

**EVALUATING THE EFFECT OF ACCREDITATION STATUS AND STABILITY OF
ACADEMIC CALENDAR AS INDICES OF GLOBAL RANKING IN AHMADU BELLO
UNIVERSITY, ZARIA-NIGERIA**

BY

DR. M. IDRIS¹ & IBRAHIM SANI KAITA²
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION,
FACULTY OF ADMINISTRATION,
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA

ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the effects of Accreditation status and Stability of Academic calendar as indices of global ranking in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The study is prompted by poor or low ranking position the University appeared in the Global Ranking and League Table despite adopting many strategies to enhance efficiency in boosting institutional capacity such as recent introduction of online assessment of staff performance by Students and increasing Visibility through adequate instalment of fiber optics to research activities. The study addressed two research questions, and tested two null hypotheses. This study adopted survey research design. A total number of 10803 (2765 Academic and 8038 non academic) staff from twelve faculties of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria formed the population of this study out of which a total number of 370 respondents were randomly sampled using simple random sampling technique. The researcher used observation (using checklist), interview and questionnaire technique in data collection. The researcher collected information from the registry regarding the above information as indices for institutional quality for global ranking. The research questions raised were analysed using descriptively using Frequencies, Percentages, mean and standard deviations while research hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance with the aid of SPSS version 21.0. The result of findings revealed significant effect of Accreditation status and Stability of Academic calendar on Global Ranking of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. On the bases of findings, the researcher recommended among others that the university should make concerted effort to ensure that NUC fully accredited the remaining 30%. There is a need for the University to organize training in form of workshop, conference and seminar to academic and non academic staff of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria on benefit of university global ranking and how to rank universities based on indices

Background to the Study

According to National Universities Commission (NUC, 2016), Nigerian Universities can either be public or private but performing the same functions, undergoing similar accreditation periodically and guided by Bench Mark minimum standard for their programmes. This is to ensure that Nigerian Universities are fully capacitated to compete with global universities especially in terms of Universities (global) ranking.

University rankings are lists of certain groupings of institutions (usually, but not always, within a single national jurisdiction),

comparatively ranked according to a common set of indicators in descending order. According to Pavel (2015), a ranking represents a relationship between a set of items such that, for any two items, the first is either “ranked higher than”, “ranked lower than” or “ranked equal to” the second. In mathematics, this is known as a weak order or total pre-order of objects. It is not necessarily a total order of objects because two different objects can have the same ranking. In the current globalized economy, global university rankings are used to measure their global competitiveness, being simultaneously criticised and lauded.

Most of the university rankings have been conducted by magazines, newspapers, websites, governments, or academics (Pavel, 2015). The international rankings cover at this moment only a small percentage of approx. 2-3% of the total of universities. In many cases, Hazelkorn (2009), stressed that, the effort required to collect, collate, and analyze the data required to produce the rankings is so great that their production on anything but a commercial basis is probably impossible. University ranking systems come in two varieties: institutional ranking systems and sub-institutional ranking systems. They can be conducted either on a national or international scale. National ranking systems are ones in which all or nearly all of a country's universities are measured against one another. Similarly, Okoli and Onah (2002) opined that global institutional ranking systems are a new variation on the older idea of national rankings. There are at present only two of these: the Academic Ranking of World Universities from Shanghai's Jiao Tong University, first released in 2003, and the World University Rankings from the Times Higher Education Supplement of Britain (henceforth THES), first released in November 2004. The first international ranking—albeit not a global one—was actually done by Asiaweek magazine in 1997, which ranked the continent's major universities.

Established in 1962, Ahmadu Bello University is a non-profit public higher education institution located in the urban setting of the large city of Zaria, Kaduna. Officially accredited and/or recognized by the National Universities Commission, Nigeria, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) is a large (Unirank enrolment range: 25,000-29,999 students) coeducational higher education institution. Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) offers courses and programs leading to officially recognized higher education degrees such as pre-bachelor degrees (i.e. certificates, diplomas, and associate or foundation degrees), bachelor degrees, master degrees, doctorate degrees in several areas of study. In the year 2017 league table, ABU Zaria was ranked number 34 ahead

of UNILAG and other conventional universities in Africa and 10th in Nigeria. However, University of Ibadan and Nsukka were at the top of the ranking. Regionally, there has been a persistent perception that the 'first generation', post-colonial universities such as Makerere (1922), Ibadan (1948) and Legon (1948) are better than those established after them. While there are complex variables implicated in the perceived high ranking of these institutions, such as the quality of facilities and staff, strict compliance with standards to match top-rate universities in Europe, quality of leadership, as well as quality and quantity of students, the rankings were not based on verifiable data.

In September 2001, Nigeria, through the National Universities Commission (NUC), initiated steps towards a national ranking of its universities. There were three major drivers for this effort. The first was a desire among the population to know more about the relative standing (performance) of the universities and their programmes in order to guide career choices by prospective students. Second, the government wanted a transparent and objective mechanism for identifying centres of excellence that could benefit from preferential funding. Third, the NUC, whose mandate includes the orderly development of universities, needed a basis for advising government on programmes and universities that should be strengthened to address projected human resource needs of the country.

The national programme accreditation exercise of 2000 provided data derived through an objective and transparent methodology for drawing up the league tables. Since 2001, annual university rankings by programmes and institutions have been conducted. In 2004 and 2005, additional indicators were included in the data to align the national ranking with three global ranking schemes: ARWU, THE, and Webometrics (Okebukola, 2006; 2010). Key indicators of ranking include the relationships between research and education, between formal competence and student learning and to the importance given to certain dimensions of the knowledge production in universities. Such

beliefs are frequently visualised through indicators such as student-teacher ratios, resources spent on staff and students or various indicators concerning the infrastructure. Similarly, there is argument relating to the epistemic dimension of rankings as the assumption that knowledge can be deconstructed, quantified and summarised in overall scores. While writers on higher education for a long time have argued that the knowledge created in universities is contextual, integrated, and culturally embedded rankings treat knowledge almost as an externality of the university. While writers on higher education for a long time have argued that the knowledge created in universities is contextual, integrated, and culturally embedded rankings treat knowledge almost as an externality of the university. It is against this background, that this study examine the effect of Accreditation status and Stability of Academic calendar as indices of global ranking of universities with emphasis on Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.

Statement of the Research Problem

In order to enhance efficiency in boosting institutional capacity, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria adopts many strategies nowadays. For instance, online assessment of staff performance by their respective Students was introduced by the University. Similarly, theses and Dissertations of postgraduate students were made available online to enhance visibility. This is possible through improving internet capacity of the University through adequate instalment of Fibre optics to research activities. Despite all the efforts of the University towards improving institutional capacity to compete with sister Universities in the Global Ranking, still Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria is nowhere to be found. It could be recalled that no Nigerian university was listed in the 2016 annual rankings compiled by the Centre for World University Rankings, CWUR, (News Agency of Nigeria, NAN 2016). According to Garba, (2016), since ranking is becoming increasingly acceptable, it has become a challenge, which

universities struggle to overcome. It came as a big shock when only University of Ibadan was featured in the ranking conducted by Times Higher Education (of London) World University Rankings for 2015/2016. And, to make matters worse, it was ranked No. 601 on the list of world's top 800 universities featured in the survey, an honour it shares with University of Ghana, University of South Africa, University of Marrakech Cadi, Ayyad (Morocco) and three Egyptian universities, Alexandria University, and Cairo University. Of the 13 African universities featured in the survey, the University of Cape Town, South Africa, placed at 120th position, is the highest ranked university in Africa. That is to say, it was 481 steps higher than the University of Ibadan, which, in turn, is 200 steps lower than Makerere University, Uganda, which was ranked 401st. Five other South African universities made the list of top-notch universities in the world, making South Africa the country with the highest number of world-class universities on the African continent.

In 2017 league table, ABU Zaria was ranked 34th in Africa and 10th in Nigeria based on global ranking indices. Among the indices adopted by the NUC for ranking of Nigerian Universities includes but not limited to Proportion of the academic staff of the university at professorial level; Foreign content (staff): proportion of the Academic staff of the university who are non-Nigerians; Foreign content (students): proportion of the students of the university who are non-Nigerians; Proportion of staff of the university with outstanding academic achievements; visibility; Ph.D. graduate output for the year; stability of university calendar as well as Student to Personal Computer (PC) Ratio.

Based on the forgoing, the research attempt to address whether some indices of Accreditation status and Stability of Academic calendar have any effect on global ranking of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria or not.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the conduct of this study:

- i. To what extent does Percentage of academic programmes with full accreditation status affect global ranking of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria?
- ii. How does Stability of Academic calendar affect global ranking of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria?

Research Hypotheses

To ensure attainment of the research questions, the study set to verify the following null hypotheses:

- H₀₁:** There is no significant effect of Percentage of academic programmes with full accreditation status on global ranking of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria;
- H₀₂:** There is no significant effect of Stability of Academic calendar on global ranking of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.

Research Methodology

The research design for this study is cross-sectional survey design. It involves systematic collection of data from different sections or group of population to determine the presence, distribution of attributes, characteristics of people and description of the present state of affairs. A total number of 2765 Academic and 8038 non-academic staff of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria formed the population of this study. The study sampled 380 respondents (both academic and non-academic staff) randomly selected from twelve faculties of ABU Zaria. A simple random sampling

technique was used in selecting the respondents. To ensure that instrument is valid, the researcher presented the instrument to three experts in the field of Management and administration who are PhD holders with rank not below senior lecturers for validation. The instruments were pilot tested in ABU Zaria among academic and non-academic staff that form part of the study but not sample of the study. The essence of pilot testing is to ensure reliability of the instrument and observed some limitations associated with it. The instruments were subjected to reliability analysis. The result of pilot test was splitted into two namely odd and even numbered items. Using Spearman rank order correlation in the analysis, r-value of 0.7 and 0.8 were obtained with the aid of SPSS package version 21.0. The research questions raised were analysed using descriptive statistics (Frequencies, Percentages, Bar chart and pie charts) while research hypotheses were tested using t-test at 0.05 level of significance with the aid of SPSS Package version 21.0.

Results

Research Question One: To What Extent does Percentage of Academic Programmes with Full Accreditation Status affect Global Ranking of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria?

To answer research question 2, percentage of the entire programme fully accredited by NUC in 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 session were compared. However, analysis of the 2014/2015 revealed that 70% of the programmes have full accreditation while 30% were interim. Detail is presented in Table 1 & 2.

Table 1: Percentage score of academic programmes of the university with full accreditation status in 2015/2016 and 2016/2017

SN	FACULTY	UG	PGD	MASTERS	PhD	Total	%
1	Administration	5	5	18	4	32	6.13
2	Agriculture	4	5	10	10	29	5.5
3	Arts	9	1	16	13	39	7.47
4	Education/Institute	19	3	39	25	86	16.47
5	Engineering	12	9	27	19	67	12.83

6	Env. Design	9	3	19	17	48	9.19
7	Law	2	3	7	6	18	3.44
8	Life Science	5	5	8	8	26	4.98
9	Medicine	4	1	11	9	25	4.78
10	Pharmacy	1	1	8	7	17	3.25
11	Physical science	9	11	32	22	74	14.17
12	Soc.science	5	2	13	4	24	4.59
13	Vet. Medicine	1	0	17	19	37	7.08
TOTAL		85	49	225	163	522	100

Source: Researcher' Field Survey August, (2017)

Table 2: Percentage score of academic programmes of the university with full and interim accreditation as at 2014/2015 session accreditation status

SN	Status	Frequency	Percentage
1	Full Accreditation	44	70
2	Interim Accreditation	19	30
3	Total	63	100

Source: Researcher' Field Survey August, (2017)

Research Question Two: How does Stability of Academic Calendar Affect Global Ranking of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria?

Table 3: Percentage score: Stability of university calendar

SESSION	NO.OF TIMES OF INSTABILITY		NO.OF STABLE MONTH		TOTAL	%	CAUSES OF INSTABILITY
		%		%			
2012/2013	5	31.7	7	58.3	12	100	ASUU Strike
2013/2014	0	0	12	100	12	100	No case recorded
2014/2015	0	0	12	100	12	100	No case recorded
2015/2016	0	0	12	100	12	100	No case recorded
2016/2017	1	8.3	11	92.7	12	100	ASUU Strike
TOTAL	6	11.1	54	88.9	12	100	

Source: Researcher' Field Survey August, (2017)

Hypothesis Testing

To test hypotheses, result obtained from the 370 respondents were subjected to t-test analysis using SPSS Package as follows:

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of Percentage of academic programmes with full accreditation status on global ranking of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.

Table 4: Independent t-test on effect of Percentage of academic programmes with full accreditation on global ranking of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria

Grouping	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	DF	t	p-value
Aca	196	50.2806	8.08721	.57766	368	1.048	.307
Non	174	53.1149	7.52249	.57028			

Table 4 presented t-test analysis on significant effect of academic programmes with full accreditation status on global ranking of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. From the result obtained, t-value computed is 1.04 and p-value 0.30 at degree of freedom of 368 was recorded. This shows that p-value observed is greater than alpha value of 0.05 and therefore hypothesis which stated that there is no significant effect of academic programmes with full accreditation status on global ranking of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria is retained.

H₀₂: There is no significant effect of Stability of Academic calendar on global ranking of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.

Table 4 presented t-test analysis on significant effect of proportion of Academic staff: student ratio on global ranking of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. From the result obtained, t-value computed is 9.9 and p-value 0.02 at degree of freedom of 368 was recorded. This shows that p-value observed is less than alpha value of 0.05 and therefore hypothesis which stated that there is no significant effect of proportion of Academic staff: student ratio on global ranking of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria is rejected.

Table 5: Independent t-test on Effect of Stability of Academic Calendar on Global Ranking of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria

Grouping	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean	DF	t	p-value
Aca	196	50.73	8.19	0.58	368	.179	.673
Non	174	49.94	8.75	0.66			

Table 5 presented t-test analysis on significant effect of Foreign content on global ranking of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. From the result obtained, t-value computed is 0.179 and p-value 0.67 at degree of freedom of 368 was recorded. This shows that p-value observed is greater than alpha value of 0.05 and therefore hypothesis which stated that there is no significant effect of Stability of Academic calendar on global ranking of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria is retained.

Discussion

Table 1 presented t-test analysis on significant effect of proportion of Academic staff: student ratio on global ranking of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. From the result obtained, t-value computed is 9.9 and p-value 0.02 at degree of freedom of 368 was recorded. This shows that p-value observed is less than alpha value of 0.05 and therefore hypothesis which stated that there is no significant effect of proportion of Academic staff: student ratio on global ranking of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria is rejected.

Table 2 presented t-test analysis on significant effect of Foreign content on global ranking of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. From the result obtained, t-value computed is 0.179 and p-value 0.67 at degree of freedom of 368 was recorded. This shows that p-value observed is greater than alpha value of 0.05 and therefore hypothesis which stated that there is no significant effect of Stability of Academic calendar on global ranking of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria is retained.

Conclusion

One inescapable conclusion from the findings of this research work is that, the aspiration of Nigerian universities to be world-class is yet to be achieved because of many challenges facing the system. This aspiration should have been accompanied by a profound change in the university curriculum which led to the conclusion that Ahmadu Bello University Zaria is capacitated for global ranking in terms of compliance with carrying capacity, academic calendar and programmes with full accreditation. However, it lacks

academic staff and students who are foreigners. Lecturers operate above NUC requirements of teacher/students ratio and proportion of academic staff at professorial level are lacking and thus cannot compete with other Universities in the Global ranking list. Thus, institutional capacity has no significant effect on global ranking of ABU Zaria.

Recommendations

On the bases of findings, the researcher made the following recommendations:

1. It is recommended that the university should make concerted effort to ensure that NUC fully accredited the remaining 30%.
2. There is a need for the University to organize training in form of workshop, conference and seminar to academic and non academic staff of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria on benefit of university global ranking and how to rank universities based on indices.

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