E-ACCREDITATION PROGRAMME PANACEA FOR UNIVERSITY EDUCATION SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

The study explored the importance of e-accreditation programme for university education sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper is a position paper. The paper used secondary data. The secondary data were collected from print and online publications. The study concluded enhanced efficiency and time management, improved transparency and accountability, cost-effectiveness and resource optimization, strengthened data management and accessibility, continuous quality improvement and promotes global competitiveness. Based on these findings, the paper recommends the Federal Government and the National Universities Commission (NUC) should ensure that all universities, especially public ones, have stable internet connectivity, modern computer systems, and functional ICT support centres to facilitate the smooth operation of the e-accreditation process. Training programmes and workshops should be organized for academic and administrative staff to enhance their digital literacy and technical skills in using the e-accreditation platform. Continuous capacity building will minimize operational errors, promote user confidence, and ensure efficiency and sustainability of the system. The NUC should adopt strong cybersecurity frameworks and regular system updates to protect sensitive institutional data from breaches or manipulation. Establishing data backup and recovery systems will also enhance trust and reliability in the e-accreditation process. Beyond initial accreditation, universities should be encouraged to use the e-accreditation system for regular self-assessment and continuous quality improvement. This will help institutions maintain high standards, identify weaknesses, and implement timely corrective measures. The government, Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), and private sector partners should collaborate to provide adequate funding for maintaining and upgrading the e-accreditation system. Partnerships with ICT experts and

international organizations (such as UNESCO and the World Bank) can also provide technical and financial support to sustain the programme.

Keyword: E-Accreditation Programme, University Education

1.0 Introduction

In the 21st century, the integration of digital technology into higher education management has become a key driver of quality assurance and institutional sustainability. One major innovation in this direction is the e-accreditation programme, which refers to the digitalization of the accreditation process through online platforms and data-driven systems. In Nigeria, the National Universities Commission (NUC)—the body responsible for maintaining standards in university education—has embraced e-accreditation as a strategic tool to improve efficiency, transparency, and accountability in the evaluation of academic programmes.

Traditionally, accreditation in Nigerian universities was conducted manually, involving cumbersome documentation, high logistical costs, and prolonged evaluation timelines. These challenges often led to delays, inconsistencies, and limited data management capacity, thereby affecting the overall quality of higher education. The introduction of e-accreditation seeks to address these bottlenecks by leveraging Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to facilitate online submission of self-study reports, virtual inspections, digital evidence evaluation, and real-time feedback between the NUC and universities.

E-accreditation serves as a panacea for sustainable university education development in Nigeria because it promotes continuous quality improvement, ensures resource efficiency, enhances stakeholder participation, and aligns Nigeria's higher education system with global best practices. By digitizing quality assurance processes, universities can better monitor academic performance, strengthen institutional governance, and ensure that educational standards remain relevant and competitive in an evolving knowledge economy. Thus, the adoption of e-accreditation marks a transformative step toward achieving sustainability, innovation, and excellence in Nigeria's university education system.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Concept of E-Accreditation

According to Law Insider (2024), "E-accreditation system means an online system used to run the application process through which applicant organisations must submit applications." This definition emphasizes the technological platform aspect of e-accreditation — portraying it as a digital tool that facilitates the accreditation process. It highlights how the process of applying for accreditation, traditionally paper-based, is now automated through an online system. The focus

here is mainly administrative, reflecting how e-accreditation simplifies submission and management of documents for accreditation agencies and higher institutions. ACOTE (2023) defines e-accreditation as "an electronic system in which the preparation and submission of all accreditation reports and related documentation are completed online through the e-Accreditation platform." This definition broadens the perspective by viewing e-accreditation not just as a platform, but as a comprehensive process of digital reporting and evaluation. It focuses on how accreditation activities—such as self-study submissions, evidence uploads, and communications between institutions and evaluators—are managed electronically. It underscores efficiency, organization, and transparency in academic programme evaluation.

The IJSRA (2024) defines e-accreditation as "the digitalization of accreditation processes through the integration of electronic data systems to enhance transparency, efficiency, and accountability in higher education quality assurance." This definition presents a scholarly view, positioning e-accreditation as part of the digital transformation of quality assurance in higher education. It emphasizes the use of ICT to improve data management, real-time monitoring, and evidence-based decision-making. Unlike the previous two definitions, this one connects e-accreditation directly to institutional quality improvement and sustainability in university governance. E-accreditation refers to the digitalization of the accreditation process using electronic platforms, online portals, and data management systems to evaluate and monitor the quality of academic programmes and institutions. It replaces traditional paper-based methods with web-based systems that allow for online submission of documents, virtual assessments, evidence-based decision-making, and real-time feedback between accrediting agencies and higher education institutions.

In simpler terms, e-accreditation is a technology-driven approach to quality assurance that enhances transparency, efficiency, and accountability in the evaluation of educational programmes. It enables accrediting bodies—such as the National Universities Commission (NUC) in Nigeria—to assess universities remotely, store accreditation data electronically, and provide continuous quality monitoring to ensure that standards are met and sustained. E-accreditation is an essential innovation for sustainable university development as it promotes effective governance, reduces bureaucratic delays, and supports continuous improvement in higher education quality.

1. Online submission of self-study and evidence documents.

2. Virtual or hybrid accreditation visits.

3. Centralized data storage and real-time monitoring.

4. Automated evaluation and reporting systems.

5. Enhanced transparency and accountability in accreditation decisions.

2.3 Concept of Sustainable University Education

Sustainable university education development refers to the continuous process of improving higher education systems in ways that meet present academic, social, economic, and environmental needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. It involves fostering institutions that are resilient, innovative, inclusive, and capable of producing graduates who contribute meaningfully to national and global development.

In the context of Nigeria, sustainable university education development entails strengthening governance, ensuring quality assurance through mechanisms like e-accreditation, promoting research and innovation, and integrating technology into teaching and learning. It also requires adequate funding, effective policy implementation, and capacity building among academic and administrative staff. A sustainably developed university system enhances quality education, promotes employability, encourages global competitiveness, and supports national growth. Ultimately, the goal is to create universities that not only impart knowledge but also drive social transformation, environmental stewardship, and economic advancement in a rapidly changing world.

4.0 Result and Discussion on advantages of the e-accreditation programme

Enhanced Efficiency and Time Management

The e-accreditation programme automates much of the traditional, paper-based accreditation processes. This reduces the time spent on manual documentation, physical submission of reports, and verification of compliance. University staff can upload necessary documents directly onto digital platforms, track progress in real-time, and respond promptly to feedback. As a result, processes that once took weeks or months can now be completed in days, freeing academic and administrative personnel to focus on teaching, research, and student development. E-accreditation significantly reduces the time required for accreditation processes by replacing manual paperwork with automated online systems. Through electronic submission and virtual assessments, institutions can complete accreditation faster and more effectively. This digital transformation minimizes travel, printing, and physical logistics, allowing the accrediting body to process multiple institutions simultaneously (International Journal of Science and Research Archive (IJSRA, 2024).

Improved Transparency and Accountability

The e-accreditation system promotes transparency by enabling real-time access to accreditation data, decisions, and reports. Institutions and stakeholders can track progress and outcomes at each stage, reducing the likelihood of manipulation or bias. The digital records serve as verifiable evidence of compliance with quality assurance standards (Law Insider, 2024). Digital accreditation platforms create a clear, traceable record of all submissions, reviews, and decisions. This transparency ensures that universities are held accountable for providing accurate and complete information, while accrediting bodies can monitor progress objectively. The risk of bias,

human error, or manipulation of documents is minimized, promoting fairness and trust in the accreditation process. It also allows stakeholders, including students and the public, to access verified information about program quality.

Cost-Effectiveness and Resource Optimization

E-accreditation eliminates costs associated with manual document processing, physical inspections, and printing. It allows universities to channel financial and human resources toward academic improvement rather than administrative overhead. The system also reduces the carbon footprint associated with travel and paper use, contributing to environmental sustainability (Edamba, 2023). By moving accreditation processes online, universities save significantly on printing, mailing, and storage costs associated with traditional paper-based systems. Staff time and travel expenses for site visits and documentation delivery are reduced. Additionally, digital platforms enable efficient allocation of human resources, as fewer personnel are needed for clerical tasks. Over time, the cost savings can be substantial, enabling universities to redirect resources toward improving academic programs and infrastructure.

Strengthened Data Management and Accessibility

Digital accreditation platforms provide centralized databases for storing institutional information, evaluation reports, and historical accreditation records. This improves institutional memory, data retrieval, and evidence-based decision-making. It also enhances collaboration among stakeholders by providing access to reliable and up-to-date information (American Occupational Therapy Association (ACOTE, 2023).

Continuous Quality Improvement

E-accreditation supports continuous monitoring of institutional performance rather than periodic evaluation. Universities can regularly update their self-assessment data and track progress toward meeting quality benchmarks. This fosters a culture of accountability and encourages ongoing institutional development and innovation (International Association for Quality Assurance in Pre-Tertiary and Higher Education (QAHE, 2024). With e-accreditation, universities can regularly monitor their performance against accreditation standards. Automated alerts, dashboards, and analytical tools help identify gaps in academic delivery, infrastructure, or governance. This proactive monitoring encourages continuous improvement rather than last-minute compliance, fostering a culture of quality enhancement. Over time, this leads to higher standards in teaching, research, and service provision.

Promotes Global Competitiveness

By adopting e-accreditation, Nigerian universities align with international best practices in quality assurance. This digital transformation enhances the credibility of Nigerian higher education institutions, making their programmes more competitive globally and improving the international recognition of Nigerian degrees (National Universities Commission (NUC), 2023). E-

accreditation systems centralize all data related to courses, faculty, research outputs, and institutional performance. This enables easy retrieval, analysis, and reporting of information for internal decision-making and external evaluation. Data is securely stored, reducing the risk of loss or misplacement. Accessibility is enhanced, as authorized users can access information from anywhere at any time, facilitating collaboration among departments and enabling rapid response to accrediting bodies' queries.

Supports Sustainable University Development

E-accreditation contributes to sustainable university development by fostering efficiency, accountability, and innovation in governance and teaching. It encourages universities to adopt digital technologies, promotes environmental conservation through paperless processes, and ensures quality education delivery aligned with global sustainable development goals (SDG 4) (World Bank, 2022). Adoption of e-accreditation aligns universities with international best practices in quality assurance. By leveraging digital systems, universities demonstrate modern, efficient, and transparent operations, enhancing their reputation domestically and internationally. Graduates from e-accredited programs are perceived as coming from well-managed institutions, improving their employability and academic mobility. This can attract international partnerships, research funding, and foreign students, strengthening the university's global competitiveness.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study examined the importance of e-accreditation programme for university education sustainable development in Nigeria. The study concluded enhanced efficiency and time management, improved transparency and accountability, cost-effectiveness and resource optimization, strengthened data management and accessibility, continuous quality improvement and promotes global competitiveness. Based on these findings, the paper recommends the following:

1) The successful implementation of e-accreditation depends largely on reliable digital infrastructure. The Federal Government and the National Universities Commission (NUC) should ensure that all universities, especially public ones, have stable internet connectivity, modern computer systems, and functional ICT support centres to facilitate the smooth operation of the e-accreditation process.

2. Training programmes and workshops should be organised for academic and administrative staff to enhance their digital literacy and technical skills in using the e-accreditation platform. Continuous capacity building will minimize operational errors, promote user confidence, and ensure efficiency and sustainability of the system.

3) The NUC should adopt strong cybersecurity frameworks and regular system updates to protect sensitive institutional data from breaches or manipulation. Establishing data backup and recovery systems will also enhance trust and reliability in the e-accreditation process.

4) Beyond initial accreditation, universities should be encouraged to use the e-accreditation system for regular self-assessment and continuous quality improvement. This will help institutions maintain high standards, identify weaknesses, and implement timely corrective measures.

5) The government, Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), and private sector partners should collaborate to provide adequate funding for maintaining and upgrading the e-accreditation system. Partnerships with ICT experts and international organizations (such as UNESCO and the World Bank) can also provide technical and financial support to sustain the programme.

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