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Accreditation of Engineering and Architectural Education in Nigeria: the way forward

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Abstract

In this study, Engineering and Architectural education and how they were accredited was assessed as carried out by the National Universities Commission (NUC), the only body that approves courses and programmes, determines and maintains minimum academic standards, monitors universities and accredits academic programmes in Nigeria. The current trends in education enrolment and engineering and architectural programs in Nigeria were also analyzed. This paper also provides recommendations for policy makers in government and the educational sector on how to redesign, upgrade and modify the existing initiatives to be able to produce graduates that will be able to compete favourably in the global engineering world.

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1. Introduction

The 2002 joint proposal by Sweden and Japan during the 57th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (Resolution 57/254) to adopt “Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD 2005- 2014)” following the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation which emphasized that education is an indispensable element for achieving sustainable development has influenced global quality assurance in tertiary education (UN,2002). Engineering Education is an instrument capable of bringing about the desired sustainable development that births the development and implementation of sustainable technologies and sustainable system innovations around the world. In fact, to realize a decade of Education for sustainable development, the educational institutions around the world will need constant and consistent forms of quality assurance through evaluation and accreditation of offered programs by suitable bodies. These forms of education quality or evaluation should not only focus on methods of teaching in classrooms and /or novel educational practices but also how well the student learns from the curriculum of such programs. Assessments of Educational programs differ from one country to the other, although, experts in Engineering Education are advocating for a global assessment and accreditation of Architectural and Engineering program to be able to fine tune-engineering practice without borders (A Patil et al, 2007, Javed A. Memon et al

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2009). Accreditation of undergraduate and graduate programs ensure quality, ethics and code of practice of programs as taught in an institution are in line with national and international set benchmarks. According to Javed et al (2009), accreditation involves an evaluation and assessment of undergraduate and postgraduate programs offered by universities and other educational providers, through a well-defined, peer review process in which endorsements based on broadly designated parameters and criteria are rendered. Program accreditation assures the public, potential employers and professional's bodies that an academic institution is satisfactory preparing candidates for the needed development and skills required for such profession. As at first quarter of 2012 there are 123 universities in Nigeria, aside Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and Colleges of education. There are 36 Federal universities, 37 state universities and 50 private universities (according to Act 9 of 1993 constitution) offering over a thousand different programs. The Universities activities are regulated and controlled by the National University commission (NUC), an agency under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education. NUC is responsible for the program accreditation and setting enrolment benchmarks' for the Universities according to their capacity. NUC works in collaboration with the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB) a body established by law to conduct matriculation examinations into tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

2. Student Enrollment in Nigeria's Universities

Enrolment into Nigeria Universities has witnessed sporadic changes from 1948 when the total student enrolment at University College Ibadan was 104 (Njoku, P. C, 2002). The number grew to 1,395 in 1960, 40,000 in 1976 and 172,000 in 1988 when the first group of graduates from the 6:3:3:4 system of education enrolled in the universities. In year 2000, the student enrolment jumped to 448,230 and 780001 in 2005. Current enrolment in Nigerian Universities is estimated at over 1million degree students. The current massification of university education elicited a growing concern about the quality of education programs offered by the various Universities. The National University Commission (NUC) continues to pursue certain measures to ensure that student enrolment was within limits of the carrying capacity of the institution as dictated by its resources such as staff, teaching support services, laboratories, libraries, equipment and lecture spaces. The continuous pursuit of NUC to regulate and control enrolment in universities has not translated to a useful measure as most Universities continue to enrol beyond their carrying capacities. Table 1 shows the yearly applications to Nigerian Universities with yearly admission into the University. Yearly around 1 million applicants want to gain entrance to Nigerian Universities with only about 10% being successful. This 10% percent of the applicants will have to sit for various University tests before they can be admitted into their various courses.

Table 1. Yearly applications to Nigeria University with yearly admission into the University

	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
Application into Nigeria's Universities	1046940	838051	917960	912350	1034083
Admission into Nigeria's Universities	106007	105955	85649	70997	-
% of applicants admitted	10.13	12.64	9.33	7.78	-

Table 2.Total Enrolment in federal University by major Discipline (2001-2006)

DISCIPLINES	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006
ADMINISTRATION	29,407	29,741	45,247	47,886	29,757
AGRICULTURE	18,557	27,201	30,457	26,455	22,022
ARTS	31,182	31,456	35,585	38,589	33,998
EDUCATION	33,782	33,798	48,230	48,889	49,247
ENGR/TECHNOLOGY	47,278	50,983	51,816	59,702	57,824
ENVIR.SCIENCE	10,864	14,676	18,036	18,853	17,968
LAW	14,395	13,896	15,430	18,506	16,299
MEDICINE	26,360	25,426	28,001	31,540	25,884
PHARMACY	5,727	5,873	5,967	5,538	4,740
SCIENCE	59,361	74,933	78,761	97,724	75,187
SOCIAL SCIENCE	45,320	38,154	54,450	52,924	56,725
VETERINARY MEDICINE	3,474	3,365	7,273	3,771	3,735
TOTAL	325,707	349,502	419,253	450,377	393,386

Source: National Universities Commission, Abuja.

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