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Accreditation issues in Faculty of Law of Nigerian Universities: Imperatives for law libraries, laws and statutes - 1.

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ABSTRACT:

The study investigated the development of laws and statutes (local and foreign) collections, an accreditation requirement in the South East Universities in relation to the Council of Legal Education standards. The scope consists of 34 titles of local and foreign laws and statutes listed by Council of Legal Education as accreditation bench mark and involves seven law faculty libraries in the universities South East Geopolitical zone of Nigeria that offer law programme. The instrument for data collection was the standard check list released by Council of Legal Education. This check list was found appropriate and adopted for this study. Two research questions were formulated for the study. The findings revealed that no law library in the zone met the Council of Legal Education standards. Recommendations were made which include among others the need for periodic assessment of collections, constant review and revision of the list.

INTRODUCTION

Law library is a library designed to assist law students, attorneys, judges and their clients and any one else who finds it necessary to correctly determine the state of the law. A law library, according to Ukpanah and Afolabi (2011), is a collection of legal information organized for use of those seeking to qualify as or who have qualified as Lawyers, and those enacting or administering law. The contents of a law library are broadly divided into two, namely, primary and secondary sources. Primary sources consist of books that contain the law itself. They include Acts of Parliament, Gazettes, Reports of Cases, digests, books of law rather than books on law. Secondary sources include treatises, commentaries, journals and other type of publication which are about law and are not in themselves sources of legal authority. They include textbooks, encyclopedia, casebooks, practice books and periodicals.

Library collections are total accumulation of books and other information materials owned by a library, and are expected to be geared towards meeting the objectives of the parent institution. Oseghale, (2008) observed that developing a balanced and useable collection is an important aspect of library services. Library collections, therefore, are built to meet the information and research needs of any academic programme.

Some law libraries may have collection gaps which in some cases may or may not be totally filled during accreditation visits which come up every five years. Law library is one of the areas or facilities used in judging any faculty of law during accreditation exercise. For the faculty of law libraries to maintain a balanced collection, meet the demands of students, lecturers and law professionals, and pass accreditations conducted by the regulatory bodies, the National Universities Commission and the Council of Legal Education, there must be adequate collections and other law requirements in place.

Accreditation is the tool used around the world to monitor, assess, and evaluate the standards and quality of the education a student receives at a college, university or other institutions of higher learning (National Universities Commission, 1989)

It is only through the process of accreditation that new students, returning students and families of students can trust that the education they are paying for is

valuable and worth their time, money and effort. Accreditation status indicates that a college, university or programme meets the standards of quality set by the accreditation organization in terms of faculty, curriculum, administration, libraries, financial well-being, and student's services.

Accreditation exercise also assure employers and other members of the community that Nigerian graduates of all academic programmes have attained an acceptable level of competency in their areas of specialization. National Universities Commission (as cited in Akomolafe, 2009) said that accreditation is to certify to the international community that the programmes offered in Nigerian universities are of high standards and their graduates are adequate for employment and for further studies.

The inability of Nigerian universities in meeting the accreditation requirements with regards to the law libraries collections contributed to the failure of accreditations in the past by some institutions. In any faculty of law accreditation exercise, if all the facilities, equipment and personnel are put in place and are adequate, but the law library collections are inadequate, that academic programme must fail accreditation (National Universities Commission, 1989). The failure of accreditation will result in loss of confidence by law students, parents and the general public in the university concerned.

While studies by researchers such as Tuhumwire and Okello-Obura (2010), Thanuskodi (2012) and Khan and Bhatti (2012) have dealt into issues of legal information needs and seeking behaviours of law library users, the aspect of accreditation issues in faculty of law of Nigerian universities appears not to have been explored. A study in this important area with reference to South East Geopolitical zone seems to be non existent. This is the motivation for this study and the gap in body of knowledge in legal literature that it intends to fill.

In order to put in place an adequate library for any academic programme, there must be adequate funding by the university. According to Nwangwu, (2000) under-funding has been a serious problem facing university education in Nigeria. The Council of Legal Education has provided university law libraries' collections standards. Both National Universities Commission and Council of Legal Education laid emphasis on accreditation requirements. While National Universities Commission's emphasis was on the requirements to enable students pass their first degree (LL.B), the Council of Legal

Education's emphasis covers all law programmes up to the Doctorate degree (Ph. D). They both stressed on the provisions of certain collections which are mandatory requirement for a successful accreditation. To ensure that faculty law libraries meet the accreditation requirements, the standard list of the law library minimum requirements was released by the Council of Legal Education. The list covered the laws and statutes (local and foreign), law journals (local and foreign), law reports (local and foreign) and law text books (local and foreign).

For National Universities Commission and Council for Legal Education to give a pass mark or grant accreditation to any academic programme, the law library collections and/or resources must match effectively and efficiently with all the courses being taught by the faculty.

Research Questions:

The following research questions guided the study:

- * To what extent have faculty law libraries in the South East Geopolitical zone of Nigeria developed their laws and statutes (local) collections, an accreditation requirement, based on the Council of Legal Education standards?
- * What is the extent of the development of laws and statutes (foreign) collections, an accreditation requirement, based on the Council of Legal Education standards in faculty law libraries in universities in South East Geopolitical zone of Nigeria?

Review of Related Literature:

Law libraries have been recognized as the "heart" of every law faculty in every university. It is the pivot on which the faculties revolve for attainment of their educational excellence, goals and objectives. To achieve the above objective, law libraries must strive to build adequate law collections that are adequate in both quality and quantity. Collections involve discovering weak areas of the collection that need to be

empowered, as well as the strong areas that need to be evaluated with a view to reaffirming their relevance in satisfying users demands (Duru and Onwuama, 2006).

Tuyo (2006), said that a law library that intends to be relevant in any academic institution must ensure that its collections are adequate. It should ensure that the quality and quantity of materials in its holdings are such that would assist the law school to attain its teaching and research objectives. He further said that there are basic reference titles that a standard law library is expected to have in its collection, such as complete sets of the up-to-date Laws of the Federation and Laws of the States, Law reports of the Supreme Courts, Courts of Appeal, Federal High Courts and the States High Courts, Law Reports of at least Commonwealth countries, secondary works that are needed to support the teaching of the subject offered especially the core subjects; precedent books of foreign countries such as Britain, America and some Asian countries, Legal dictionaries and other dictionaries, Thesaurus Legal bibliographies and both legal and general encyclopedia. The quantity should be such that the library users should not have to struggle before they can get the books to use.

Accreditation, according to American Psychological Association (2009), is both a status and a process. As a status, accreditation provides public notification that an institution or programme meets standards of quality set forth by an accrediting agency. As a process, accreditation reflects that in achieving recognition by the accrediting agency, the institution or programme is committed to self study and external review by one's peers in seeking not only to meet standards but to continuously seek ways in which to enhance the quality of education and training. It is to determine if the particular programme, discipline or sub-discipline to be accredited in the university has in all respect met the approved Minimum Academic Standards.

The National Universities Commission(1989), said that accreditation is the tool used around the world to monitor, access, and evaluate the standards and quality of education a student receives at a college, university or other institutions of higher learning. It is only through the process of accreditation that new students, returning students, and families of students can trust that the education they are paying for is valuable and worth their time, money and efforts. Accreditation status indicates that a college, university, or programme meets the standards of quality set by the accreditation

organization, in terms of faculty, curriculum, administration, libraries, financial well-being, and student services.

The objectives of accreditation of academic programmes in Nigerian universities, according to National Universities Commission (1999), are to ensure that at least the provision of Minimum Academic Standards documents are attained, maintained and enhanced. It is also to assure employers and other members of the community that Nigerian graduates of all academic programmes have attained an acceptable level of competency in their areas of specialization. It is also to certify to the international community that the programmes offered in Nigerian universities are of high standards and their graduates are adequate for employment and for further studies.

For any accreditation exercise to be successful and approved, it must follow a set standards. Standard has been described as acceptable point of reference or basis of comparison or common norms of the people. Dean (as cited in Kotso, 2007) defined standards as an example, rule or basis of comparison established by authority, a general consensus of opinion or custom. It is based upon either a specific description of practice, method, process, construction, etc, a measure of quantity and required to achieve a stated objective.

There are standards in law libraries' management. It covers the collections, staffing, physical structure, security, funding, services and others. The Council of Legal Education mindful of the importance of a standard law library made it an important criterion that a faculty of law must have a separate standard law library before accrediting the law faculty (Tuyo, 2007). There should be standard in classification and arrangement of materials for easy dissemination. This involves the use of a common and standard classification scheme – Moys Classification Scheme, by all law libraries in Nigeria. This brings for uniformity of arrangement of materials in all the law libraries.

On spaces and physical facilities, Tuyo, (2007) said that the library building's layout should be such that would make administration of the library easy and efficient. It should be appropriate to accommodate the services rendered to the users. Within the library, he said, the citing of the photocopying section should be in place, easily accessible to the users without it being too close to the entrance for security reasons. The fees charged should also be affordable to the students.

Equally covered by the standard is the sitting arrangement which should be such that it would be close to the collections on the shelves. It is also recommended that the library should be air-conditioned but where this could not be afforded, a well ventilated accommodation without compromising on security. The table and chairs provided should be durable as well as being comfortable. In addition, as we are in the IT age, Tuyo (2007) said that time has come for the law library to be connected to a network whereby interested readers would have access not only when they are in the library but also when they are outside the library.

According to Idowu, (2006) the areas that have been clearly marked out for standardization include the library building, interior design, toilet facilities, ventilation, communication, acoustics, library equipment and facilities, security, space provision (for user's materials, circulation desk, etc) departmentalization and holdings.

Idowu, (2006) said that the staff of any type of library must be structured and organized as to cover all the functions performed by the library in the most effective way. For instance, it is the position of the Council of Legal Education that in academic law libraries, the staffing structure should comprise of at least a senior professional librarian, who would be assisted by some library officer, library assistants, clerical staff and porters/security men. The National Universities Commission, (1989) said that the Law Librarian must have qualifications that a librarian is required to possess in Nigeria, and preferably, he/she should, in addition, hold a Bachelors degree in Law.

Marafa, (2001) stated that for a law librarian, academic and professional qualifications are important factors that would facilitate the execution of professional responsibilities from a position of strength... The librarian should not be a librarian alone but an admixture of law and library science". To further strengthen the need for adequate training for librarians, Harrison (as cited in Idowu, 2006) said that the best stocked library in the world cannot give an efficient and comprehensive service to its users if it does not at the same time possess a keen efficient and highly trained staff capable of exploiting the stock to its fullest advantage.

To stress the importance of good and adequate staffing, the National Universities Commission, (1989), the regulatory body and clearing house for universities in Nigeria, approved a document which seeks to set uniform standards for law libraries, both in

terms of staffing and holdings. The document which is titled “Approved Minimum Standards in Law for all Nigerian Universities” has 24 pages. It is the opinion of Idowu (2006), that in most of our university law libraries, this guideline seems to hold and is being implemented.

The National Universities Commission (1989) Approved Minimum Standards in Law for all Nigerian Universities stated that “every law faculty should have a law library which is separate, and distinct from any other library the university may have”. It went on to recommend that the law library should be a completely separate building or at least one or two floors of a library complex. It is also the provision of the Council of Legal Education that the law faculties be housed in their own physical facilities. The law library in the same way should be distinct from the main library and other campus libraries. This is one of the major requirements for accreditation of a law faculty by the Council of Legal Education.

The American Bar Association (ABA) standards require that the law library should have sufficient autonomy to direct the growth and development of the library collections, and that the Dean of the law school and the library director determine the law library policies in consultation with the faculty, ABA (n.d.) This requirement also applied to Council of Legal Education in Nigeria. Tuyo, (2007) suggested that to achieve these standards, the budget for the law library should be added to the budget of the faculty. This would ensure that the faculty would have control in the acquisition of law materials for the library. Where the budget of the law library is subsumed into the overall budget of the university library, Tuyo (2007) argued that there is the likelihood that the faculty library would not be able to acquire most of the materials it is expected to acquire for it to discharge its primary assignment of rendering up-to-date services to the faculty members and the students.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which university law libraries in the South East Geopolitical zone of Nigeria developed their :

- * Laws and Statutes (local) collections; and
- * Laws and Statutes (foreign) collections, accreditation requirements

based on the Council of Legal Education standards.

Methodology:

The design of the study was descriptive survey. This design was considered suitable and appropriate here as the study would gather legal information on the collections of the law libraries in universities of the South East Geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The survey was carried out in the universities offering law programmes in the South East zone of Nigeria. They are, Abia State University Law Library, Uturu; Anambra State University Law Library, Igbariam Campus; Ebonyi State University Law Library, Abakaliki; Enugu State University of Science and Technology Law Library, Agbani Campus; Imo State University Law Library, Owerri; Nnamdi Azikiwe University Law Library, Awka and University of Nigeria Law Library, Enugu Campus. The population of this study was the seven Faculty law libraries in the South East zone of Nigeria.

The instrument for data collection was the check list provided by the Council of Legal Education as accreditation bench mark. The check list contained 34 titles of Laws and Statutes (local and foreign) which were regarded as core titles by the Council of Legal Education. The researchers personally visited the university law libraries within the area of the study with the authenticated check list and checked the collections against the check list. The check list was used to crosscheck the collections of every faculty law library within the area of the study. Every laws and statutes title listed in the check list was checked against all the law libraries' author/title and subject catalogues, the checklist catalogues and the accessions registers to verify if such title was listed among the holdings of the law library.

During the checking, a title is ticked "YES" if found in the library and "NO" if not found. The data that were obtained from the study were analysed using descriptive statistic. The simple percentage (%) was used to obtain the percentage of collections owned by each law library, and this was done by finding the percentage of the titles available or observed from the expected titles (CLE standards) for each law library.

The following 5 point scale were used to arrive at the extent/level of development.

V.P.	-	Very Poor	-	0 – 20%
P.	-	Poor	-	21 – 40%

Mod.	-	Moderate	-	41 – 60%
G.	-	Good	-	61 – 80%
V.G.	-	Very Good	-	81 - 100%

Decision Rule: Any law library which scored 70% and above was regarded as meeting the Council of Legal Education standards while any law library which scored 69% and below was regarded as not meeting the Council of Legal Education standards. The mid point between 61 - 80 = 70 and this is the bench mark and pass mark required by both the National Universities Commission and the Council of Legal Education for passing accreditation for law programme.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data:

Research Question 1:

To what extent have law libraries in the South East Geopolitical zone of Nigeria developed their laws and statutes (local) collections, an accreditation requirement based on the Council of Legal Education standards.

Table 1: Summary of Descriptive Analysis of Development of Laws and Statutes (local) in the Faculty Law Libraries

LAWS AND STATUTES (LOCAL)						
S/No	Universities	Expected Number	Available Number	Percentage Availability	Extent of Availability	Decision
1.	ABSU	17	8	47.05	Mod	Below Standard
2.	ASU	17	2	11.76	V.P.	Below Standard
3.	EBSU	17	10	58.82	Mod	Below Standard
4.	ESUT	17	3	17.65	V.P.	Below Standard
5.	IMSU	17	7	41.18	Mod	Below Standard
6.	NAU	17	9	52.94	Mod	Below Standard
7.	UNEC	17	10	58.82	Mod	Below Standard

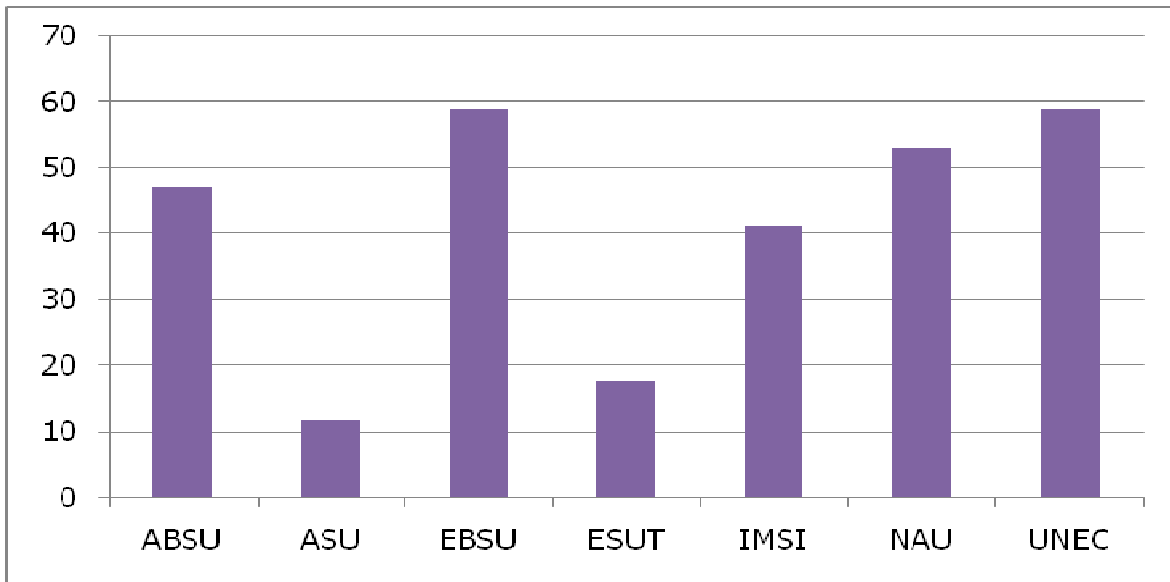


Figure 1: Bar Chart showing Percentage Availability of Legal Resources- Laws and Statutes (local) in the Faculty Law Libraries in South East Nigeria

Findings and Discussions:

Table 1 showed that none of the law libraries in the South East Geopolitical zone of Nigeria met the Council of Legal Education standards in local laws and statutes collections. However, the result showed that some law libraries have more collections of local laws and statutes than the others. The collections of ABSU (47.05%), EBSU (58.82%), IMSU (41.18%), NAU (52.94%) and UNEC (58.82%) were more than those of ASU (11.76%) and ESUT (17.65%). The above result showed that while ABSU, EBSU, IMSU, NAU and UNEC have moderately developed collections of local laws and statutes, ASU and ESUT have very poorly developed collections of laws and statutes.

Research Question 2:

What is the extent of the development of laws and statutes (foreign) collections, an accreditation requirement, based on the Council of Legal Education standards in faculty law libraries in universities in South East Geopolitical zone of Nigeria?

Table 2: Summary of Descriptive Analysis of Development of Laws and Statutes (foreign) in the Faculty Law Libraries

LAWS AND STATUTES (FOREIGN)						
S/No	Universities	Expected Number	Available Number	Percentage Availability	Extent of Availability	Decision
1.	ABSU	17	8	47.05	Mod	Below Standard
2.	ASU	17	0	0	V.P.	Below Standard
3.	EBSU	17	8	47.05	Mod	Below Standard
4.	ESUT	17	2	11.76	V.P.	Below Standard
5.	IMSU	17	4	23.52	P	Below Standard
6.	NAU	17	6	35.28	Mod	Below Standard
7.	UNEC	17	8	47.05	Mod	Below Standard

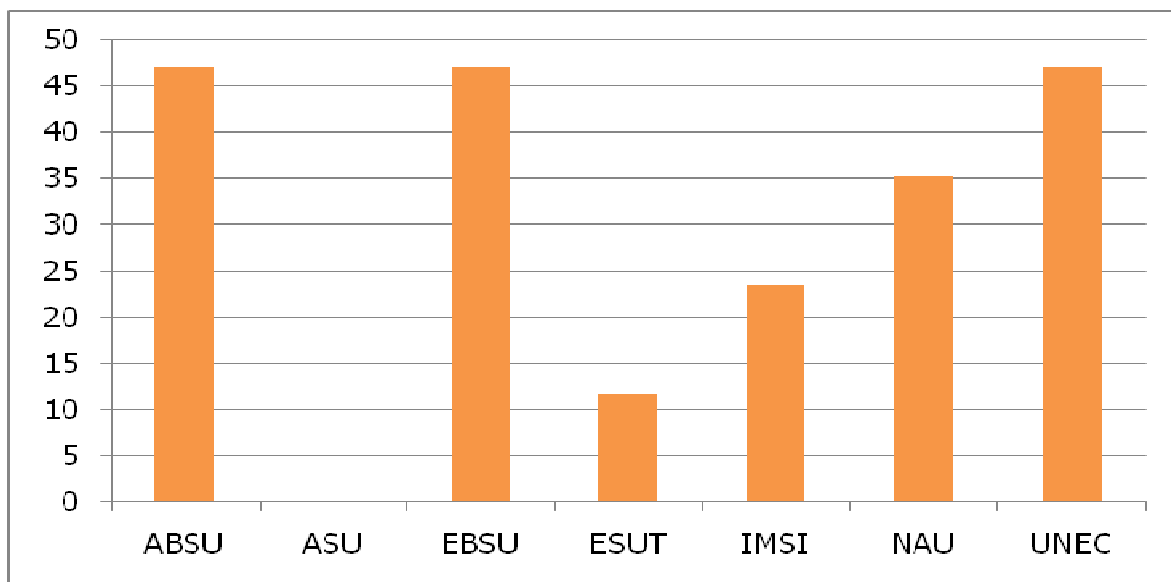


Figure 2: Bar Chart showing Percentage Availability of Legal Resources – Laws and Statutes (foreign) in the Faculty Law Libraries in South East Nigeria

Table 2 showed that none of the law libraries in the South East Geopolitical zone of Nigeria met the Council of Legal Education standards in foreign laws and statutes collections. The result also showed that some law libraries in the zone have more collections than the others. The collections of ABSU (47.05%), EBSU (47.05%), NAU (35.29%) and UNEC (47.05%) were more than those of ASU (0%), IMSU (23.53%) and ESUT (11.76%). The above differences also showed that while ABSU, EBSU and UNEC have moderately developed collections, IMSU, and NAU have poorly developed collections, and ASU and ESUT have very poorly developed collections of foreign laws and statutes.

Conclusion:

None of the law libraries in South East Geopolitical zone of Nigeria met the Council of Legal Education accreditation standards in local and foreign laws and statutes. This finding is in line with Koleosho's (2006) when he said that many law libraries are not really worth their salt because of various problems facing them as follows: lack of funds; unavailability of materials; size and status of staff; and services offered by the library.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations were made.

- * The law libraries should be adequately funded to enable them purchase the recommended core and other relevant materials.
- * There should be periodic assessment of the law libraries' collections by the regulatory bodies to ensure that law libraries improve in their collections and that the collections match with the curriculum of the faculties.

- * The Council of Legal Education should from time to time review and revise the law libraries accreditation minimum standards so as to increase or include important materials published lately or after the release of the standards.
- * Efforts should be made by librarians to comply with the Council of Legal Education bench mark in the purchase of law books.
- * Law libraries should draw up acquisitions policy to guide them in the selection and acquisition of books.
- * As new editions and revised editions of standard law books are published, Council of Legal Education should make efforts to include them in the standard list.

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