade facilities to meet accreditation standards. It ensures minimum infrastructural quality across federal, state, and private universities; and it encourages external funding, particularly from TETFund, to support infrastructural projects. Supporting these findings, Egwemi and Ekaette (2019) reported that NUC conducts periodic quality assessment exercises, including infrastructure assessment, to evaluate universities' compliance with established standards in infrastructural provision. Hence NUC intervention enhances the provision of physical infrastructure in the universities. Contrary to the findings of this study, Oladejo (2022) reported that ineffective supervision by the NUC is partly to blame for the inadequate infrastructure and improper teaching aids.

Additionally, this study highlights the importance of consistency in accreditation and monitoring processes to maintain alignment with global standards and foster infrastructural growth. Corroboratively, the findings from the qualitative aspect of the study noted that NUC plays a crucial role in supervising, regulating, and facilitating infrastructural development in Nigerian universities. NUC's influence remains relevant, particularly in standard setting, funding facilitation, enforcement of quality assurance, and adaptation to global best practices. It was found that NUC compels universities to prioritize infrastructure through accreditation

and resource verification, ensures physical facilities meet minimum standards thereby contributing to quality education and aligns Nigerian universities with global best practices helping them meet international standards. However, challenges persist in the maintenance of NUC as an arbiter of standards in South-West Nigerian universities. These challenges range from unintentionally encouraging universities to develop infrastructure reactively rather than through long-term planning and perception of overregulation which may limit university autonomy potentially slowing down independent decision-making.

This study acknowledged that NUC is evolving to adopt global standards in infrastructure requirements through its supervisory role and periodic supervision keep universities in check. NUC is pushing for international best practice by emphasizing digital visibility and internationalization along with practical considerations of global rankings as a metric of academic quality. Even though, the study revealed that NUC does not prioritize global rankings as the primary measure of quality; while suggesting that Nigerian universities should focus on internal academic development rather than fixating on global rankings. Corroborating the findings of this study, Ogunbode and Akanbi (2019) discovered that although the supervisory function of the NUC has helped in enhancing digital infrastructure in the universities, there are still challenges and gaps in the digital infrastructure of Nigerian universities. In addition, Adelabu and Bolarinwa (2020) found that the National Universities Commission (NUC) has shown a growing focus on improving digital infrastructure and promoting e-learning in Nigerian universities. They also observed that the NUC has developed guidelines and quality assurance frameworks to ensure that e-learning programmes in Nigerian universities meet specific standards.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It is well known that in order for universities to be accredited, all of their equipment and facilities must be maintained, repaired, and made operational. Very few universities would have made facility acquisitions, renovations, or maintenance without the accrediting process. For NUC, this is a huge plus. All direct recipients of the facilities should be encouraged to write about the strengths and weaknesses of the university facilities, as well as the working and non-working equipment in the system, in order to increase the effectiveness of the exercise. NUC can create a reporting format while the feedback is sent online to a NUC-provided address.

It is therefore recommended that:

1. Adequate funding should be provided for all tertiary institutions in the country to give them the opportunity of acquiring all necessary facilities, equipment and chemicals for the laboratories for them to scale through the accreditation process rather than resulting to borrowing.
2. Effort should be made by the institution's management to engage the services of more qualified and experienced personnel into relevant departments to avoid hiring of staff from sister institutions or sister department within the institution as well as the supporting staff in the department. This effort will help cater for the teeming population of students faced in the country in the recent time to ensure compliance with the lecturer/students ratio minimum benchmark.
3. All stakeholders must become involved in the financing -parents and guardians, the society in general, the private sector and non-Governmental agencies.

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