ASSESSMENT OF RESOURCE VERIFICATION IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: GOAL SETTING, STRATEGIC PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION, AND MONITORING

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Article History

Received: 26 / 02 / 2025

Accepted: 11 / 03 / 2025

Published: 14 / 03 /2025

Abstract: Ensuring quality in Nigerian university education requires a systematic approach to goal setting, strategic planning, implementation, and monitoring. One crucial aspect of maintaining academic standards is resource verification, which evaluates the adequacy of faculty, infrastructure, and learning materials to support accredited programs. This paper assesses the process of resource verification in Nigerian universities, emphasizing its role in quality assurance, institutional credibility, and compliance with regulatory standards set by the National Universities Commission (NUC). The study explores how universities define and design academic programs, undergo external evaluations by government agencies, and implement approved programs while maintaining continuous monitoring mechanisms. The findings suggest that while resource verification enhances quality assurance, challenges such as inadequate funding, faculty shortages, and infrastructure deficits hinder its effectiveness. The study recommends enhanced government investment, strategic planning at the institutional level, and stronger regulatory enforcement to ensure universities meet global educational standards. By improving resource verification and academic oversight, Nigerian universities can foster better learning outcomes, graduate employability, and international competitiveness.

Keywords: Resource verification, quality assurance, strategic planning, academic program accreditation.

How to Cite: PILLAH PhD, T. P., GOYIT, G. E, PILLAH, PhD, V. T., (2025). ASSESSMENT OF RESOURCE VERIFICATION IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: GOAL SETTING, STRATEGIC PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION, AND MONITORING. *IRASS Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences,2(3)107-112*

1. Introduction

The quality of graduates produced by a society directly influences their success in higher education and the nation's overall development. Nigerian universities face significant challenges, including resource constraints, rising student enrolment, and the need for global competitiveness. These challenges necessitate maintaining and enhancing academic standards to meet regulatory requirements. This study explores the processes of goal-setting, strategic planning, implementation, and monitoring in Nigerian universities, with a focus on resource verification for academic programs.

According to Iguodala (2023), goal-setting theory suggests that behaviour change occurs when goals are both specific and challenging. Nigerian universities strive to enhance education through economic growth, global competitiveness, and the production of skilled graduates with expertise in their fields (Douglas, 2023). Strategic planning plays a crucial role in achieving these objectives by aligning institutional policies, programs, and activities with long-term educational goals (Kabeyi, 2019). Implementation of strategic plans involves resource allocation, staff development, and operational adjustments, but financial constraints, institutional capacity, and regulatory compliance can impact effectiveness.

To ensure academic programs meet quality standards, the National Universities Commission (NUC) conducts resource verification exercises, evaluating faculty, infrastructure, and learning materials (NUC, 2020). This verification process ensures universities uphold their academic commitments. Additionally, continuous monitoring and assessment are essential for evaluating progress, addressing gaps, and maintaining accountability in academic quality. By focusing on resource verification, this study underscores its role in improving academic programs and strengthening governance in Nigerian universities. Through an in-depth analysis of goal-setting, strategic planning, implementation, and evaluation, this research provides valuable insights for policymakers, university administrators, and stakeholders working to enhance higher education standards in Nigeria. This paper is structured into five sections; the introduction, the concepts clarification, literature review, major discussions, conclusion and recommendation.

2. CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

Goal Setting

Goals play a crucial role in various aspects of life, providing motivation, direction, and a clear focus on achieving specific objectives. The SMART framework—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound—is commonly used to set and attain goals effectively (Corporate Finance Institute [CFI], n.d.). The concept of goal setting originates from research in industrial and organizational psychology, particularly in relation to workplace task performance. This theory suggests that setting clear, specific, and challenging goals enhances motivation and behavioral change (Seijts et al., 2024).

Goal Setting Theory (GST) explains the connection between conscious goal-setting and task performance, where goals serve as the desired outcomes individuals aim to achieve. According to Iguodala (2023), behavioral change occurs when goals meet two key criteria: (a) they must be clearly defined and consciously acknowledged, and (b) they should be challenging enough to push individuals beyond their usual achievements. This makes goal setting a widely adopted approach in behavior modification strategies.

Research by Seijts and Latham (2016), building on Locke and Latham's (2002) work, highlights goal setting as one of the most effective strategies for increasing engagement in public health interventions. The theory posits that the effectiveness of goal setting improves under the following conditions: (a) individuals are highly committed to the goal, (b) the task is straightforward with minimal actions and choices required, (c) feedback is provided on progress, and (d) necessary resources are available with minimal external constraints. These factors contribute to goal setting being a powerful motivational tool in various domains.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning plays a vital role in providing organizations with direction and ensuring alignment with long-term goals. According to Whitenight (2024), the annual process of goal setting and strategic planning is crucial for businesses to establish a competitive advantage and maintain relevance in an evolving marketplace. Effective strategic planning allows organizations to define their objectives, allocate resources efficiently, and enhance decision-making processes.

The Management Study Guide (MSG, 2015) highlights that managers use strategies to achieve multiple organizational goals. Strategy is defined as the overall direction set for an organization and its components to guide them toward achieving a desired future state. A well-structured strategic planning process ensures the formulation of clear strategies that align with business goals, optimize resources, and enhance organizational efficiency.

Strategic planning has undergone significant evolution. Initially, it followed a structured, hierarchical approach known as rational planning, which emphasized goal setting and clear action plans (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2020). This traditional method involved selecting appropriate tools and actions, followed by systematic implementation and evaluation through performance management frameworks. However, modern strategic planning has shifted toward a managerial perspective, integrating everyday practices across different organizational levels. This contemporary approach fosters adaptability, continuous learning, and the dynamic alignment of strategic initiatives with operational realities.

Implementation and Monitoring

Policy implementation is the process of executing planned projects or programs to achieve predefined objectives. Ogunode et al. (2024) define implementation as the practical execution of government policies by relevant stakeholders, ensuring that planned initiatives align with intended goals. Policy implementation is a crucial phase of the policy cycle, which consists of four main stages: (a) Issue Identification and Agenda-Setting – identifying and defining problems requiring government intervention; (b) Policy Formulation – designing actionable steps to ensure the feasibility and acceptance of policies among stakeholders; (c) Implementation – translating policies into concrete actions and ensuring adherence to the prescribed framework; and (d) Evaluation – assessing policy effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement.

Two major factors contribute to policy failure: non-implementation and unsuccessful implementation (Ogunode et al., 2024). Non-implementation occurs when a policy is not enacted as planned, whereas unsuccessful implementation happens when external conditions hinder a fully executed policy from achieving its intended outcomes. Successful policy implementation requires the delegation of authority and clear communication among stakeholders. Poor coordination in policy communication can lead to management inefficiencies, particularly in Nigeria's public sector.

Monitoring and evaluation are integral to ensuring that policy implementation remains effective. Monitoring involves tracking progress, providing guidance, and ensuring compliance with planned initiatives (Ogunode et al., 2020). It serves as an internal control mechanism that enables policymakers to measure performance, assess resource utilization, and identify inefficiencies. According to Ajibade and Ajibade (2020), monitoring involves systematic assessment of project inputs, methodologies, and expected outcomes. This process ensures that educational institutions, government agencies, and private organizations can evaluate infrastructure, staffing, funding distribution, and service quality.

By emphasizing systematic monitoring, policymakers can improve governance, enhance accountability, and mitigate challenges related to ineffective policy execution. Strengthening monitoring frameworks in Nigeria will contribute to better policy outcomes and sustainable development.

Resource Verification

Educational resources refer to all human and material inputs necessary for the seamless operation of universities. These resources are broadly categorized into human resources and non-human (material) resources (Atanda et al., 2024). Resources are essential components that facilitate the effective delivery of education. In the context of higher education, resources encompass human, material, and financial inputs that contribute to the overall quality of academic programs (Atanda et al., 2024). The adequacy and proper allocation of these resources directly impact the success of universities in achieving their academic and developmental objectives. As Nigerian universities strive for excellence, resource verification remains a fundamental process in maintaining quality assurance.

Academic Programs

Academic programs form the foundation of higher education, integrating specific courses and requirements to confer degrees or certifications. These programs are broadly classified

into conventional and specialized universities (Iguodala, 2023). Conventional universities, often referred to as old-generation institutions, offer diverse programs across disciplines such as Management Sciences, Social Sciences, Medicine, Pharmacy, Law, Arts, and Engineering. In contrast, specialized universities focus on specific areas, such as agriculture and technology, ensuring that graduates acquire expertise tailored to particular industries. Regardless of classification, academic programs must align with industry standards to prepare students for career opportunities. Quality curriculum design, practical skill integration, and partnerships with industry stakeholders contribute to the effectiveness of these programs. Regular evaluation through accreditation processes ensures that programs remain relevant in an ever-evolving global landscape (National Universities Commission, 2020).

To maintain academic excellence, universities must meet specific criteria in curriculum design, program outcomes, and academic support services. A well-structured curriculum should incorporate practical applications, technology-driven learning, and industry-oriented coursework to enhance graduate employability (Iguodala, 2023). Universities must also establish clear program outcomes by conducting regular assessments, setting measurable goals, and adjusting curricula based on student performance and market demands. Additionally, academic support services such as modern laboratories, libraries, and e-learning platforms are essential in fostering student success (Atanda et al., 2024). These resources, combined with strategic planning and regulatory oversight, ensure that Nigerian universities produce competent graduates who contribute meaningfully to national development.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Resource verification is an essential quality assurance process that ensures universities meet the required standards for delivering academic programs. The National Universities Commission (NUC) plays a critical role in conducting these verifications, assessing institutions based on faculty qualifications, infrastructure adequacy, and learning resources (National Universities Commission, 2020). The verification process is designed to maintain academic integrity, ensure compliance with regulatory requirements, and enhance the overall educational system in Nigeria (Atanda et al., 2024). The verification framework aligns with global best practices for accreditation and ensures that universities provide students with the necessary resources to facilitate learning and research.

Academic resource verification is a multi-phase process that involves an initial assessment of human and material resources, evaluation of program structure, and follow-up monitoring to determine continuous compliance (Iguodala, 2023). Universities must demonstrate faculty competence, library adequacy, laboratory sufficiency, and proper governance structures to secure approval for new and existing programs (Ogunode et al., 2024). However, challenges such as underfunding, faculty shortages, and infrastructural deficiencies have impacted the efficiency of resource verification in Nigerian universities (Kabeyi, 2019).

Goal setting is a fundamental aspect of organizational success and plays a vital role in higher education management. According to Goal-Setting Theory (GST), clearly defined objectives enhance motivation and performance by providing direction and measurable targets (Seijts et al., 2024). In Nigerian universities, goal setting is particularly crucial for resource

verification, as institutions must align their academic programs with regulatory benchmarks and industry standards (Iguodala, 2023). Universities that set specific and challenging goals in resource management are more likely to meet accreditation standards and achieve sustainable educational growth.

Strategic planning, on the other hand, involves formulating long-term policies and implementation strategies to achieve institutional objectives (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2020). Effective strategic planning in higher education requires universities to evaluate their internal capabilities, anticipate future challenges, and allocate resources efficiently (Whitenight, 2024). Nigerian universities face increasing pressure to adapt to global competitiveness, rising student enrollments, and financial constraints, making strategic planning essential for sustaining academic quality. Universities that integrate strategic planning into their resource verification processes improve decision-making, optimize resource allocation, and enhance institutional performance (Douglas, 2023).

Implementation is the critical phase where planned resource verification strategies are put into action. Ogunode et al. (2024) define policy implementation as the process of executing planned programs and policies to achieve desired outcomes. For universities, resource verification implementation involves faculty recruitment, infrastructure development, and procurement of learning materials in accordance with NUC guidelines. The success of implementation depends on factors such as funding availability, leadership commitment, and institutional capacity (Ajibade & Ajibade, 2020).

Many Nigerian universities struggle with effective implementation due to inadequate financial resources and bureaucratic inefficiencies (Eze & Nwakoby, 2016). Poor implementation often results in incomplete accreditation approvals, loss of institutional credibility, and lower student satisfaction (Garba & Ejiro, 2020). To overcome these challenges, universities must adopt a structured approach to policy execution, leveraging technology-driven solutions, staff training, and stakeholder engagement to ensure efficient resource management.

Monitoring and evaluation therefore play a crucial role in assessing the effectiveness of resource verification and ensuring continuous improvement. Monitoring involves tracking progress, identifying gaps, and making necessary adjustments to enhance compliance with NUC regulations (Ogunode et al., 2020). Effective monitoring requires universities to conduct periodic internal assessments, maintain accurate records, and establish feedback mechanisms to address deficiencies in academic programs.

Evaluation, to Ajibade and Ajibade (2020) is a systematic process of determining whether an institution has met its resource verification objectives. Its outcomes inform policy reviews, curriculum updates, and future planning efforts. Institutions that engage in regular self-assessment are more likely to maintain accreditation, improve academic quality, and enhance their global reputation (Atanda et al., 2024). However, inadequate data management systems, limited technical expertise, and resistance to change often hinder effective monitoring and evaluation in Nigerian universities (Douglas, 2023).

4. MAJOR DISCUSSIONS

Despite its significance, resource verification in Nigerian universities faces several challenges, including funding constraints,

poor infrastructure, limited human capital, and regulatory inconsistencies (Iguodala, 2023). Many institutions lack modern laboratories, digital libraries, and qualified faculty, which negatively affects their accreditation outcomes (Atanda et al., 2024). Additionally, political interference and bureaucratic delays in the verification process often undermine its credibility (Garba & Ejiro, 2020).

Nevertheless, advancements in digital transformation and educational reforms present opportunities for improving resource verification. The adoption of automated verification systems, AI-driven assessments, and e-learning integration can enhance efficiency and transparency in the accreditation process (Kabeyi, 2019). Furthermore, increased public-private partnerships and government funding can help address infrastructure gaps and improve the overall quality of education in Nigeria (National Universities Commission, 2020).

The objective of university education in Nigeria is to produce skilled professionals across various sectors of the economy. Achieving this goal requires universities to maintain high academic standards through structured goal setting, strategic planning, implementation, and monitoring (Akpan & Etor, 2018). The National Universities Commission (NUC) is central to ensuring quality assurance, particularly through resource verification and program accreditation (Iguodala, 2023). Universities follow a three-stage internal process for developing academic programs: definition and design, resource verification, and implementation. The definition and design phase involves curriculum formulation based on the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS), ensuring that programs meet industry relevance and regulatory requirements. Faculty qualifications, infrastructure, and instructional materials are also evaluated. The proposal moves through departmental and university-wide reviews before submission to the NUC for external validation (NUC, 2024). The second stage, resource verification, is a crucial quality assurance exercise conducted by the NUC, involving a comprehensive review of teaching and learning facilities, faculty strength, and research capabilities. Institutions that meet NUC requirements gain approval to commence new programs, while those that fall short must rectify deficiencies before receiving accreditation (Abolo, 2019). The NUC also mandates periodic accreditation reviews, ensuring continuous compliance with educational standards (Douglas, 2023).

The implementation or operational phase serves as a pilot stage, where newly approved programs admit students and function for two years before undergoing reassessment by the NUC. This stage allows universities to evaluate student performance, faculty sufficiency, and infrastructure adequacy, ensuring the program aligns with quality benchmarks (Iguodala, 2023). Universities must demonstrate compliance with regulatory policies, or risk program suspension. The NUC's role extends beyond resource verification to broader educational reforms, including the 2018-2023 Strategic Blueprint for the Revitalization of University Education, which introduced curriculum restructuring and program diversification (NUC, 2023). Recent collaborations, such as the Nigeria-United Kingdom (UK) National Steering Committee on Transnational Education (TNE), emphasize global competitiveness and higher education sustainability. These developments reinforce the significance of strategic planning, implementation, and monitoring in ensuring that Nigerian universities produce graduates equipped for national and international job markets (Douglas, 2023). By strengthening verification processes and integrating innovative

educational policies, Nigeria's higher education system can achieve sustainable academic excellence.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

The assessment of resource verification in Nigerian universities through goal setting, strategic planning, implementation, and monitoring is essential for maintaining academic quality and ensuring that institutions meet global educational standards. Universities serve as the foundation for human capital development, producing skilled professionals to drive economic growth. However, challenges such as insufficient resources, inadequate infrastructure, and regulatory bottlenecks often hinder the effectiveness of academic programs. To address these issues, the National Universities Commission (NUC) has implemented rigorous resource verification and accreditation exercises to ensure compliance with Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS).

The three-stage internal process for academic program development; definition and design, resource verification, and implementation, plays a critical role in quality assurance. The design stage ensures that curricula are industry-relevant and aligned with global best practices. The resource verification process, conducted by government agencies and professional bodies, ensures that universities have adequate faculty, infrastructure, and learning facilities. The implementation phase allows institutions to operate programs on a trial basis, undergoing periodic reassessment to maintain academic credibility. Additionally, the NUC's strategic reforms; such as the 2018-2023 Strategic Blueprint for the Revitalization of University Education, demonstrate a commitment to improving higher education governance and institutional performance.

To enhance the effectiveness of resource verification, Nigerian universities must adopt a proactive approach by strengthening internal quality control mechanisms, ensuring adequate resource allocation, and fostering collaborations with international educational bodies. Moreover, continuous monitoring and evaluation will allow institutions to identify gaps, implement necessary improvements, and align with global educational trends. By reinforcing quality assurance frameworks, Nigerian universities can achieve sustainable academic excellence, produce globally competitive graduates, and contribute meaningfully to national development.

To secure the future of higher education in Nigeria, all hands must be on deck. A holistic and sustained approach to goal setting, strategic planning, resource verification, and quality monitoring is non-negotiable. By fostering a culture of accountability, innovation, and academic integrity, Nigerian universities will not only produce globally competitive graduates but also contribute significantly to national development and economic transformation.

Recommendations

To enhance the quality of education and ensure Nigerian universities meet global standards, urgent and strategic actions must be taken. The government must prioritize increased funding for higher education, ensuring that universities have adequate resources to support teaching, research, and infrastructure development. A robust financial commitment will guarantee well-

equipped libraries, modern laboratories, conducive learning environments, and competitive faculty remuneration. Additionally, policy implementation must be strengthened, with strict enforcement of regulations related to resource verification and accreditation, preventing institutions from operating substandard programs that compromise academic excellence.

The resource verification process must be conducted with transparency, regularity, and efficiency, leveraging technology to eliminate bureaucratic bottlenecks and ensure seamless assessments. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) should be actively encouraged, as collaboration between universities and corporate organizations can provide alternative funding, foster research development, and drive institutional innovation. Furthermore, digital transformation in higher education must be accelerated, with universities integrating smart learning technologies, online resource libraries, and digital research databases to enhance knowledge dissemination and improve learning outcomes.

The government must also invest in academic staff development, facilitating capacity-building programs, research grants, and international exchange opportunities for lecturers and researchers. A well-trained faculty will enhance curriculum delivery, research output, and overall institutional performance. Alongside this, a dedicated monitoring and evaluation framework should be established, with an independent body tasked with ensuring continuous compliance with NUC verification standards, identifying gaps, and recommending necessary improvements. Legislative frameworks must also be reinforced, making it mandatory for all universities to comply with established academic quality assurance policies, with sanctions imposed on institutions that fail to meet these standards.

Beyond government interventions, society must take collective responsibility in strengthening higher education. Parents, students, and alumni must become active stakeholders, advocating for quality assurance and ensuring that academic programs align with accreditation standards. The private sector and philanthropic organizations must step forward to support university development funds, investing in infrastructure, research grants, and innovation hubs that will position Nigerian universities as centers of academic excellence. More so, industry-academia collaboration must be strengthened, with businesses providing internship opportunities, skill development programs, and mentorship initiatives that will bridge the gap between education and employment.

At the grassroots level, educational awareness must be intensified, ensuring that students and guardians make informed decisions when selecting academic programs, prioritizing institutions that meet resource verification requirements. Communities must also play a supportive role in university development by providing additional assistance in security, facility maintenance, and welfare programs that enhance the overall learning experience.

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