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THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION ACT AND THE CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDARDS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

Adesina Omolara Adeola
Department of Educational Management
Faculty of Education
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria
08037977403; adesina.oa@unilorin.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

Quality assurance is fundamental to the credibility, relevance and effectiveness of higher education. In Nigeria, the National Universities Commission (NUC) serves as the principal regulatory agency responsible for coordinating university development and promoting the maintenance of academic standards. This paper examines the statutory foundations of the NUC's regulatory responsibilities and the challenges associated with implementing quality assurance standards in Nigerian universities. It considers the relevant legal provisions, accreditation procedures, curriculum reforms and institutional conditions affecting compliance with prescribed standards. The discussion identifies inadequate funding, infrastructural deficiencies, shortages of qualified academic personnel, industrial disputes, insecurity, weak regulatory enforcement and the rapid expansion of the university system as major constraints. It further examines the implications of these challenges for university administrators, academic staff, students and employers. The paper argues that the existence of statutory provisions and accreditation requirements does not automatically guarantee educational quality. Effective implementation depends on the availability of adequate institutional resources, competent regulatory supervision, sustained institutional commitment and effective enforcement. It recommends increased government investment in university education, stronger NUC monitoring mechanisms, improved staff welfare, institutional capacity development, enhanced internal quality assurance and greater transparency in accreditation decisions. The paper concludes that strengthening university quality assurance requires a coordinated approach that connects statutory obligations with the financial, human and material conditions necessary for effective implementation.

Keywords: National Universities Commission Act, quality assurance, university education, academic standards, accreditation, regulatory enforcement.

1. Introduction

Quality, accountability and relevance have become central concerns in contemporary higher education. Universities are expected not only to award recognised academic qualifications but also to produce graduates with the knowledge, skills and competencies required for professional practice, economic

productivity and national development. In Nigeria, these expectations have become increasingly important because of the expansion of the university system and the growing demand for access to higher education.

The expansion of Nigerian universities has created additional opportunities for tertiary education. However, the increase in institutional numbers and student enrolment has not always been accompanied by corresponding improvements in infrastructure, academic staffing, research facilities and institutional resources. This imbalance raises concerns about the capacity of universities to maintain acceptable academic standards and produce graduates whose competencies meet national and professional expectations. Saliu (2020) observes that reliance on system-wide accreditation as the principal quality control mechanism presents important challenges for the effective regulation of Nigerian universities.

The National Universities Commission occupies a central position in addressing these concerns. Established following recommendations arising from the early development of university education in Nigeria, the Commission initially performed mainly advisory and coordinating functions. Its regulatory responsibilities were subsequently strengthened through legislation, transforming it into a major institution for coordinating university development, prescribing academic standards, conducting accreditation exercises and advising government on higher education matters.

The NUC's responsibilities extend across federal, state and private universities. It is expected to ensure that institutions comply with nationally prescribed academic standards irrespective of their ownership, location or institutional structure. This responsibility is particularly demanding in a university system characterised by differences in financial capacity, infrastructure, staffing and administrative arrangements. The statutory foundation of university quality assurance is provided principally by the National Universities Commission Act and the Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions) Act. These instruments establish the institutional and regulatory basis for the Commission's activities and provide for the determination and enforcement of minimum academic standards. In exercising its regulatory responsibilities, the NUC has introduced and revised academic standards to reflect changing educational expectations. The progression from Minimum Academic Standards to Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards and, subsequently, the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) illustrates continuing efforts to improve curriculum relevance and graduate competencies (Maiyaki, 2023).

Despite these regulatory developments, many universities continue to experience inadequate funding, infrastructural deficiencies, shortages of qualified academic personnel and insufficient research facilities.

These conditions limit their ability to satisfy prescribed requirements and sustain improvements in teaching, learning and research. The problem is therefore not simply the absence of regulatory provisions but the difficulty of translating those provisions into effective institutional practice.

This paper examines the National Universities Commission Act and the challenges associated with implementing quality assurance standards in Nigerian universities. It focuses on the statutory and institutional foundations of university regulation, accreditation and curriculum reforms, institutional and operational constraints, the implications of university expansion for regulatory oversight, and the experiences of major stakeholders. Its central argument is that effective quality assurance requires a functional relationship between the legal framework, institutional capacity and the enforcement responsibilities of the NUC.

2. Legal and Institutional Foundations of University Quality Assurance

The regulation of university education in Nigeria rests on a legal framework that establishes minimum academic requirements, defines institutional responsibilities and provides the basis for monitoring compliance. The effectiveness of this framework depends on the relationship between the statutory powers of the NUC and the regulatory mechanisms through which those powers are exercised.

2.1 Statutory Mandate of the National Universities Commission

The National Universities Commission Act provides the statutory foundation for the establishment and operation of the NUC. It defines the institutional responsibilities of the Commission in the coordination and regulation of university education. These responsibilities include advising government on university development, promoting the balanced growth of the university system, examining issues affecting higher education and contributing to the formulation and implementation of policies for university development.

An important complementary legal instrument is the Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions) Act. Section 10 of this legislation empowers the NUC to determine minimum academic standards for institutions awarding university degrees in Nigeria. This authority enables the Commission to establish requirements relating to curriculum content, academic staff qualifications, student-teacher ratios, teaching and learning resources, library facilities, laboratory equipment and other essential institutional facilities.

The two legal instruments perform complementary functions. The NUC Act establishes the Commission and provides the institutional basis for its regulatory responsibilities, while the Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions) Act provides an important statutory basis for determining

minimum academic standards. Together, they constitute central elements of the legal framework for university quality assurance in Nigeria.

The influence of these statutory responsibilities is evident in university administration. Kajo, Agulu and Kondom (2024) found that minimum academic standards and accreditation requirements influence the management of federal universities in the North-Central geopolitical zone. This demonstrates that regulatory provisions shape institutional decisions concerning academic programmes, staffing, infrastructure and other aspects of university administration. However, the existence of statutory authority does not automatically guarantee compliance. The NUC must possess the institutional resources, technical expertise and administrative capacity necessary to monitor universities effectively. Similarly, universities require sufficient financial and material resources to satisfy the requirements imposed on them.

2.2 Accreditation as an Instrument of Regulatory Control

Accreditation is one of the principal mechanisms through which the NUC translates its statutory responsibilities into practical quality assurance activities. It provides a systematic means of assessing whether academic programmes satisfy the minimum standards established for university education. The accreditation process involves the examination of institutional information concerning curriculum content, academic staff qualifications, student enrolment, library resources, laboratory facilities, teaching equipment and other requirements relevant to programme delivery. Universities are expected to provide documentary evidence of their capacity to operate the programmes submitted for assessment.

Accreditation panels comprising experienced academics and specialists in relevant disciplines undertake institutional visits to verify the information supplied by universities. During these visits, the panels inspect facilities, examine academic records, interact with staff and students, assess teaching and learning resources and determine the extent to which programmes satisfy prescribed requirements.

Following assessment, programmes may receive full accreditation, interim accreditation or denial of accreditation, depending on the extent of their compliance with established standards. Full accreditation indicates that the programme satisfies the applicable requirements, while interim accreditation identifies areas requiring improvement. Denial of accreditation indicates that the programme has failed to satisfy the prescribed requirements.

Accreditation is therefore an important instrument for promoting institutional accountability and protecting the credibility of university qualifications. Nevertheless, its effectiveness depends on the accuracy of institutional information, the competence and independence of assessment panels, the regularity of inspections and the willingness

of universities to implement recommendations. Akomolafe and Adesua's examination of accreditation in Nigerian federal universities reinforces the importance of evaluating accreditation in relation to the actual quality of academic programmes.

For accreditation to produce sustainable improvements, it must operate as a continuous quality enhancement process rather than an administrative exercise undertaken only when programmes are due for inspection. The NUC must also ensure that institutions implement corrective measures within clearly defined periods.

2.3 Evolution of Academic Standards and Curriculum Reforms

The academic standards applied by the NUC have undergone successive revisions in response to changing educational needs and concerns about the limitations of earlier regulatory approaches.

The Minimum Academic Standards introduced in 1989 provided a common framework for university programmes, with considerable emphasis on prescribed course content and subject coverage. Although this approach promoted uniformity, it was criticised for being overly prescriptive and restricting institutional flexibility in curriculum development.

The introduction of Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards in 2007 represented an effort to address these limitations. The revised framework placed greater emphasis on learning outcomes and the competencies students were expected to acquire. It also provided universities with greater flexibility to adapt their curricula while maintaining nationally approved academic requirements.

A further development was the introduction of the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards in 2023. The CCMAS framework provides a common curriculum component while allowing universities to determine additional content that reflects their institutional objectives and local circumstances. Under the framework, 70 per cent of the curriculum is prescribed as the common core, while the remaining 30 per cent is available for institutional customisation (Maiyaki, 2023).

The framework also incorporates cross-cutting areas such as entrepreneurship education, peace and conflict resolution, and technological literacy. These areas are intended to improve the relevance of university education and strengthen graduate preparedness for employment, professional practice and participation in society. The successive revisions of academic standards demonstrate the NUC's efforts to make university education more responsive to changing social and economic demands. However, curriculum reform cannot independently guarantee improved learning outcomes. Its implementation requires qualified lecturers, appropriate instructional materials, functional laboratories, relevant technology and adequate learning environments. The success of CCMAS therefore depends on the capacity of universities to translate its provisions into effective teaching and learning experiences.

3. Institutional and Operational Constraints on Quality Assurance Implementation

The implementation of quality assurance standards in Nigerian universities is affected by interconnected financial, infrastructural, administrative and regulatory constraints. Although the NUC has established minimum academic requirements, many institutions encounter difficulties meeting them because of inadequate resources and unfavourable operating conditions.

3.1 Inadequate Funding and Institutional Capacity

Funding remains one of the major obstacles to effective quality assurance in Nigerian universities. Public universities depend substantially on government subventions to finance their operations, but available resources are often insufficient to meet institutional requirements. The consequences are evident in difficulties associated with recruiting academic personnel, maintaining existing facilities, acquiring modern laboratory equipment, updating library collections and providing essential student support services.

Ineye-Briggs (2023) and Arah (2017), identified inadequate educational funding as a major constraint on the delivery of quality education in Nigeria. The problem is particularly significant because NUC standards require substantial financial investments. Universities are expected to maintain appropriate student-teacher ratios, employ qualified academic personnel, equip laboratories, provide functional libraries and support research activities. However, the resources available to many institutions are inadequate to meet these obligations consistently.

The implementation of CCMAS further illustrates the relationship between policy requirements and institutional resources. Universities must provide updated instructional materials, qualified personnel, modern facilities and technological resources to implement the revised curriculum effectively. Ogunode, Lawan and Jegede (2023), in their examination of public universities in North-Eastern Nigeria, identified inadequate funding as a constraint on infrastructure provision, staff recruitment and the acquisition of technological resources required for effective CCMAS implementation.

This situation creates a fundamental implementation problem. Regulatory standards prescribe the conditions necessary for quality education, but universities cannot consistently satisfy those requirements without adequate financial support. Consequently, funding inadequacies weaken the relationship between statutory expectations and actual institutional performance.

3.2 Infrastructural Deficiencies and Inadequate Learning Facilities

The physical environment in which teaching, learning and research take place is an important determinant of educational quality. Universities require functional lecture halls, laboratories, libraries, workshops,

information technology facilities, electricity and other essential infrastructure to deliver approved academic programmes effectively.

However, infrastructural deficiencies remain a major concern in many Nigerian universities. Some institutions operate with deteriorating classroom buildings, insufficient lecture spaces, poorly equipped laboratories and outdated library collections. Increasing student enrolment places additional pressure on existing facilities. Where student numbers exceed the capacity of available classrooms and laboratories, opportunities for practical learning and meaningful interaction between lecturers and students become limited.

The problem extends beyond the availability of buildings and equipment. Maintenance and continuous operation are equally important. Laboratories require functioning equipment and consumable materials, libraries need current books and electronic resources, while information technology facilities depend on reliable electricity and internet connectivity. Igiri et al. (2021) reported that inadequate infrastructure and unreliable electricity supply constitute serious constraints on research productivity in Nigerian academic institutions. These findings illustrate how infrastructural deficiencies affect not only teaching but also research and other academic activities.

Concerns have also been raised about the accuracy of institutional representations during accreditation exercises. Where facilities are temporarily improved or equipment is borrowed specifically for inspection visits, accreditation panels may not obtain an accurate picture of the resources available for sustained programme delivery. For quality assurance to be meaningful, accreditation assessments must establish whether facilities are genuinely available, functional and adequate for continuous academic operations. Regulatory monitoring should therefore examine their regular use, maintenance and contribution to teaching and research rather than focus exclusively on their physical presence during inspection.

3.3 Shortage of Qualified Academic Personnel and Brain Drain

The availability of qualified academic staff is indispensable to the implementation of minimum academic standards. Lecturers are responsible for delivering curricula, supervising students, conducting research, assessing learning outcomes and contributing to institutional governance. When universities lack sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified academics, the quality of these activities is affected. Nigerian universities have experienced difficulties attracting and retaining experienced academics. Poor remuneration, inadequate research support, unfavourable working conditions and limited access to modern academic facilities have contributed to the migration of qualified personnel to other countries. This development reduces the availability of experienced lecturers and weakens institutional capacity.

The departure of experienced academics affects universities in several ways. It reduces

the number of lecturers available to teach specialised courses, supervise postgraduate research and mentor early-career academics. It may also increase the workload of remaining staff, weaken research teams and make it difficult for departments to satisfy accreditation requirements relating to staff qualifications and student-teacher ratios. In some institutions, courses may be assigned to available lecturers whose academic specialisations do not fully correspond with the subjects they are required to teach. Such arrangements can compromise the depth and accuracy of instruction. The departure of senior academics also creates gaps in institutional experience, research leadership and academic mentorship.

Private universities experience related staffing difficulties. Some depend heavily on part-time, adjunct and visiting lecturers rather than maintaining sufficient numbers of permanent academic staff. Although these appointments may provide access to specialised expertise, excessive dependence on temporary personnel can affect teaching continuity, student supervision and the development of a stable research culture. The shortage of qualified academics therefore represents more than a staffing problem. It directly affects the capacity of universities to satisfy statutory academic standards and provide the quality of education expected by students, employers and society.

3.4 Industrial Disputes and Discontinuity of Academic Activities

Industrial disputes between university workers and government have repeatedly affected the stability of academic activities in Nigerian universities. Disagreements over salaries, allowances, working conditions, university funding and the implementation of negotiated agreements have contributed to recurrent industrial actions, particularly within federal and state institutions. The Academic Staff Union of Universities has undertaken industrial actions to draw attention to unresolved demands relating to staff welfare, institutional funding and the general conditions of university education. Such actions have sometimes resulted in prolonged suspension of lectures, interruption of research activities and disruption of academic calendars. When academic sessions are interrupted for extended periods, universities may struggle to complete prescribed course content within the normal academic calendar. Attempts to recover lost time through compressed schedules may also affect the depth of teaching and learning. Prolonged interruptions can delay student progression, disrupt postgraduate supervision and affect institutional productivity.

Ewa and Eze (2023) and Arah (2020), in their examination of the effects of ASUU strikes on university performance in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria between 2012 and 2022, identified significant disruptions associated with repeated industrial actions. Their discussion underscores the importance of industrial stability to the continuity of academic activities. Although periods of improved industrial relations can create opportunities for more stable academic calendars, the absence of strikes does not

necessarily mean that the underlying causes of industrial conflict have been resolved. Sustainable academic stability requires consistent attention to staff welfare, university funding, agreed employment conditions and effective engagement between government and university unions. Industrial harmony is therefore an important condition for effective quality assurance. Universities require stable academic environments to implement curricula, conduct research, assess students and sustain the institutional activities through which academic standards are achieved.

3.5 Weak Regulatory Enforcement and Institutional Non-compliance

The effectiveness of the NUC's regulatory mandate depends significantly on its ability to ensure that universities comply with prescribed academic standards. Although the Commission conducts accreditation exercises and issues regulatory guidelines, enforcement remains a major concern.

Some universities have been associated with the continued operation of academic programmes that have failed accreditation requirements or whose accreditation status requires review. Where institutions fail to address identified deficiencies, the credibility of the regulatory system may be weakened. Such practices also create risks for students who may complete programmes without the expected level of academic recognition. Concerns about the effectiveness of existing quality assurance practices have also been raised in studies of stakeholder perceptions of university regulation. Allegations of irregularities, including bribery and attempts to influence accreditation processes, further raise questions about the transparency and integrity of regulatory procedures.

The existence of regulatory provisions is insufficient unless the NUC can monitor compliance and apply appropriate sanctions when institutions violate established requirements. Effective enforcement requires adequate inspection personnel, sufficient financial resources, reliable information about institutional performance and the independence to take action against non-compliant institutions. The Commission must also ensure that accreditation decisions and institutional compliance information are communicated clearly to the public. Such transparency would enable prospective students, parents, employers and other stakeholders to make informed decisions about university programmes and qualifications.

3.6 Insecurity and the Disruption of University Operations

Insecurity constitutes an additional challenge to the implementation of quality assurance in different parts of Nigeria. Insurgency, banditry, kidnapping and other forms of violence have disrupted educational activities in several regions, creating difficult conditions for students, academic staff and university administrators. Universities operating in affected areas may experience interruptions to academic activities, reduced student attendance, difficulties in recruiting staff and restrictions on access to institutional facilities. In some circumstances, security threats may necessitate temporary relocation,

suspension of activities or adjustments to the delivery of academic programmes.

These conditions affect the capacity of universities to maintain normal academic operations. Laboratories may remain underutilised, research activities may be suspended and students may be unable to participate fully in lectures and practical exercises. Insecurity can also discourage qualified academics from accepting appointments in affected locations. The challenge demonstrates that quality assurance is influenced by broader social and political conditions. Regulatory requirements may prescribe appropriate facilities, staff qualifications and academic schedules, but their implementation becomes difficult where institutions cannot provide a safe and stable environment for teaching, learning and research. Addressing insecurity is therefore an important part of creating the conditions necessary for universities to maintain academic standards. Quality assurance policies must recognise the operational difficulties faced by institutions in insecure environments while ensuring that students' educational interests and academic standards remain protected.

4. Expansion of the University System and the Capacity for Regulatory Oversight

The rapid expansion of the Nigerian university system has significantly increased the responsibilities of the NUC. Although institutional growth has created additional opportunities for higher education, it has also placed considerable pressure on the Commission's capacity to conduct regular accreditation, inspection and monitoring exercises.

Every university is expected to comply with national academic standards, while individual programmes require assessment and accreditation. The Commission must also monitor institutional changes, review applications, investigate complaints and ensure that approved programmes continue to satisfy prescribed requirements.

This expanding responsibility creates difficulties where regulatory resources do not increase at a corresponding rate. Limited personnel, inadequate funding and logistical constraints may prevent the NUC from conducting sufficiently frequent inspections across all institutions. Consequently, the quality assurance system may become more dependent on scheduled accreditation visits than on continuous monitoring of institutional performance. The growth of private universities presents additional regulatory concerns. Differences in financial capacity, staffing arrangements, infrastructure and institutional governance may affect the ability of some institutions to maintain academic standards. Some private universities experience inadequate research funding and difficulties recruiting qualified permanent academic staff. Their dependence on temporary lecturers may affect the continuity of instruction, while pressure to remain financially viable may create tensions between commercial interests and academic responsibilities. The NUC must therefore ensure that the expansion of the university system does not weaken academic standards. This requires regulatory arrangements

capable of monitoring institutional performance, identifying emerging deficiencies and ensuring compliance across federal, state and private universities. The growth of the university system presents a dual challenge. Government must respond to the increasing demand for university education while ensuring that institutional expansion is accompanied by adequate infrastructure, qualified personnel and sustainable funding. For the NUC, this requires a stronger regulatory structure supported by sufficient personnel, financial resources and effective monitoring systems.

5. Stakeholder Perspectives on the Implementation of Quality Assurance

The implementation of quality assurance provisions affects different groups within the university system. University administrators, academic staff, students and employers experience the regulatory framework from different perspectives. Their concerns reveal the practical differences between statutory expectations and institutional realities.

5.1 University Administrators and Institutional Capacity

University administrators generally recognise the importance of NUC standards in maintaining the credibility of university education. However, many institutions face difficulties meeting prescribed requirements because of limited financial resources, inadequate infrastructure and shortages of qualified personnel. From the administrative perspective, the problem arises partly from the difference between regulatory expectations and available institutional capacity. Universities are required to maintain appropriate facilities, recruit qualified staff and provide adequate learning resources, yet their financial allocations may be insufficient to support these obligations. This situation highlights the need for a stronger relationship between regulatory supervision and institutional capacity development. Universities must remain accountable for complying with academic standards, but government and relevant authorities must also address the resource conditions that affect their ability to meet those standards.

5.2 Academic Staff, Accreditation Procedures and Working Conditions

Academic staff view quality assurance from the standpoint of teaching, research, professional development and working conditions. Although lecturers generally acknowledge the importance of accreditation, concerns arise where accreditation activities impose substantial administrative demands without producing sustained improvements in institutional conditions. Preparing documentation, arranging facilities and responding to accreditation requirements may require considerable time and effort. Some lecturers regard accreditation activities as excessively bureaucratic, particularly where institutions concentrate on preparing for inspection visits rather than implementing continuous improvements.

Temporary arrangements made to satisfy inspection requirements may also weaken confidence in accreditation as a mechanism for sustainable quality enhancement.

Accreditation should therefore assess the actual conditions under which lecturers teach, conduct research and supervise students.

Effective quality assurance requires more than increasing regulatory demands. It also requires adequate remuneration, improved working conditions, research support and institutional resources that enable lecturers to perform their responsibilities effectively.

5.3 Students and the Protection of Educational Interests

Students are among the principal beneficiaries of quality assurance because the regulatory framework is intended to protect their educational interests. They expect universities to provide qualified lecturers, adequate learning facilities, relevant academic programmes and recognised qualifications. However, concerns arise where students discover after admission that the facilities or academic expertise advertised by their institutions are not available to the expected standard. Students may also enrol in programmes without adequate information about their current accreditation status. Such situations can create difficulties when graduates seek employment or admission into postgraduate programmes. These concerns demonstrate the importance of public access to accurate accreditation information. The NUC should ensure that students and prospective applicants can readily verify the approval and accreditation status of institutions and academic programmes. Such information would strengthen student protection and discourage institutions from using misleading claims to attract applicants.

5.4 Employers and the Relevance of Graduate Competencies

Employers assess university quality largely in terms of the knowledge, skills and competencies graduates demonstrate in professional and workplace settings. Concerns about graduate employability raise questions about the extent to which existing quality assurance processes measure actual learning outcomes. Accreditation assessments traditionally examine institutional inputs such as staff qualifications, infrastructure, curriculum content and available learning resources. Although these elements are essential, they do not independently establish whether students have acquired the competencies required for professional practice and employment. The introduction of CCMAS represents an effort to strengthen the relationship between university curricula and graduate competencies. Its emphasis on entrepreneurship, technological literacy and other cross-cutting areas reflects the need for university education to prepare students for changing workplace and societal demands. Curriculum revision alone, however, cannot resolve graduate competency gaps. Universities must adopt effective teaching approaches, strengthen industry partnerships, provide practical learning opportunities and use assessment methods that measure students' ability to apply knowledge. These improvements require institutional commitment, qualified academic staff and adequate resources. The perspectives of employers therefore reinforce the need for quality assurance systems to give greater

attention to learning outcomes and graduate capabilities alongside the traditional assessment of institutional inputs.

6. Conclusion

The National Universities Commission Act and related education legislation provide the statutory foundation for regulating university education and maintaining academic standards in Nigeria. Through its regulatory mandate, the NUC is responsible for coordinating university development, promoting minimum academic requirements, conducting accreditation exercises and advising government on matters affecting higher education. The development of Minimum Academic Standards, Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards and the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards demonstrates continuing efforts to adapt academic requirements to changing educational and national development needs. Nevertheless, there is a substantial gap between the legal provisions governing quality assurance and the conditions under which Nigerian universities operate. Inadequate funding, deteriorating infrastructure, shortages of qualified academic personnel, industrial disputes, insecurity and weak enforcement mechanisms continue to undermine the effective implementation of prescribed standards. The rapid expansion of the university system has further increased the regulatory responsibilities of the NUC without necessarily providing corresponding resources for effective supervision.

The challenges also demonstrate that institutional compliance cannot be achieved through regulatory demands alone. Universities require adequate financial support, functional facilities, qualified personnel and stable academic environments to satisfy the standards established by the NUC. Similarly, the Commission requires sufficient funding, trained personnel, reliable monitoring systems and institutional capacity to enforce compliance consistently. The experiences of university administrators, academic staff, students and employers further demonstrate that quality assurance must extend beyond administrative compliance. It should promote continuous improvement in teaching, research, institutional governance and graduate competencies. Accreditation is most effective when its recommendations result in sustained improvements rather than temporary arrangements designed merely to satisfy inspection requirements. The central conclusion is that effective quality assurance requires a combination of sound legislation, adequate institutional resources, competent regulatory supervision and sustained commitment by universities and government. Without these conditions, the statutory provisions governing university regulation will remain only partially effective, and Nigerian universities will continue to experience difficulties meeting national development expectations and academic standards.

7. Recommendations

Based on the issues examined, the following measures are recommended to strengthen the implementation of the NUC Act and improve quality assurance in Nigerian universities.

1. Increase government funding for university education: Federal and state governments should improve financial allocations to university education. Funding should prioritise infrastructure, recruitment of qualified academic personnel, research development and the provision of modern teaching and learning resources.
2. Strengthen NUC monitoring and enforcement mechanisms: The NUC should improve its regulatory capacity through adequate staffing, increased funding, regular institutional inspections and effective follow-up on accreditation recommendations. Institutions that fail to comply with established standards should be required to implement corrective measures within specified periods, with appropriate sanctions applied where violations persist.
3. Improve university infrastructure and learning resources: Government and university management should prioritise the rehabilitation of deteriorating facilities and the provision of functional laboratories, libraries, lecture halls, workshops, electricity and information technology resources. Accreditation assessments should consider the continuous availability and effective utilisation of facilities rather than their temporary presentation during inspection visits.
4. Address academic staff shortages and brain drain: Universities should improve staff remuneration, employment conditions, career development opportunities and research support to attract and retain qualified academics. Government should strengthen research grant programmes and encourage diaspora academic engagement through visiting appointments, collaborative research and knowledge exchange initiatives.
5. Strengthen the implementation of CCMAS: Universities should receive appropriate technical and financial support to implement the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards. Academic staff should be trained in curriculum development, contemporary teaching methods, technology-supported instruction and competency-based assessment. The curriculum flexibility provided under CCMAS should be used to develop programmes that reflect institutional strengths and relevant local and national needs.
6. Promote industrial harmony in universities: Government and university unions should establish effective negotiation and dispute-resolution mechanisms to address employment and funding disagreements before they develop into prolonged industrial actions. Agreements reached with university unions should be implemented transparently and within clearly defined timelines to protect the continuity of academic activities.

7. Strengthen coordination among regulatory and professional bodies: The NUC should improve collaboration with relevant government agencies, professional regulatory organisations and quality assurance institutions. Such coordination would reduce duplication, strengthen programme monitoring and ensure that academic standards reflect the requirements of professional practice and national development.
8. Develop internal quality assurance systems: Universities should establish effective internal quality assurance units responsible for continuous programme evaluation, staff development, student feedback, monitoring of learning outcomes and implementation of accreditation recommendations. Institutional quality assurance should be treated as an ongoing management responsibility rather than an activity undertaken only before external accreditation visits.
9. Improve transparency and public access to accreditation information: The NUC should maintain accessible and regularly updated records of university approval and programme accreditation status. Prospective students, parents, employers and other stakeholders should be able to verify institutional recognition and programme accreditation before making educational decisions.
10. Strengthen research capacity and international collaboration: Universities should expand research funding, establish institutional research support systems and develop partnerships with local and international academic organisations. The NUC and government should encourage collaborative research, staff exchange and participation in international quality assurance networks while ensuring that adopted practices are appropriate to Nigerian institutional conditions.

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