

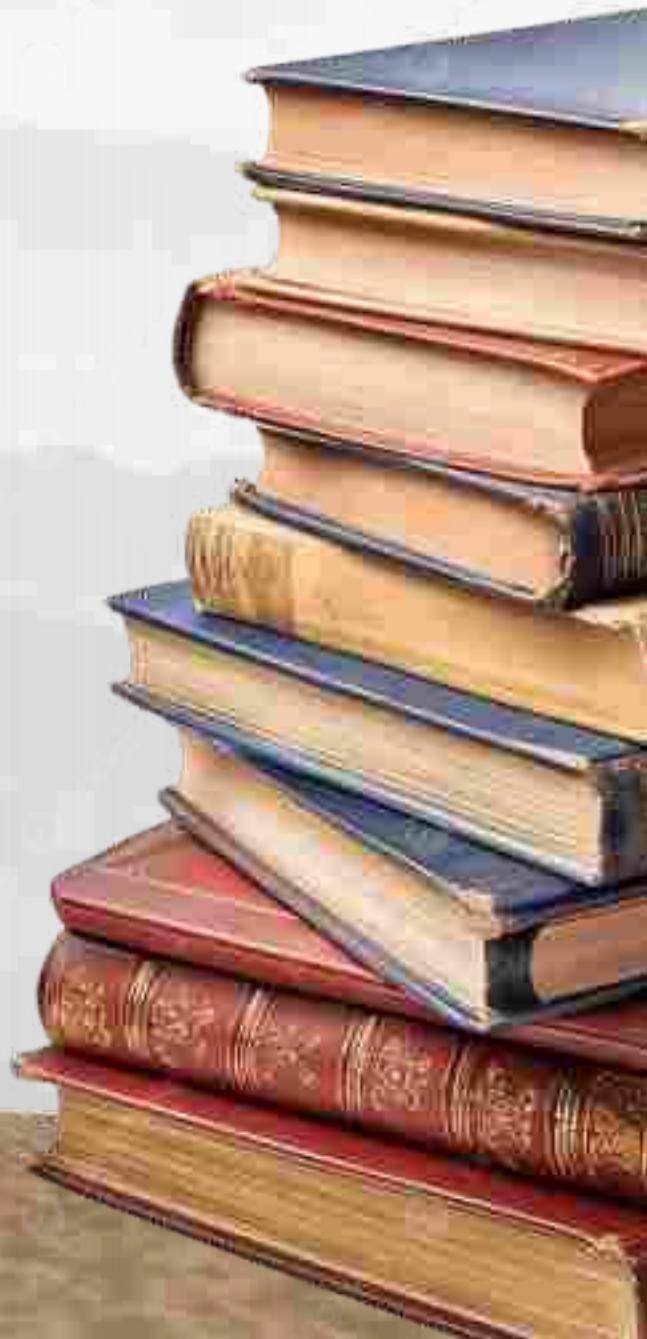


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# PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

VOLUME TWO



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**BOOK CHAPTER**

# **PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

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*Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria*

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*Educational Research and Management Consultant,  
Financial Analyst and Digital Facilitator.*

*President, Institute of Education, Management and Professional Studies and International Organization For Professional and Proficiency Studies, Owerri Imo State, Nigeria West Africa.*

**Dr Mirian N. Obizue.**

*Institute of Arts Management and Professional Studies.  
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# CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

## **Ogunode Niyi Jacob, PhD**

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria

## **Ayodele Ebunolu Nwesigbo, PhD**

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

## **Usman Ibrahim, PhD**

Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

## **Oyekanmi, Funmilayo Bosede, PhD**

Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, University of Ilesa, Osun State, Nigeria

## **Mary Adanna Chinwuba, PhD.**

Executive Director, Chalcedony Schools; National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools (NAPPS), Abuja

## **Adamu Awwal Salman**

Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa, Nigeria

## **Danyawo Musa Adamu, PhD.**

Department of Criminology and Security Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

## **Olamoyegun, Stephania Olabisi, PhD.**

Department of Science Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

## **Ola-Adeniji Elizabeth Bolarinwa**

Department of Science Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

## **Olapade Olubunmi Olayinka.**

Department of Human Resources and Administration, Nigeria Airspace Management Agency (NAMA), Nigeria

## **Sani Kasimu, PhD.**

Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Federal University Wukari, Nigeria

## **Inemesit Nsikak Edet.**

Assistant Chief Education Officer, Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja, Nigeria

## **Nwankwo Nkechi Chinelo, PhD.**

Department of Educational Management and Planning, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State, Nigeria

## **Unachukwu Ijeoma Blessing, PhD.**

Department of Economics Education, Federal College of Education (Technical), Umuze, Nigeria

## **Christopher Idowu Ojo.**

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

## **Temitope Zulfah Mustapha**

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

## **Emeana Geraldine Chinwe**

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

## **Victor Olugbenga Ayoko.**

Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, National Open University of Nigeria

## **Galadima, Farida Ibrahim.**

Department of Adult and Continuing Education, Federal University Wukari, Nigeria

## **JAE, Talatu**

Department of Educational Foundation, Taraba State University, Jalingo

## **Maryam Abdullahi, PhD.**

Department of Education, Nigerian Police Academy, Wudil, Kano, Nigeria

## **Muhammad Danjuma Maiwada**

Department of Education, Nigerian Police Academy, Wudil, Kano, Nigeria

## **Umoru Abdulrasheed Oseni.**

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

## **Saleh Khalid Mahmud.**

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

## **Ronald Winifred Abhulimen, PhD.**

Biological Sciences Department, Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences, Federal University Wukari, Nigeria.

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## CHAPTER NINE

# TERTIARY EDUCATION AND ACCREDITATION OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

By

**Inemesit Nsikak Edet**

[Inemesitedet994@gmail.com](mailto:Inemesitedet994@gmail.com)

Department of Educational Management, University of Abuja, Nigeria.

### ABSTRACT

Accreditation is an essential mechanism for assuring the quality, relevance, and credibility of tertiary education in Nigeria. This chapter examines how accreditation by regulatory bodies—such as the National Universities Commission (NUC), the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE)—safeguards academic standards through evaluation of curriculum, staffing, infrastructure, and governance. It discusses types of accreditations (institutional, programme, and professional), roles of regulatory agencies, the importance of accreditation for student outcomes and employability, and the challenges institutions face—such as underfunding, infrastructural deficits, regulatory compliance, and the burden of outdated facilities. Drawing on empirical studies and policy reports, the chapter proposes sustainable strategies: strengthen internal quality assurance units; increase funding; build staff capacity; consistently upgrade infrastructure; align curricula with industry needs; and digitize accreditation processes. By implementing these strategies, Nigerian tertiary institutions can enhance their global competitiveness, ensure accountability, and deliver education that is both high-quality and responsive to societal needs.

**Keywords:** accreditation; quality assurance; tertiary education; regulatory agencies; curriculum relevance; Nigeria; programme accreditation

## 8.1. Introduction

Tertiary education serves as a critical pillar for national development, providing the advanced knowledge, skills, and human capital necessary for socio-economic progress. In Nigeria, the tertiary education sector comprises universities, polytechnics, monotechnics, and colleges of education, all of which play vital roles in producing graduates who drive innovation, leadership, and professional practice across various fields. However, ensuring the quality and relevance of education delivered by these institutions remains a persistent challenge (Akpan & Etor, 2016; Ogunode, Edinoh & Rauf, 2023).

To address issues of quality assurance, standardization, and institutional accountability, the Nigerian government—through regulatory bodies such as the National Universities Commission (NUC), the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) has established a structured accreditation system. Accreditation is a process by which academic programs and institutions are evaluated to determine whether they meet established standards in curriculum design, staffing, infrastructure, governance, and academic outcomes.

This chapter introduces the concept of accreditation within the context of Nigeria's tertiary education system. It explores aims and objectives of accreditation, types of accreditations the roles of regulatory agencies, and the importance of accreditation in promoting educational quality and global competitiveness. The chapter also highlights the challenges associated with the accreditation process, including underfunding, infrastructural deficits, and institutional compliance issues. By examining these dynamics, this chapter sets the stage for a deeper understanding of how accreditation impacts policy formulation, institutional performance, and the overall integrity of Nigeria's higher education landscape. Thus, this chapter discussed the following subheadings.

### Clarification of concepts

1. Accreditation
2. Types of accreditations
3. Roles of regulatory agencies
4. Importance of accreditation in promoting educational quality and global competitiveness
5. Challenges Militating against Accreditation in Tertiary Education
6. Sustainable Strategies to improve accreditation in Tertiary Education in Nigeria

## 9.2. Clarification of concepts

### Concept of Accreditation

Accreditation in tertiary education is a formal process through which academic programs or institutions are evaluated and certified as meeting established standards of quality, relevance, and effectiveness. It is a critical quality assurance mechanism used to ensure that tertiary institutions (such as universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education) offer education that is consistent with national and, in some cases, international expectations. Accreditation is the official recognition granted to an academic program or institution after a thorough assessment by a regulatory body to confirm that it meets minimum required standards in areas such as curriculum content, teaching staff qualifications, infrastructure, research output, governance, and student support services (Akpan, & Etor, 2016).

The purpose of accreditation include; to ensure that academic programs meet acceptable academic and professional standards; to hold institutions accountable to students, employers, government, and society; to ensure consistency in the quality of education across institutions and programs; to ensure that certificates and degrees awarded by institutions are valid and respected both locally and internationally; to encourage institutions to regularly evaluate and improve their programs and facilities (Ahaotu, & Akor, 2015).

The accrediting institutions in Nigeria include; National Universities Commission (NUC): Oversees universities; National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), Oversees polytechnics and technical institutions and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), Oversees colleges of education. These bodies develop benchmarks, conduct assessments, and grant full, interim, or denied accreditation status based on evaluation results.

## 9.3.Types of accreditations

### a) Institutional Accreditation:

This accreditation system evaluates the entire institution (e.g., a university or polytechnic) for its governance, infrastructure, financial management, and overall academic integrity. Institutional accreditation is a comprehensive evaluation process that assesses the overall quality and effectiveness of a tertiary institution as a whole, rather than individual academic programs. It focuses on the institution's mission, governance, infrastructure, administrative processes, financial stability, academic environment, and student support services. The purpose of institutional accreditation is to ensure that the institution operates in a manner that promotes high academic standards, ethical leadership, accountability, and sustainability.

The key features of Institutional Accreditation:

**1. Holistic Evaluation:**

It examines all aspects of an institution — academic, administrative, financial, and physical infrastructure.

**2. Focus on Systems and Structures:**

It assesses the effectiveness of institutional governance, leadership, planning, and quality assurance mechanisms.

**3. Compliance with Regulatory Standards:**

Institutions are measured against minimum benchmarks and guidelines set by national regulatory agencies.

**4. Sustainability and Integrity:**

The institution must demonstrate its ability to maintain educational standards and manage resources responsibly over time.

**b) Criteria for Institutional Accreditation**

The criteria for institutional accreditation in Nigeria may include; vision and mission alignment with educational goals; Governance and leadership structure; quality of teaching and learning environments; staff qualifications and welfare; financial health and resource management

library, laboratories, and ICT facilities; student support services and welfare; Internal quality assurance systems and community service and societal impact

In Nigeria, institutional accreditation is carried out by National Universities Commission (NUC) for universities; National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) – for polytechnics and monotechnics and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) – for colleges of education. These bodies conduct periodic inspections and assessments, and institutions that meet the required standards are granted full accreditation, while those falling short may receive interim accreditation or be denied accreditation altogether.

**c) Program Accreditation:**

This accreditation system focuses on specific academic programs (e.g., Engineering, Law, Education) to ensure they meet standards in content, delivery, and outcomes. Programme accreditation is the process of evaluating and certifying the quality and standards of a specific academic program (such as Medicine, Law, Engineering, Accounting, etc.) offered by a tertiary

institution. It focuses on whether the curriculum, teaching methods, staff qualifications, learning resources, and outcomes of a particular course or department meet the minimum requirements set by regulatory bodies. Institutional accreditation evaluates the institution as a whole, programme accreditation ensures that each individual course of study delivers education that is relevant, up-to-date, and aligned with academic and industry standards (Anugom, 2016; Elhoseny, Metawa, & Hassanien. 2016).

### **Professional bodies**

Professional bodies may also be involved, especially for regulated disciplines, such as:

- 1) Council for Legal Education (CLE): For Law
- 2) Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria (NMCN): For Nursing
- 3) Council for the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria (COREN): For Engineering
- 4) Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN): For Medicine and Dentistry

### **Possible Accreditation Outcomes:**

- 1) Full Accreditation: The program meets all required standards.
- 2) Interim Accreditation: The program meets some standards but has deficiencies that must be addressed within a time frame.
- 3) Denied Accreditation: The program fails to meet key standards and may be suspended until improvements are made.

### **9.4. Roles of Regulatory Agencies**

#### **i. National University Commission (NUC)**

The National University Commission (NUC) is a regulatory body that oversees the functions of universities in Nigeria. It is responsible for formulating and implementing policies regarding academic programs, quality assurance, and university standards. Additionally, the NUC is responsible for accrediting and monitoring universities to ensure they are meeting the required standards. The commission also plays a crucial role in supervising the establishment of new universities and ensuring they meet the minimum requirements for operation. Furthermore, the NUC is responsible for conducting research and providing recommendations to the government regarding the development of the higher education sector. Overall, the NUC plays a significant role in promoting excellence and maintaining the integrity of the Nigerian higher education system.

#### **ii. National Board for Technical Education (NBTE)**

The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) is a governmental body in Nigeria that oversees the development, regulation, and supervision of technical and vocational education in the country. It plays a crucial role in the improvement and advancement of technical education and training in Nigeria. Among its many functions, the NBTE is responsible for evaluating and accrediting technical institutions, developing curricula and teaching guidelines, and promoting the quality of technical education. It also works closely with government agencies and industry organizations to ensure that technical education aligns with current and future needs. Additionally, the NBTE serves as a platform for policy development, research, and advocacy for technical and vocational education. Its efforts have greatly contributed to the growth and success of technical education in Nigeria, providing students with valuable skills and knowledge for their future careers (Ogunode, & Okwudinma, 2024).

### **iii. National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE)**

The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) in Nigeria is responsible for overseeing and regulating the education system in Nigeria. Its main functions include accreditation of colleges of education, development of curriculum and standards, and assessment of teacher education programs. The NCCE also serves as a policy-making body for teacher education and is responsible for monitoring the quality of education in Nigeria. Additionally, the NCCE is also involved in research and development, as well as providing technical assistance to educational institutions. The NCCE plays a vital role in ensuring the quality and effectiveness of teacher education in Nigeria (Ogunode, et al 2024).

## **9.5.Importance of accreditation in promoting educational quality and global competitiveness**

Accreditation is a critical quality assurance mechanism in tertiary education, serving as a benchmark for evaluating the standard and effectiveness of academic programs and institutions. In Nigeria, accreditation—conducted by regulatory bodies such as the NUC, NBTE, and NCCE—plays a vital role in ensuring that tertiary institutions meet minimum academic and professional standards. Its significance goes beyond national quality control; it is also a key driver of global competitiveness in higher education.

### **i. Ensures Academic Quality and Standards**

Accreditation guarantees that tertiary institutions and their programs meet minimum academic standards in terms of curriculum content, staff qualifications, instructional methods, and learning outcomes. This process ensures that:

- 1) Students receive quality education aligned with current knowledge and industry needs.
- 2) Institutions remain accountable in the delivery of academic services.

3) Teaching, learning, and assessment processes are continuously improved. Without accreditation, institutions may offer substandard programs, leading to poorly trained graduates who cannot compete effectively in the job market ((Ogunode, et al 2024; National Universities Commission 2012).

#### **ii. Promotes Institutional Accountability and Transparency**

Through regular audits and evaluations, accreditation compels institutions to maintain accountability in the use of resources, student support systems, and academic policies. This transparency:

- 1) Builds public trust in the institution's operations.
- 2) Encourages responsible management and governance.
- 3) Reduces the likelihood of corruption and academic fraud. Accountable institutions are more likely to attract funding, partnerships, and top talent—factors that enhance competitiveness (Obadara, & Alaka, 2013; Obadara, & Alaka, 2013).

#### **iii. Enhances Student and Employer Confidence**

Accreditation signals to students and employers that a program or institution has met recognized standards of excellence. This increases:

- 1) Student confidence in the value of their qualifications.
- 2) Employer trust in the competence of graduates from accredited programs.
- 3) Graduate employability due to alignment between academic training and workplace expectations. As a result, accredited institutions are more likely to produce graduates who succeed in both local and international job markets.

#### **iv. Facilitates International Recognition and Mobility**

In an increasingly globalized world, accreditation is key to cross-border recognition of qualifications. Institutions and programs that meet national and international accreditation standards are more likely to:

- 1) Participate in international academic exchange and research collaborations.
- 2) Have their graduates accepted into postgraduate programs abroad.

3) Build global partnerships that boost institutional reputation and influence. This enhances Nigeria's presence and competitiveness in the global higher education space.

#### **v. Encourages Continuous Improvement and Innovation**

The accreditation process promotes a culture of self-assessment and reform, requiring institutions to: Periodically review and update curricula. Upgrade facilities and learning environments. Train and retrain academic staff. Invest in research and development. Such improvements make institutions more dynamic, responsive to societal needs, and globally relevant.

#### **vi. Influences Funding, Ranking, and Policy Decisions**

Government agencies, development partners, and private donors often base their funding decisions on an institution's accreditation status. Additionally, national and international university rankings frequently consider accreditation in their evaluation criteria. Accredited institutions are thus better positioned to: Access competitive funding and grants. Attract high-caliber students and staff and Influence policy and curriculum development at national and regional levels.

### **9.6.Sustainable Strategies to improve accreditation in Tertiary Education in Nigeria**

Improving the accreditation process in Nigeria's tertiary education system requires long-term, systemic, and sustainable strategies. These strategies must not only address current deficiencies in infrastructure, staffing, and curriculum delivery but also build a culture of quality, accountability, and continuous improvement across institutions. For Nigeria to raise its academic standards and enhance global competitiveness, a proactive and multi-faceted approach is essential. Below are key sustainable strategies to improve accreditation outcomes and processes in Nigerian tertiary institutions:

#### **i. Strengthening Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) Systems**

Each institution should develop a robust Internal Quality Assurance Unit responsible for: regular internal reviews of academic programs, monitoring compliance with accreditation standards, coordinating self-assessment and documentation before external accreditation visits and training academic and administrative staff on quality assurance practices. A functional IQA system ensures that institutions are consistently accreditation-ready, not just reactive during visitation periods (Javidan, Raveendran, Rai, Tackett, Kulasegaram, Whitehead, Rosenfield, & Houston. 2020).

#### **ii. Adequate and Sustainable Funding**

Accreditation failures are often linked to poor funding, which leads to inadequate infrastructure, obsolete equipment, and insufficient staffing. Government and institutional leaders must prioritize, increased budgetary allocation to education, sustainable financial planning by institutions and encouraging alternative funding sources (e.g. alumni donations, endowments, partnerships with

the private sector). Funding improvements must be tied to accountability frameworks to ensure efficient use of resources (Ogunode, & Okwudinma, 2024; Mark, 2016).

### **iii. Capacity Building and Staff Development**

Accreditation depends heavily on the quality and quantity of academic staff. Sustainable improvements require: recruitment of qualified lecturers to meet staff-student ratios, ongoing professional development and training in pedagogy, research, and technology and incentives to retain top academic talent, especially in specialized fields. A highly skilled workforce ensures that academic standards are maintained and continually improved (Ogunode, 2025; Akomolafe, & Ibijola, 2014).

### **iv. Infrastructure Upgrade and Maintenance**

Institutions must invest in: modern laboratories, workshops, libraries, and ICT facilities, Smart classrooms and e-learning platforms and regular maintenance of existing infrastructure. These resources are often critical criteria during accreditation assessments, especially for science, technology, and professional programs (Ogunode, Edinoh, & Rauf, 2023).

### **v. Curriculum Review and Industry Relevance**

To ensure accreditation success and global relevance, academic programs must be regularly reviewed to reflect current industry needs and technological trends; developed in collaboration with professional bodies and employers, embedded with practical components like internships, entrepreneurship, and digital skills training. Curriculum modernization positions Nigerian graduates to compete in both local and international labor markets (Fitriani, & Damayanti 2019; Otokunefer, 2015).

### **vi. Digitalization of Accreditation Processes**

To improve transparency, efficiency, and record-keeping, accreditation processes should be digitized. This includes: online submission of self-study reports and documentation, digital dashboards for tracking institutional compliance, use of data analytics to identify gaps and track progress over time and digital tools also reduce delays and promote better communication between institutions and regulatory bodies (Venkatapur, Akshay, Kulkarni, Preethi & Shreesha 2023; Allen, 2015).

### **vii. Strengthening the Role of Regulatory Agencies**

Regulatory bodies like NUC, NBTE, and NCCE need to be properly funded and staffed with experts; transparent, consistent, and timely in their accreditation processes, more collaborative and less punitive—working as partners in institutional growth and encouraged to adopt global best

practices and benchmarks. A reliable and responsive accreditation system builds institutional trust and promotes continuous improvement (Ogunode, Olaoye, & Yakubu, 2023; Okebukola, 2018)).

### **viii. Encouraging Institutional Autonomy with Accountability**

Autonomy allows institutions to innovate and tailor their academic offerings. However, it must be paired with strong accountability measures. Institutions should be empowered to manage their resources, staff, and programs effectively, performance metrics should be used to assess their readiness for accreditation and regular public disclosure of accreditation status can drive accountability and competition. Autonomy backed by transparency creates room for innovation while maintaining quality standards (Ogunode, Nwisiagbo, & Soetan-Ayanfe, 2024; Tunde, & Issa, 2013).

### **ix. Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration**

Sustainable improvement in accreditation requires input from; Students (as primary beneficiaries of quality education), employers and professional bodies (for feedback on graduate performance), Alumni and private sector partners (for support in funding and curriculum development), International bodies (to align local standards with global benchmarks). Such collaborations enrich the accreditation process and make outcomes more practical and relevant (Ogunode, & Samuel, 2022; Aljarallah & Dutta. 2021).

## **Conclusion**

Accreditation is a cornerstone of quality assurance in Nigeria's tertiary education system. It serves as a vital mechanism for evaluating the relevance, credibility, and effectiveness of academic programs and institutions. Through the work of regulatory bodies such as the National Universities Commission (NUC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), accreditation ensures that minimum academic standards are maintained, resources are adequately provided, and graduates are well-prepared for the demands of the workforce and society.

In a rapidly changing global environment, the need for a strong and transparent accreditation system has become even more urgent. Accreditation promotes academic excellence, institutional accountability, international recognition, and continuous improvement. However, its success depends on sustained commitment from all stakeholders—government, institutions, academic staff, industry, and students.

To strengthen tertiary education in Nigeria, accreditation must be seen not just as a regulatory hurdle but as a strategic tool for transformation and global competitiveness. By embracing quality standards and investing in institutional development, Nigeria can build a higher education system that meets both national development goals and international expectations.

## Revise Questions

1. Define Accreditation
2. List types of accreditations
3. Discuss Roles of four each of the regulatory agencies
4. Highlights four importance of accreditation in promoting educational quality and global competitiveness
5. List five challenges militating against accreditation in Tertiary Education
6. Discuss five sustainable strategies to improve accreditation in Tertiary Education in Nigeria

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# AUTHORS' BIBLIOGRAPHY

## CHAPTER ONE:

### AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF WEST AFRICA TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF WEST AFRICA COUNTRIES

#### Authors:

**Ogunode Niyi Jacob, Ph.D.**

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria

#### About the Authors:

**Ogunode** Niyi Jacob, Ph.D., a professional educational planner and an administrator. Ogunode Niyi Jacob Ph.D. have written many articles and conference papers on education especially educational planning, educational administration and management in Nigeria, Tertiary education, ICT education, Green Education, Gender Education, Artificial intelligence and special education. Ogunode Niyi Jacob is currently a staff with Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria. He graduated from the famous university of Abuja. He has Master and Ph.D. in Educational Administration and Planning.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### IMPACT OF RAPID GROWING POPULATION ON THE INFRASTRUCTURE IN NIGERIA

#### Authors:

**Usman Ibrahim, Ph.D.**

Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

#### About the Author:

**Dr. Usman** Ibrahim holds Ph.D., MSc and BSc in Sociology from the Department of Sociology, Bayero University Kano, where he was a Lecturer before moving to the Department of Sociology, Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State-Nigeria. Dr. Usman taught at all level of Nigerian education from Primary School Teacher in Awe Local Government Education Authority to Nasarawa State Ministry of Education (Teachers Service Commission) as Secondary School Teacher and finally to university. His area of specialization in Sociology is demography, population studies and social statistics with main interest in fertility and reproductive health and its associated social problems. He has attended so many

international and local conferences and participated in many research activities in addition to publishing in both local and international journals. Dr. Usman also contributed chapters in more than five different text books so far and is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology, Federal University of Lafia-Nasarawa State.

## CHAPTER THREE:

### ROLE OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN FISH PRODUCTION DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

#### Authors:

**Oyekanmi, Funmilayo Bosede, Ph.D.**

Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, University of Ilesa, Osun State, Nigeria

#### About the Author:

**Oyekanmi** Fumilayo Bosede is a distinguished academic and fisheries scientist with over three decades of experience in teaching, research, and academic administration. She began her academic career in 1989 as a Senior Instructor at the College of Agriculture, Mokwa, and now a Reader in the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, University of Ilesa, Osun State. Her areas of specialization include aquaculture nutrition, fish farming systems, freshwater prawn ecology, and environmental impacts on aquatic productivity. Dr. Oyekanmi has contributed extensively to the academic community through numerous publications in reputable national and international journals, and conference proceedings. Her research has attracted grants, including international funding from Zoetis Pharmaq SA and TETFund IBR. She is a Fellow of the Strategic Institute for Natural Resources and Human Development (FRHD), and holds membership in several professional bodies including FISON, WAS, ANIFS, and NIAS. Her work has been recognized with multiple awards for academic excellence and nation-building contributions, she remains committed to advancing sustainable fisheries practices, mentoring young scholars, and promoting gender inclusiveness in agricultural research and development in Nigeria and beyond.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### FACTORS THAT WILL ENHANCE DEVELOPMENT OF CAREER SERVICE CENTRES IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

#### Authors:

1. **Mary Adanna Chinwuba, Ph.D.** – *Lead Author*  
Executive Director, Chalcedony Schools; National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools (NAPPS), Abuja

## 2. Adamu Awwal Salman

Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa, Nigeria

### About the Authors:

**Dr. Mary** Adanna Chinwuba. She graduated with a 2.1 in Biochemistry from the Federal University of Technology Owerri, after which she proceeded to obtain a Post Graduate Diploma in Education, then Masters in Educational Administration and Planning and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Guidance and Counselling from the prestigious University of Abuja. She has published over 25 Academic Journals online and has featured in so many international conferences. She is a renowned educationist and the Executive Director of Chalcedony Schools. She is a certified member of Association of Professional Counsellors of Nigeria (APROCON), Secretary of National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools (NAPPS Kubwa Satellite), A Licensed and professional teacher with TRCN, She is a trainer and coach to a lot of teachers. She is a genuine lover of God, she is married to Pastor Chibuzo Chinwuba and they are blessed with 2 beautiful daughters.

**Adamu** Awwal Salman is a distinguished educational psychologist with a B.Ed from Bayero University Kano and an M.Ed from Nasarawa State University. He is a staff member at Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa. Adamu Awwal Salman has authored numerous articles and conference papers on topics including educational psychology, gender, artificial intelligence, tertiary institutions, ASUU, and educational administration. He also holds roles such as Secretary of the Akus Educational Foundation, Ankpa, and Secretary of the Economic Tree Management Committee at Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa, Director of the College of Arts, Science and Islamic Studies (CASIS) reflecting his commitment to education and community development.

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA AND CRIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

#### Authors:

##### **Danyawo Musa Adamu, Ph.D.**

Department of Criminology and Security Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

#### About the Author:

**Danyawo** Musa Adamu, Ph.D., a professional lecturer with the Department of Criminology and Security Studies, Federal University of Lafia. Danyawo Musa Adamu Ph.D. has written many articles and conference papers on criminology, especially educational planning, educational administration in

Nigeria, the role of ICT in administration, and Artificial Intelligence. Danyawo Musa Adamu is currently a staff with Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. He graduated from the University of Maiduguri. He has a Master's in Sociology and a Ph.D. in International Studies. Dr. Danyawo Musa Adamu is a lecturer in the Department of Criminology and Security Studies, in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State. He is a member of Association of Professional Councilors of Nigeria. He is an academician par excellence and a professional lecturer who has published in a number of academic journals, contributed to chapters in books, and continues to impact knowledge in Criminology and Security Studies as well as Change and Innovation in the Educational System.

## CHAPTER SIX:

### GAMIFICATION IN SCIENCE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

#### Authors:

##### 1. **Olamoyegun, Stephanía Olabisi, Ph.D. – Lead Author**

Department of Science Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

##### 2. **Ola-Adeniji Elizabeth Bolarinwa**

Department of Science Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

#### About the Authors:

**Stephanía** Olabisi Olamoyegun (Ph.D.) is a science educator and Chemist with 15 years of teaching experience at senior secondary school. She holds a degree in Chemistry Education from University of Uyo, Masters and Ph.D. in Science Education from University of Abuja. Her work focuses on improving the teaching and learning of science. She has published scholarly articles on teacher preparation, students' misconceptions in science, and the integration of digital learning tools in classrooms. With years of experience teaching at the university level, Dr. Stephanía is committed to bridging the gap between research and classroom practice. She has served as a mentor for pre-service and in-service science teachers. Her current research interests include curriculum innovation, psychosocial factors of interest, self-efficacy, and learning environment on achievement in Basic Science among Junior Secondary School Students in North Central Nigeria, and the role of technology in advancing science education in Nigeria.

**Ola-Adeniji** Elizabeth Bolarinwa is a distinguished educator and chemist with a decade of teaching experience. Born with a passion for science and

education, Elizabeth has established herself as a dedicated and accomplished professional in her field. Elizabeth holds a Bachelor's degree in Applied Chemistry from Usman Danfodio University. She furthered her education by obtaining a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) from the National Open University. Her academic pursuits culminated in a Master's degree from the University of Abuja. With a strong foundation in chemistry and education, Elizabeth embarked on a teaching career that has spanned over ten years. Her dedication, expertise, and commitment to excellence have made her a respected and beloved educator among her students and peers. Throughout her career, Elizabeth has demonstrated a tireless passion for inspiring and mentoring young minds. Her contributions to the field of education have been significant, and her legacy continues to inspire future generations of scientists, educators, and leaders.

## CHAPTER SEVEN:

### TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA AND HUMAN MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

#### Authors:

#### **Olapade Olubunmi Olayinka**

Department of Human Resources and Administration, Nigeria Airspace Management Agency (NAMA), Nigeria

#### About the Author:

*Olapade* Olubunmi N. Olayinka is an experienced Public Administrator and Human Resource professional with a strong academic background, including a Master's degree and a Postgraduate Diploma in Public Administration. Currently serving at the Nigeria Airspace Management Agency (NAMA), Olubunmi has held various key roles since 2012, including Head of the Environment Unit and Officer in charge of the Office and Housing Unit. Her work spans administrative coordination, human resources, environmental management, and project oversight. A Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Human Resources Management and Member of both the Nigerian Institute of Management and the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management, she combines professional expertise with a passion for leadership and service. Olubunmi is also active in community development, particularly in women and youth-focused initiatives. Her core values are integrity and professionalism.

## CHAPTER EIGHT:

### TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS AND COMMITTEE SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

#### Authors:

#### **Sani Kasimu, Ph.D.**

Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Federal University Wukari, Nigeria

#### About the Author:

*Dr. Sani* Kasimu holds a B.A. in Public Administration (2011), M.Sc. in Public Administration (2016), PGD in Economics & Statistics (2019), and Ph.D. in Public Administration (2024) from Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, Nigeria. He is a Senior Lecturer with the Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, Federal University Wukari. His areas of interest include Public Financial Management, Public Sector Accounting, Statistics, Econometrics, Public Debt Management, Development Administration, Strategic Planning and Management, Project Management Analysis, and Public Policy Analysis.

## CHAPTER NINE:

### TERTIARY EDUCATION AND ACCREDITATION OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA

#### Authors:

#### **Inemesit Nsikak Edet**

Assistant Chief Education Officer, Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja, Nigeria

#### About the Author:

*Inemesit* Nsikak Edet is a post-graduate student currently pursuing a Ph.D. degree in Educational Administration and Planning at the University of Abuja, Nigeria. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Science Education and a Master's Degree in Educational Administration and Planning, among other professional certifications. She currently works with the Federal Ministry of Education as the Assistant Chief Education Officer. She taught Sciences in Federal Government Boys' College Abuja specializing in Biology. She is a member of the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria and the Local School Board, Living Faith Church Worldwide.

**CHAPTER TEN:****TERTIARY EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA****Authors:****Nwankwo Nkechi Chinelo, Ph.D.**

Department of Educational Management and Planning, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State, Nigeria

**Unachukwu Ijeoma Blessing, Ph.D.**

Department of Economics Education, Federal College of Education (Technical), Umuze, Nigeria  
Email: [ijeoma.unachukwu@fcetumunze.edu.ng](mailto:ijeoma.unachukwu@fcetumunze.edu.ng)

**About the Author:**

**Nwankwo** Nkechi Chinelo, Ph.D., is a distinguished educational administrator, planner, and researcher. Dr. Nwankwo has authored numerous articles and conference papers in the fields of educational administration, planning, and management, anxiety management, tertiary education, and artificial intelligence. She holds a Ph.D. in Educational Management and Planning from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State. She is an active member of the Nigerian Association for Educational Administration and Planning (NAEAP), Association of Educational Management and Policy Practitioners (AEMPP), and Forum for African Women Educationist (FAWE).

**CHAPTER ELEVEN:****TERTIARY EDUCATION AND COMPUTER-BASED TEST IN NIGERIA****Authors:****Unachukwu Ijeoma Blessing, Ph.D.**

Department of Economics Education, Federal College of Education (Technical), Umuze, Nigeria  
Email: [ijeoma.unachukwu@fcetumunze.edu.ng](mailto:ijeoma.unachukwu@fcetumunze.edu.ng)

**Nwankwo Nkechi Chinelo, Ph.D.**

Department of Educational Management and Planning, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State, Nigeria

**About the Author:**

**Dr. Unachukwu** Ijeoma Blessing is a lecturer in the Department of Economics Education at Federal College of Education (Technical), Umuze. She holds her Bachelor's degree, Masters of Science (MSc), and Ph.D. in Economics (Development & Labour Economics). She is a researcher, analyst, and critical

thinker, with excellent communication and human development management skills. Dr. Unachukwu has published many papers in reputable local and international journals. She is currently the Head of Department in the Economics Department at Federal College of Education (Technical), Umuze. She is an active member of the Nigerian Economic Society (NES) and the Nigerian Economic Society of Female Professionals (NESFP).

**CHAPTER TWELVE:****DIGITALIZATION OF TERTIARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: BENEFITS, PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS****Authors:****1. Christopher Idowu Ojo – Lead Author**

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

**Phone: 08133154731**

**Email:** christopheroj070@gmail.com

**2. Temitope Zulfah Mustapha**

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

**Phone: 08039171701**

**Email:** temitopemustapha29@gmail.com

**3. Emeana Geraldine Chinwe**

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

**Phone: 08033752432**

**Email:** jaygreg2003@gmail.com

**About the Authors:**

**Christopher** Idowu Ojo, a professional educational planner and an administrator. Christopher Idowu Ojo has written several articles and conference papers on education especially educational planning, educational administration and management in Nigeria, tertiary education, and ICT education. Christopher Idowu Ojo is currently a staff with University of Abuja, Nigeria where he also graduated from. He has a Master's and Ph.D. (in view) in Educational Administration and Planning.

**Temitope** Zulfah Mustapha is an Educational Strategist and Media Education Expert. She has written many reports, articles, and seminar papers on education—especially on educational administration and management, basic education concerns, inclusive education, tertiary education, ICT education, gender education, and special education. She is presently a staff with the Voice of Nigeria, where she heads the Education Desk and has served for 13 years. She

graduated from the University of Ilorin and has a Master's and Ph.D. (in view) in Educational Administration and Planning.

**Emeana** Geraldine Chinwe is a seasoned Administrator and currently an Assistant Director/Admin with the National Film & Video Censors Board (NFVCB), Abuja. She has held different administrative positions and is currently in charge of Appointment, Promotion, and Discipline. She is also a member of the NFVCB Media Literacy Campaign Team that educates and carries out enlightenment campaigns on film matters. Emeana Geraldine C. is a professional Educational Planner and a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Human Resource Management (FCIHRM). She graduated from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and the University of Abuja, Nigeria, and is presently pursuing her Ph.D. in Educational Administration and Planning at the University of Abuja, Nigeria.

### CHAPTER THIRTEEN:

#### DEPLOYMENT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR FRAUD DETECTION AND PREVENTION IN TERTIARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

##### Authors:

**Victor Olugbenga Ayoko**

Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, National Open University of Nigeria  
Email: [victorayoko@gmail.com](mailto:victorayoko@gmail.com)

##### About the Author:

**Victor** Olugbenga Ayoko is a research scholar in the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, National Open University of Nigeria. He is a multidisciplinary scholar with qualifications across the faculties of science, management science, social science, and education. He is a member of the Open Distance and e-Learning Association of Nigeria (ODeLAN), the National Association of Educational Administration and Planners (NAEAP), and the Nigerian Economic Society (NES). He has published in several local and international journals, contributed to book chapters, and presented papers in relevant conferences. His areas of interest include school administration, sustainable development, economic development, and open and distance learning.

### CHAPTER FOURTEEN:

#### DEPLOYMENT OF TECHNOLOGIES IN CURTAILING EXAMINATION MALPRACTICES IN NIGERIA TERTIARY EDUCATION

##### Authors:

**Galadima, Farida Ibrahim**

Department of Adult and Continuing Education, Federal University Wukari, Nigeria.

##### JAE, Talatu

Department of Educational Foundation, Taraba State University, Jalingo

##### About the Author:

Galadima Farida Ibrahim has a Master's Degree in Educational Administration and Planning and is currently pursuing a Doctorate in the same field. She is a lecturer with Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria. She is a research scholar and has written many articles in education and beyond. Farida is a member of the National Association of Educational Administration and Planning (NAEAP).

### CHAPTER FIFTEEN:

#### SMART RESEARCH IN TERTIARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

##### Authors:

1. **Maryam Abdullahi, Ph.D.** – *Lead Author*

Department of Education, Nigerian Police Academy, Wudil, Kano, Nigeria

2. **Muhammad Danjuma Maiwada**

Department of Education, Nigerian Police Academy, Wudil, Kano, Nigeria

##### About the Authors:

**Maryam** Abdullahi, Ph.D., is a professional educational psychologist. She has written many articles and conference papers on education, especially educational psychology, guidance and counseling, tertiary education, computer and ICT education, and special education. Maryam Abdullahi is currently a lecturer at the Nigerian Police Academy, Wudil, Kano, Nigeria. She graduated from Bayero University Kano for her first and second degrees and obtained her Ph.D. at Federal University Dutse-Ma, Katsina State, Nigeria. She has a Master's and Ph.D. in Educational Psychology.

**Muhammad** Danjuma Maiwada is currently pursuing his Ph.D. at Bayero University, Kano. His research interests include Educational Psychology, Literacy in Education, Tertiary Education, Special Education, and

Guidance and Counseling. He serves as a Lecturer in the Department of Education at the Nigerian Police Academy, Wudil, Kano. Maiwada is dedicated to advancing knowledge and contributing to the academic community through his research endeavors. He earned both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Bayero University, Kano, with a Master's in Educational Psychology.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN: TERTIARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

### Authors:

**Umoru Abdulrasheed Oseni**

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

### About the Author:

**Umoru** Abdulrasheed Oseni is a part-time lecturer in the Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja. He holds a Diploma in Accounting, B.Sc (Ed) Accounting, and an M.Ed in Educational Administration and Planning. He is currently working on his Ph.D. thesis in Educational Administration and Planning, all at the University of Abuja. Umoru Abdulrasheed Oseni has conducted many analytical and empirical research studies in educational leadership and management, published in reputable local and international journals. He is happily married with children.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: TERTIARY EDUCATION AND FUNDING IN NIGERIA

### Authors:

**Saleh Khalid Mahmud**

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

Email: [khalidmahmuh13@yahoo.com](mailto:khalidmahmuh13@yahoo.com)

### About the Author:

**Saleh** Khalid Mahmud is a professional educational planner and administrator. He has written many articles and journals on education, especially educational planning, educational administration, and management in Nigeria, tertiary education, and ICT education. Saleh Khalid Mahmud is currently a Ph.D. student in the Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria. He earned his Master's degree in Educational Planning and Policy from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN:

### AN ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT OF URBANIZATION ON LOCAL BIODIVERSITY

### Authors:

**Ronald Winifred Abhulimen, Ph.D.**

Department of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Biosciences, Federal University Wukari, Nigeria

Email: [ronaldwinifred@gmail.com](mailto:ronaldwinifred@gmail.com)

ORCID iD: 0009-0006-3670-4079

### About the Author:

**Ronald** Abhulimen Winifred, Ph.D., is a distinguished wildlife ecologist with a Ph.D. from the University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria. She is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Biosciences, Federal University Wukari. She has authored numerous articles and conference papers on the terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity of molluscs, arthropods, and aquatic macroinvertebrates fauna. She was awarded Best Departmental Lecturer in 2025 and serves as an Academic Board Member of ENE Health College, Wukari. She lectures both undergraduate and postgraduate students in Biological Sciences and has supervised many project works. Dr. Winifred is also a member of NES Taraba State Chapter (pioneer Financial Secretary, 2023/2024), as well as Unit Head of the Decoration Unit in her church, where she serves as a deaconess of God.