ANALYSIS OF UNIVERSITIES COMPLIANCE TO NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION'S (NUC)'S STIPULATED ADMISSION CRITERIA AND PHYSICAL FACILITIES FOR BIOLOGY EDUCATION IN SOUTH-EAST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study on Analysis of Universities compliance to National Universities commissions (NUC)'s stipulated Admission criteria and physical facilities for biology education in South East, Nigeria was guided by two research questions. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consists of 31 Heads of Admission Unit and 31 Heads of Science Education Department summing up to 62 in all the 31 Universities in South East Nigeria. Three Private Universities only which had science Education Department were purposively selected while five Public Universities were randomly selected for the study. Two respondents from each of the eight selected Universities added up to make a sample size of 16. The Researcher developed and utilized two structured instruments for data collection namely; Questionnaire on compliance to NUC's stipulated admission criteria for Biology Education in South-East (QCNUCSAC) and Observation checklist for compliance to NUC's stipulated benchmark for physical facilities (OCCNUCSBPF) in South East Nigeria. Validation of the instruments was done by 3 Experts from Faculty of Education. A reliability coefficient of 0.94 was obtained with Cronbach's Alpha. Data collected were analyzed using IBM SPSS. Mean and percentages were used to answer the two research questions. The findings of the study revealed that, Public Universities in South East Nigeria had a higher compliance to NUC benchmark for Biology Education on admission criteria while Private Universities complied more with availability of Physical facilities. It was recommended among other things that Federal government through NUC should finance the provision of standard physical facilities in Public Universities in order to create a conducive environment for learning. NUC should from time to time conduct impromptu accreditation to know the true situation of things and also identify where support is needed. This will help to checkmate unnecessary alleged window dressing during routine accreditation. There should be a severe deterrent for private Universities who indulge in compromise of admission criteria.

Keywords: Compliance, national universities commission, admission criteria, physical facilities, biology education.

Introduction

The University Education that was handed down to Nigerians by our colonizers was of a global standard and could compete with Education anywhere in the world. There was international

acceptability and high regards for the quality of her graduates, they were fit –for- purpose and had a maximum standard. However, the structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of 1986 affected the major fabrics of education, Staffing was affected, laboratories were not fully equipped as it used to be, Libraries were not also furnished satisfactorily and a lot of things went wrong, Ukah (2014) observed that the policy made a nonsense of our Educational efforts and went on to emphasize how it robbed us of Educational freedom, building up of infrastructure, recruitment of competent teachers and articulation of worthwhile policy that will drive development in our country. That was the onset of falling standards of Education which was further aggravated by brain drain (which has persisted till date) and technical aid that took many university staff to other Countries. After this period, the quality of university products became questionable and unacceptable.

The first measure was to promulgate decree 16 of 1985 on Minimum Standards for Basic Education which empowered the National Universities Commission (NUC) in Nigeria to accredit the degree programmes, monitor for standards and other academic awards in all the Universities (Ingawa 2017; Okoye 2021). Out of a total of 274 Universities established Nigeria between 1960 when the first indigenous University was established (https://www.nuc.edu.ng 2024), 31 are established in South East of Nigeria. It is not certain whether NUC has been monitoring these 274 Universities adequately to ensure compliance to standards and improved quality of Education or not. The doubt is borne out of allegations that some Universities do borrow equipment and Staff for purposes of accreditation. According to Ekpoh & Edet (2017), window dressing of issues during Accreditation has been prominent in Nigerian Universities. He noticed that books were borrowed to boost the library stock, facilities were also borrowed giving false impression about facilities and too much paper documentation among other things during accreditation. If this is to go by, then quality of Education may not improve until the incongruity of the situation is removed.

If any Nation must grow scientifically, technologically and economically, the Education system of such a nation should be handled with extreme care. Quality is an attribute that defines a good Education (Ezeaku 2013). Education without quality can be liken to cuisine without salt. In fact, the savor of any Nation is quality Education. University Education is an instrument par excellence for effecting National development if only it is laden with the required quality. NUC is an Agent of quality in the Nigerian Universities. According to Ezeaku (2014), if it is compromised, then there is no hope of improved Quality in Education in Nigeria.

Academic standards compliance is key to achievement of learning outcomes (intellectual knowledge, Competencies and behavioural attitudes). Having every aspect of Education starting from conducive environment, excellent instructors, standard curriculum and good human resource without landing in desirable learning outcomes tantamount to a great resource wastage (Okaforcha & Okeke 2020; Okoye 2017). It is one thing to set the rules and standards and another to follow it up. It is when the rules/standards are complied with that the desirable learning outcome can be realized. If a just and egalitarian society is in view, then compliance to Academic Standards must be attained. It won't be an overstatement to mention at this point that compliance to NUC guidelines is the bedrock for quality Education in Nigeria.

As noted by Okaforcha and Okeke (2019), the benchmark minimum Academic Standards specifies the qualification of lecturers required for each programme, the laboratory space, Academic content, physical facilities, Library resources and Employees. The decree gave the NUC legal backing to provide curriculum to University Education, thus bringing about centralization of

university administration and the uniformity in terms of the nature and content of university academic programmes (Okoye 2016; Dada, Wunti and Martin, 2017). The mandate of the NUC was further expanded to include approval of courses and programmes, determination and maintenance of minimum academic standards, monitoring of university for compliance, accreditation of academic programmes; provision of guidelines and process for the establishment of private universities. Other functions of the Commission include; ensuring the quality of the academic programmes offered in Nigerian universities, forwarding all external support to the Nigerian universities, organizing workshops and seminars on curriculum development for the university as the need arises, liaising with relevant government agencies to determine the manpower needs of the nation so as to develop benchmark and also sensitize universities to establish programmes to meet such needs (NUC 2022). Earlier, Ezeaku (2012) stated that it is only when education curriculum is formulated and rooted to meet the needs of the society that it can be very effective to modern day advancements. The essence of minimum standards therefore was to make sure that graduates from the Universities were not variegated in quality but each and every one of them, regardless of where he or she graduated from, is equipped with minimum knowledge and competence to match with the degree.

Apart from setting standards as mentioned above, measures should be taken to ensure compliance to those standards. Compliance to standards means that the basic Admission requirements, Course content, Provisions of physical facilities, human resources, Library resources, Staff-students ratio among others, should be duly followed as stipulated in the NUC Guidelines (2007). Failure to yield to the benchmark means no compliance.

Although the NUC mandatory roles have been spelt out, there is still skepticism on whether the universities comply to them adequately or not. NUC has been carrying out forensic audit of universities since 2012 with the aim of fishing out Universities that operate below the set standard and sanction them accordingly. Prof. Julius Okojie, the then NUC Secretary, in a 1-day sensitization seminar speech observed some rots and he said that some private universities have persistently violated extant rules and regulations at the detriment of quality Education (www.vanguardnigr.com,2012). It therefore becomes necessary to carry out this study aimed at finding out the extent to which Nigeria Universities (public and private) comply to NUCès stipulated Minimum Academic Standards.

Statement of the Problem
Many years after National Universities Commission (NUC) was empowered by Nigerian Government to monitor the administrative and academic progress of the Universities through accreditation process with the hope of improving the quality of education, it appears that Universities are yet to fully comply with the minimum Academic standards laid down by the. Studies have shown that NUC. Studies have shown that Universities, both Private and Public, do not still comply with the set Standard in some areas of the University system such as, but not limited to, admission criteria, staff mix, staff- student ratio, provision of adequate Library resources, Physical facilities and so on. This puts in doubt the credibility of the standard of university education in Nigeria and her products.
Based on the above observation, this Study was carried out to investigate the extent of Private and Public Universities' compliance to the NUC's Benchmark on minimum academic standards for

admission criteria and physical facilities for Biology Education in South East Nigeria where no such study is known by the researchers to have been conducted.

Research Questions
1) To what extent do Private and Public Universities comply with admission requirements as stipulated by NUC benchmark for Biology Education in South-East, Nigeria?
2) To what extent do Private and Public Universities comply with NUC benchmark on availability of physical facilities for Biology Education in South-East, Nigeria

Purpose of the study
The purpose of this study is to find out the extent of compliance of Private and Public Universities in South-east Nigeria to NUCs Benchmark on Minimum Academic Standards. Specifically, the study investigated the extent of:

(1). Public and Private Universities compliance to Admission requirements as stipulated by NUC Benchmark for Biology education in South-East Nigeria

(2). Public and Private Universities compliance to the provision of physical facilities as recommended by NUC benchmark in South-East, Nigerian

Methods
Research Design
This research was based on a Descriptive Survey Design which involves gathering of information that relates to the opinions and observations of the respondents It enables the researcher to use questionnaire and observation checklist to collect information and analyze the data collected.

The study was carried out in South-East Geo-political Zone of Nigeria. South-East Zone is one of the six geo-political Zones in Nigeria. There are five states that make up this zone. They are: Anambra, Imo, Enugu, Ebonyi and Abia states. The Zone is the Igbo speaking parts of Nigeria. The researchers chose this zone because from the review of Literature, it was discovered that this type of research has not been carried out in this zone on Biology Education.

The population consisted of 31 Admissions Unit Heads and 31 Heads of Science Education Department adding up to 62. Sixteen respondents were drawn from Eight Universities which were selected for the Study. Five public Universities out of the number that have Science Education Department were selected using simple random sampling technique and used for the study. The only three Private Universities which had Science Education Department were purposively selected for the Study. The sample size consisted of 2 respondents from each of the 8 Universities used for the study totaling 16 respondents.

Two Instruments namely Questionnaire on compliance to NUCès stipulated admission criteria (QCNUCSAC) and Observation Checklist for compliance to NUCès stipulated Benchmark for Physical facilities (OCCNUCSBPT) were developed by the researchers for data collection. The Researchers used the NUC Benchmark minimum Academic Standard for Biology Education to formulate the items of the instruments.

The questionnaire was formulated to elicit correct information from the Deputy Registrar / Head of Admissions Unit on the extent of compliance to the recommended Admission criteria by NUC benchmark minimum academic standards for Biology Education in South-East, Nigeria. It was

meant to answer research question one. The Observation Checklist was used to collect information on compliance to recommended physical facilities as recommended by NUC BMAS. It was formulated to answer research question two. The key respondents were Lecturers who gave information on availability of physical facilities in the University.

The instruments (questionnaire and observation checklist) were given to three experts from Science Education department and department of Educational Foundation (Measurement and Evaluation and Curriculum studies respectively) in the Faculty of Education of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka for validation. The comments and suggestions of these three experts were incorporated into the final copy of the instruments which were administered to the respondents.

After the modification of the items in line with the corrections and comments of the experts, the Questionnaire was subjected to Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test which yielded a reliability estimate of 0.94. This was considered high enough for this study.

Four research assistants were engaged to administer the instruments to the respondents in the Universities selected in South-East Nigeria. To do this successfully, they were briefed on the best approach on how to get answers from respondents, On- the- spot method of completion and retrieval of the instruments could not be used as most respondents were very busy and responsible people who could not be tracked down at will. There was therefore the need to leave the instruments behind with the respondents till the next day to ensure high-return rate of completed instruments. This also checkmated high errors or loss of instruments.

When instruments were retrieved, they were subjected to screening on the spot to ensure that it was properly completed The Observation Checklist were filled by the researchers and the research assistants based on their observations. All the documents were appropriate for data analysis.

Data collected was analyzed using IBM SPSS. Mean, standard deviation and simple percentages were used to answer research questions. The following are the ratings considered for the questionnaire and Observation Checklist 0.0% - 29% connoted No Compliance, 30% - 49% connoted low Compliance, 50% - 69.9% connoted moderate Compliance, 70% - 79.9% connoted high compliance and 80% and above represented very high compliance.

Results and Discussion

Research Question One: To what extent do Universities comply with admission requirements as stipulated by NUC benchmark for Biology Education in South east Nigeria?

Table 1: *Mean Percentage Compliance Score of Public and Private Universities on Admission Requirement Biology Education*

Variable	Public(n=5)		Remark*	Private(n=3)		Remark
	Mean	SD		Mean	SD	
Admission Requirement Compliance Score zsj(%)	77.78	23.57	HC	66.67	11.11	MC

*VHC = Very High Compliance; HC = High Compliance; MC = Moderate Compliance;
LC=Low compliance; NC – No Compliance

The result displayed in Table 1 shows that the percentage compliance with admission requirements for public universities was 77.78% while that of private universities was 66.67%. These values indicate that public universities had high compliance to admission requirement stipulated by NUC benchmark for Biology Education while Private Universities had moderate compliance to NUC admission Requirements. This could be a possible reason why parents tend to prefer to send their children to Private Universities despite the high fees as JAMB cut off point may not be complied with and parents may not have much huddles to face compared to Public Universities.

Research Question Two;

To what extent do public and private Universities comply to NUC benchmark on availability of physical facilities for Biology Education Department in South East Nigeria?

Table 2 *Percentage Compliance by Public and Private Universities to Availability of Physical facilities Resources as Stipulated by NUC Benchmark for Biology Education*

S/N	Physical Facilities	Public (n=5)				Rmk	Private (n=3)				Rmk
		Available		Not Available			Available		Not Available		
		N	%	N	%		N	%	N	%	
1.	Demonstration Laboratory in the Biology Education Department	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	3	100.0	-	-	AV
2.	An Educational Technology Laboratory	2	40.0	3	60.0	NAV	1	33.3	2	66.7	NAV
3.	A Micro Teaching Unit	3	60.0	2	40.0	AV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV
4.	A Biological Garden	2	40.0	3	60.0	N AV	-	-	3	100.0	NAV
5.	Other Laboratories	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV
6.	Adequate classroom	5	100.0	-	-	AV	3	100.0	-	-	AV
7.	Workshops	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	3	100.0	-	-	AV
8	Staff Office	5	100.0	-	-	AV	3	100.0	-	-	AV
9	Microscope in laboratory/sterilizer	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV
10	Hand Lens	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV
11	Balances	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV
12	Hot Plates	3	60.0	2	40.0	AV	3	100.0	-	-	AV
13	Refrigerator	3	60.0	2	40.0	AV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV
14	Air pumps	3	60.0	2	40.0	AV	1	33.3	2	66.7	NAV
15	Microscope (Binocular)	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV
16	Skeletal System	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	3	100.0	-	-	AV
17	Muscular System Chart	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	3	100.0	-	-	AV
18	Herbarium	3	60.0	2	40.0	AV	1	33.3	2	66.7	NAV
19	First Aid Box	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	3	100.0	-	-	AV
20	Photometer	3	60.0	2	40.0	AV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV
21	Beakers	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	3	100.0	-	-	AV
22	White Board	2	40.0	3	60.0	NAV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV
23	Meter Rule	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	1	33.3	2	66.7	NAV
24	Chemicals	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV
25	Incubator /Sterilizer	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV
26	Bunsen burners for heating	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	3	100.0	-	-	AV
27	Fire Extinguishers	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	3	100.0	-	-	AV

28	Sand buckets	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	3	100.0	-	-	AV
29	Test Tubes	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	3	100.0	-	-	AV
30	Petri Dish	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	3	100.0	-	-	AV
31	Preserved Plant and Animal Specimen	3	60.0	2	40.0	AV	3	100.0	-	-	AV
32	Flat/Round Bottom Flask	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	3	100.0	-	-	AV
33	Preserving Bottles	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	3	100.0	-	-	AV
34	Measuring Cylinder, Funnels	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	3	100.0	-	-	AV
35	Digestive System Chart	4	80.0	1	20.0	AV	3	100.0	-	-	AV
36	Washing Brush	3	60.0	2	40.0	AV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV
37	Insect Storage Boxes	2	40.0	3	60.0	NAV	3	100.0	-	-	AV
38	Spatula Stainless	2	40.0	3	60.0	NAV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV
39	Eye Model	2	40.0	3	60.0	NAV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV
40	Ear Model	2	40.0	3	60.0	NAV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV
41	Nose Model	2	40.0	3	60.0	NAV	2	66.7	1	33.3	AV

The results displayed on Table 2 shows that out of the 41 physical facilities stipulated in NUC Benchmark for Biology Education, 33 (80.5%%) of them were available in public universities while 36 (87.8%) were available in private universities. This represents high compliance in both public and private university, although private universities had slightly more compliance than public schools.

Poor physical facilities in form of congested classroom without a working fan or a good' ventilation can affect students' interest in attending classes and can ultimately affect academic performance. Conversely a serene academic environment can motivate learning and consequently good academic performance. Therefore, a good turnout of 1st class honour students in private Universities could stem from a good academic environment.

Summary of the Findings
The following answers were obtained from the research questions: -
1) Public Universities have higher compliance of 77.78% while Private Universities have moderate compliance of 66.67% to admission requirements as stipulated by NUC benchmark for Biology Education in South East Nigeria.
2) There is high compliance in both private and public universities to physical facilities as stipulated by NUC Benchmark for Biology Education although it is slightly higher in private than in public universities in South East, Nigeria.

Recommendations
The following Recommendations were made based on the findings from the study
(1) Federal Government through NUC should finance provisions of Physical facilities in Public Universities in order to curb overcrowding and boost teaching and learning in the classrooms.
(2) During accreditation exercise in Public Universities the NUC should not only fill forms in the offices but should request to see all the facilities in order to be sure that they exist in forms and shapes stipulated by NUC.
(3) NUC should from time to time embark on impromptu accreditation in order to know the true situation when it comes to availability of physical facilities

(4) NUC should cover the lapses where found in availability of physical facilities by writing to Federal Ministry of Education or TETFUND to provide assistance for provision of classrooms and other facilities.

(5) Workshops, Seminars and conferences should be organized for admission officers from time to time aiming at discouraging them from compromising with the stipulated admission requirements as such compromise will result to grievous consequences to the society at large.

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