

Digitalization of Accreditation Programme in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

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Abstract: Digitalization of accreditation programme is a rapidly growing trend in Nigerian tertiary institutions. This process involves using technology to streamline and improve the accreditation process for academic programs. This paper examine the benefits of academic programme accreditation digitalization. The paper is a position paper. The paper employed secondary data. The secondary data were collected from prints and online publications. The paper concluded that the benefits digitalization of academic programme accreditation in Nigeria includes; improvement in the efficiency of accreditation process, cost minimization, elimination of resources wastage, transparency in accreditation processes, sound assessment objectivity and consistency, quality in data collection and analysis, data security, online databases and collaboration among institutions. Based on this, the paper recommends that National Universities Commission, National Commission for Colleges of Education and National Board for Technical Education should embrace digitalization of academic programme accreditation in the tertiary institutions. Governments should provide the digital infrastructure facilities for National Universities Commission, National Commission for Colleges of Education and National Board for Technical Education to enable the institutions digitalize accreditation in the institutions. Staff of National Universities Commission, National Commission for Colleges of Education and National Board for Technical Education should be trained on digital skills to enable them work with digital facilities.

Key words: Academic Programme, Accreditation, Digitalization, Tertiary institutions.



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1.0 Introduction

Tertiary education is defined by National policy on Education (2013) as the education given after Post Basic Education in institutions such as Universities and Inter-University Centres such as the Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic Language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages, institutions such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), and Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology and the National Teachers' Institutes (NTI). According to Edinoh and Wali-Essien (2023), tertiary education is a social agent of progress and development in the society and aids technological advancement. It is designed to help in the development of nations by providing the high as well as the middle level manpower needed for the social, economic and political advancement through the programme of teaching, learning, research and community services.

Tertiary education offers a broad range of academic disciplines and professional programs, including bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, doctoral degrees, and professional certifications. It focuses on in-depth exploration of subject areas, critical thinking, research skills, and the development of specialized expertise (Proctoredu 2023). Tertiary education is a crucial component of national development, designed to address and solve pressing local, national, and international problems through intensive teaching, research, and the provision of community services. It plays a pivotal role in fostering individual development and growth, while also making a positive impact on society at large (Schrader-King, 2024; Ogunode, Olaoye, & Yakubu, 2023). By equipping individuals with advanced knowledge and skills, tertiary education contributes to the creation of a knowledgeable and skilled workforce capable of driving innovation and progress (Ogunode & Musa, 2024). Tertiary education is an organized educational system that is consciously designed for manpower production, in-service training and national development. Tertiary education is an education that advances teaching, research and community services for national development. Tertiary education is an education industry that is meant for the production of manpower and national development via implementation of teaching, research and provision of community services (Ogunode, 2025). From the above, tertiary education is an education designed for transformation of the states and for production of manpower through active engagement of teaching, research and provision of community services.

To improve the quality and academic programme accreditation in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, the Nigerian government established the following agencies; National Universities Commission, National Commission for Colleges of Education and National Board for Technical Education. National Universities Commission, the NUC is a parastatal under the FME. The Commission was established in 1962 with the task of developing and managing university education in Nigeria. Its functions include: granting approval for all academic programmes in Nigerian universities; granting approval for the establishment of all higher educational institutions offering degree programmes; and ensuring quality assurance, through regular accreditation, of all academic programmes in universities (Ogunode, Nwisagbo & Soetan-Ayanfe, 2024).

National Commission for Colleges of Education, the NCCE is a parastatal of the FME established by Decree 13 of 1989. The establishment of the Commission was a resultant effect of the utmost importance accorded to quality teacher education by the Federal Government of Nigeria. Since its inception, the Commission has continuously pursued the goals of quality assurance in teacher education. It has continuously reviewed and standardized the curriculum of colleges of education in the country through programme accreditation, which is carried out once in five years (NUON, 2012).

National Board for Technical Education, the established by Act No. 9 of 1977, the NBTE is a parastatal of the FME specifically created to handle all aspects of technical and vocational education falling outside university education. The Board supervises and regulates, through an

accreditation process, the programmes offered by technical institutions at secondary and post-secondary school levels. It is also involved in funding of polytechnics owned by the Government of Nigeria (NUON, 2012).

The above agencies and commission in Nigeria are saddled with of ensuring quality assurance via effective programme accreditation and resource verification. According to Ogunode, Edinoh, and Rauf (2023) these institutions were established purposely for academic programme accreditation and provision of supervision. Ogunode, and Samuel (2022) and Anugom (2016) observed that among other things handle by these agencies include, supervision and policy formulation. These institutions have actively been engaging in visiting different tertiary institutions for programme accreditation and resources verification. National Universities Commission, National Commission for Colleges of Education and National Board for Technical Education have over the years adopted manual accreditation which involved physically visiting the institutions to assess, inspect and verify human and materials resources available in the institutions to compare with the set standard and requirement meant to commence the academic programme.

The manual academic programme accreditation been used by the Commission, National Commission for Colleges of Education and National Board for Technical Education for accrediting academic programme in the Nigerian tertiary institutions appear to be confronted with a lot of challenges calling for modification of processes and methods. The integration of technology in the management and administration of education especially tertiary institutions have led to transformation. It is vital to integrate technology into the accreditation of academic programme of the Nigerian tertiary institutions. It is based on this that this paper seeks to discuss the benefits of digitalization of accreditation of academic programme in the Nigerian tertiary institutions.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Accreditation

Accreditation can be defined as a mechanism designed in the tertiary institutions to ensure that academic programme offers are of standard and meet various policies and quality of national and international standard (Ogunode, Edinoh, & Rauf, 2023). Accreditation of academic programs is all-embracing and involves assessing the appropriateness of programme philosophy and objectives, the adequacy and relevance of the curricula to the students in their specific areas of study and the world of work (Akpan & Etor 2018). Accreditation according Obadara and Alaka in Akpan, and Etor, (2016) is a process that aids institutions in developing and sustaining effective educational programmes and assuring the educational community, the general public and other organizations that the accredited institution has met high standard of quality and effectiveness. It is a measure of the quality of academic programmes on acceptable minimum standard provided by the accrediting agency.

Accreditation according to Akpan, et al, (2016) 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 exceeded the published standards (set by an external body such as a government, national quality assurance agency, or a professional association) for accreditation, and whether it is achieving its mission and stated purpose. The objectives of accreditation of higher institutions/programmes as outlined by the NUC in Ogunode, and Samuel,(2022) include; to ensure that at least the minimum academic standards documents are attained, maintained and enhanced; to assure employers and other members of the community that Nigerian graduates of all academic programmes have attained an acceptable level of competency in their areas of specialization and to certify to the international community that the programmes offered in Nigerian universities are of high standard and their graduates are adequate for employment and

further studies. Accreditation aid quality assurance and delivery of quality education in higher institutions (Ahaotu, & Akor, 2015; Ogunode, Edinoh, & Rauf, 2023). Accreditation according to Ogunode, Nwisagbo, & Soetan-Ayanfe, (2024) is organized programme designed by institutions to ensure validity and reliability of an academic programme that institutions are currently offering as programme and to ensure the quality assurance in the institutions. Accreditation is a system designed for higher institutions to ensure academic programmes offer in the institutions meet up with national and international standard.

From the above, accreditation is a planned and systematic process meant for assessment and checking of a programme or institutions with a set out standard and requirements weather the programme or institutions meet with the set standard to be given a status of recognition for a period of time. The objective of accreditation includes; to ensure quality assurance, to prevent corruption practices and promote accountability in educational institutions, to promote quality education and maintained quality status in schools; to aid implementation of education policies.

2.2 Concept of Digitalization of Accreditation Programme

Accreditation digitization is the process of transferring traditional paper-based accreditation systems into digital formats. This can include digitizing paper forms, streamlining accreditation processes through online portals, or creating digital databases of accredited entities. With the increasing use of technology in academia, digitalizing accreditation is becoming a more prevalent practice. This not only helps with efficiency and organization, but also allows for easier access to accreditation information and data analysis. By implementing digitalization, higher education institutions can ensure a more streamlined and transparent accreditation process.

Digitalization of accreditation is the process of integrating modern technology and digital tools into academic programs accreditation process. This includes using digital resources for accreditation process, as well as automating administrative tasks such as, data collection verifying of resources, numbering and scoring of resources presented. The goal of digital accreditation is to enhance fast and efficient accreditation process, improved resources verification and improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of accreditation. By incorporating digital tools and resources, accreditation institutions are able to keep up with the rapidly evolving landscape of technology and provide tertiary institutions with the reliable and efficient processes.

3.0 Method

The research uses an exploratory approach through literature studies sourced from Web of Science, Scopus, PubMed, Scholar, and Sinta, which are scientific databases capable of storing high quality articles. Key words used: "Accreditation in Tertiary Education ". Inclusion criteria was published within the last ten years (2015-2025) to ensure the review was up to date, the full text was written in English and there was discussion about quality assurance in higher education. These articles were excluded if they did not fit the topic of discussion (adapted from Mayulu, & Tricahyadinata, 2024).

4.0 Result and Discussion on Benefits of Digitalization of Accreditation of academic Programme in Tertiary Institutions

The benefits of digitalization of accreditation of academic programme in the Nigerian tertiary institutions includes; improved in the efficiency of accreditation process, cost minimization, elimination of resources wastage, support transparency in accreditation processes, support assessment objectivity and consistency, support quality in data collection and analysis, data security, online databases and collaboration among institutions.

1) Improved the Efficiency of Accreditation Process

Digitalization of accreditation in tertiary institutions will aid efficiency in the accreditation process. Digitalization involve the deployment of technology that helps to ensure effective and efficient use of academic resources. Digitalization of accreditation in tertiary institutions improves and increase efficiency in the in the resources allocation and utilization. Digitalizing and automating accreditation process will support smooth data collection, analysis and storage for decision making. Streamlining processes of data collection and distribution in accreditation process will lead to reduced costs, increase productivity and improve the speed and accuracy of the processes. Venkatapur *et al.*, (2023) submitted that shorter time allows institutions to adapt to changes in the educational environment and human resources market needs. The speed in the accreditation process has a positive impact, especially for students who are waiting for clarity regarding the status of their study program. Students get the information they need to plan their careers better. This sense of trust creates confidence for students that they receive quality education during study. Time efficiency allows institutions to allocate resources more effectively and administrative staff can focus on analysis and evaluation in lengthy administrative processes. Improving the productivity of the accreditation team contributes to the quality of the evaluations carried out. Digitalization has become increasingly important in management of tertiary institutions and in the accreditation process. By digitizing the accreditation process, academic institutions are able to streamline their processes and improve efficiency. This not only benefits the institutions themselves, but also the students who rely on their credentials for future opportunities. With digitalization, the accreditation process becomes more transparent and accessible. This is due to the fact that all necessary information and documentation can be easily stored and accessed online. This eliminates the need for physical paperwork and allows for quicker and more accurate verification of credentials. Mayulu, et al (2024) and Venkatapur, Akshay, Kulkarni, Preethi & Shreesha (2023) noted that the implementation of an accreditation automation system shows a significant increase in the efficiency of the accreditation process.

2) Cost minimization

Academic programme accreditation is very expensive. It requires a lot of resources. The financial requirement for the implementation of accreditation programme in the tertiary institutions is both shared by the regulating institutions and the institutions themselves. With digitization of accreditation in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria, less funds will be needed to carry out the functions by the respective institutions. Digitization of accreditation permits less movement of officials from Abuja to the institutions, digitization of accreditation reduces high number of staff needed to accreditation responsibilities and processes and digitization of accreditation reduces time wastage. Ogunode, and Okwudinma (2024) noted that increasing efficiency also has implications for reducing operational costs so that institutions do not need to spend large budgets to manage long accreditation processes. Cost savings can be allocated to other programs that support improving the quality of education. Also, Pandey, and Subedi (2023) submitted that digitalization of accreditation programme in tertiary institutions reduced the cost as well as saved the travel time.

3) Elimination of resources wastage

The digitalization of accreditation of tertiary institutions in Nigeria will no doubt help to reduce huge resources wastage that have been associated with manual accreditation processes in the various institutions. These resources wastages includes materials resources, time resources wastage and financial wastages. With the deployment of digital facilities for the accreditation of academic programme in the tertiary institutions resources wastages will be eliminated and less resources will be used. Pandey, et al (2023) discovered that digitalization of accreditation programme helped keeping stakeholders safe from the virus, participation of expanded stakeholders of HEIs being assessed, such as: alumni, practitioners, employers, and civic

organizations in interactions and discussion, it also allowed the assessors to work comfortably, from office or from home environment. Mayulu, et al (2024) concluded that the accreditation automation system makes a significant contribution to increasing efficiency, accuracy and transparency in the educational accreditation process. Accreditation completion time efficiency of up to 50% allows educational institutions to be more responsive in facing increasingly higher quality demands in the global era. The application of digital technology in automation systems not only speeds up the accreditation process, but also increases active participation from all stakeholders, as well as making it easier to access accreditation information.

4) Support transparency in accreditation processes

Another big challenge that have plagued the Nigerian tertiary institutions accreditation process is corruption. Otokunefor (2015) reported that the poor quality of our university graduates is due to the interwoven nature of the infrastructural deficiencies of the universities. According to him, magic facilities spring up overnight before accreditation exercises and disappear soon after. Sometimes, spaces allocated to and used by other departments are simply relabeled for the sake of accreditation. After the exercise, the facilities revert to the original owners and the struggle for survival continues (Otokunefor, 2015). The corruption practices will be eliminated from the accreditation processes because all resources presented in one institutions have been captured and uploaded with a unique number and identify of the institutions. Staff also presented for accreditation in one institutions cannot be represented in another institutions because of their digital details and pictures on the regulating institutions platform or database. Mayulu, and Tricahyadinata, (2024) opined that transparency in the accreditation process is the aspect that is most considered in implementing an automation system. The system built provides easy access for all stakeholders, including students, lecturers and stakeholders. Clear and easily accessible information strengthens public trust in the accreditation process, which is a key element in building an institution's reputation. Increased transparency contributes to fairness and objectivity in the accreditation process. Information that can be accessed by all parties, including stakeholders, reduces the potential for doubt or suspicion about the integrity of the accreditation process. An environment where all stakeholders feel involved and valued is created. Active stakeholder participation becomes more real with an automation system. Users can provide direct feedback through the platform, which creates better communication between all parties involved. This feedback serves to improve the accreditation process and provides valuable data for continuous adjustments and improvements (Javidan, Raveendran, Rai, Tackett, Kulasegaram, Whitehead, Rosenfield, & Houston.2020).

5) Support Assessment objectivity and Consistency

The automation system uses an automatic assessment algorithm to speed up the evaluation process. The use of algorithms ensures that assessments are carried out objectively and consistently, which reduces the possibility of human error in manual assessments, so that accreditation results become more reliable and recognized by all stakeholders. A standardized evaluation process ensures that each institution is evaluated based on the same criteria. Uniformity in assessments reduces the risk of bias and ensures all institutions receive fair treatment. The results maintain the integrity of the accreditation process, so that the public can trust the results. Data visualization with a modular design is an important feature that supports assessment objectivity. The use of informative graphs and tables presents accreditation results in an easy-to-understand manner thereby improving communication of results to all parties involved (Venkatapur *et al.*, 2023).

6) Improve in the quality of data collection and analysis

Through the use of digital tools and platforms, regulating institutions are able to gather and analyze data more efficiently, making the accreditation process more accurate and timely. This

trend has been seen as a positive step towards modernizing the higher education system in Nigeria. With the implementation of digitalization in accreditation, institutions are able to easily carry out accreditation by tracking, supervision, inspecting, verifying and monitor academic program resources and data sent in by institutions. This process will aid fast and aid data-driven decisions making that will to enhance the quality of accreditation in the various tertiary institution. Also, digitalization of accreditation allows for more transparency and accountability in the accreditation process, leading to a more credible and reliable system. Mayulu, and Tricahyadinata, (2024) and Elhoseny, Metawa, & Hassanien. (2016) observed that the automation system in accreditation facilitates online data collection through digital questionnaires filled out by the institution's accreditation team. This process allows institutions to collect data quickly and accurately, thereby reducing the possibility of data input errors that often occur in manual processes and accurate data is an important foundation for valid evaluations. Digital questionnaires can be tailored to the specific needs of institutions, because their flexible design allows institutions to explore more in-depth information about various aspects of education (Venkatapur *et al.*, 2023). Added value to the accreditation process is created from these adjustments. Comprehensive data collection allows for analysis of trends, patterns and issues that need to be addressed in the accreditation process. The accreditation team can identify areas that require more attention and formulate appropriate improvement steps. The process improves the overall quality of the evaluation. Automatic data analysis supports more precise decision making. Accurate and relevant information helps institutions design more effective education quality improvement strategies. Decisions taken based on valid data produce positive results for institutional development.

6) Data Security

Data security according to Mayulu, and Tricahyadinata, (2024) is a major concern in accreditation automation systems. Implementing encryption and two-factor authentication protects sensitive information from unauthorized access. Security is very important to maintain the integrity of accreditation data and build trust among stakeholders because a secure system prevents potential misuse of data that could harm an institution's reputation. Strong data protection enables institutions to guarantee that the information provided to the public is accurate and reliable. A sense of security for all parties involved in the accreditation process will be created and better monitoring of data access will be the benefit of the automation system. The use of strict access controls ensures only authorized individuals can access sensitive information. This creates a safer environment for managing accreditation data. The automation system periodically performs security audits to ensure data remains protected. The audit carried out will help identify potential security gaps that need to be fixed. Automation process supports continuous improvement in implemented data protection. Adequate data protection contributes to compliance with applicable regulations and standards. Complying with established regulations is important for institutions and this compliance not only protects data but also increases the institution's reputation in society as well as stakeholders' trust in the institution due to the implementation of data security. Trust in institutions is an important basis for establishing better relationships between institutions and stakeholders. A good security system allows institutions to focus more on educational innovation and with adequate protection in place, institutions can explore new technologies without worrying about data security. Innovation can have a positive impact on the quality of education (Mayulu, et al 2024). Digitization of academic program accreditation in schools led to data security and data accessibility for planning academic programme (Mark, 2016)

7) Online databases

The academic program accreditation digitalization is process that is constantly evolving, with digitalization becoming an increasingly important aspect in tertiary institutions. In order to keep up with this trend, many regulating institutions are implementing digitalization initiatives in

accreditation and resources verification to improve the quality and process of accreditation. These initiatives include the use of digital tools and platforms to streamline the accreditation process, as well as to collection of data and analyzing of data more efficiently. Allen, (2015) noted that digitization of academic program accreditation has also led to the development of online databases, making it easier for institutions to access and share accreditation information. This trend is expected to continue as more and more academic institutions recognize the benefits of digitalization in the accreditation process.

8) Collaboration between Institutions

Digitalization of accreditation process in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria will aid collaboration among accrediting agencies, different higher institutions and international accreditation firms. Digitalization allows for easier collaboration among institutions, as well as the ability to share and compare data. This leads to a more standardized and reliable accreditation process, as information can be easily verified and cross-checked. In addition to these benefits, digitalization also allows for better tracking and monitoring of the accreditation process. This means that institutions can identify and address any potential issues or shortcomings more efficiently, leading to continuous improvement and higher quality education. Overall, it is clear that digitalization plays a crucial role in the accreditation process and its importance cannot be overlooked. Not only does it improve efficiency and transparency, but it also ensures the credibility and reliability of academic institutions and their credentials.

4.1 Findings

The paper revealed that the benefits of digitalization of accreditation in the Nigerian tertiary institutions includes; improvement in efficiency of accreditation process, cost minimization, elimination of resources wastage, support transparency in accreditation processes, support assessment objectivity and consistency, support quality in data collection and analysis, ensure data security, online databases and collaboration among institutions.

4.3 Conclusion and Recommendations

Digitalization of academic programme accreditation is a rapidly growing trend in Nigerian tertiary institutions. This process involves using technology to streamline and improve the accreditation process for academic programs. This paper explore the benefits of academic programme accreditation digitalization. The paper concluded that the benefits digitalization of academic programme accreditation in Nigeria will includes; improvement in the efficiency of accreditation process, cost minimization, elimination of resources wastage, transparency in accreditation processes, sound assessment objectivity and consistency, quality in data collection and analysis, data security, online databases and collaboration among institutions.

Technology can aid effective accreditation in the tertiary institutions. Technology deployment in the accreditation process can assist in data distribution and dissemination among institutions and accrediting institutions. Technology deployment for accreditation in the tertiary institutions can support automation of administrative tasks that will aid effective decision and planning academic programme by accrediting agency and institutions.

Technology deployment for accreditation support online data bases that can be accessed by both accrediting agencies and higher institutions for effective collaboration and for curriculum development. Technology can assist accrediting agency to assess institutions virtually and this will lead to cost reduction in accreditation processes. Technology allows many stakeholder to participate in accreditation processes virtually and make their input to improve the quality of accreditation in institutions.

Technology deployment in the accreditation process of higher institutions will help to promote accountability and transparency. It will help to detect corruption practices in resources

assessment. With technology, corruption in the accreditation processes can be reduced to minimum. Technology in accreditation process in the higher institutions will aid effective allocation of resources and effective monitoring and supervision through tracking devices.

Based on this, the paper recommends that National Universities Commission, National Commission for Colleges of Education and National Board for Technical Education should embrace digitalization of academic programme accreditation in the tertiary institutions. Governments should provide the digital infrastructure facilities for National Universities Commission, National Commission for Colleges of Education and National Board for Technical Education to enable the institutions digitalize accreditation in the institutions. Staff of National Universities Commission, National Commission for Colleges of Education and National Board for Technical Education should be trained on digital skills to enable them work with digital facilities.

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