SIGNIFICANCE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN PROGRAMMES ACCREDITATION IN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES IN GHANA

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ABSTRACT: *The purpose of this research is to determine the significance of academic libraries in the accreditation of programmes in Technical Universities in Ghana. The study is limited to Technical Universities in Ghana, with their librarians and assistants as target respondents, and is guided by two key objectives. The study employed a census design method to collect data from all Technical University librarians and their assistants and six purposefully selected GTEC staffs making a total enumeration of thirty-six. The questionnaire was utilized as a means of gathering information. Data was given in frequency, graphs, with their respective percentages. The discovery demonstrates that libraries are actively involved in all certification processes because they offer information resources that are necessary and critical for accreditation. The study recommended that adequate financial support must be provided to academic libraries for them to function effectively. Also, alternative power supply should be developed for the library to have a stable power supply and enough skilled personnel with background knowledge in librarianship be placed in charge of the library, and academic libraries should invest in the acquisition of electronic resources. Lastly, the study suggested that the collections of the libraries of technical universities must be current to help support accreditation of programmes in their institutions.*

KEYWORDS: academic libraries, accreditation, Ghana tertiary education commission (GTEC), information resources, programmes, technical universities

INTRODUCTION

According to Nkiro and Yusuf (2007), accreditation is an acknowledgment process in which standards, policies, and procedures are evaluated to establish the quality of a particular

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programme by accrediting bodies, which are either government agencies, specialized or professional entities. The library is the result of our cultural development. Libraries are recognized as a conduit for the transmission of knowledge, resources, cultural identity, and civilization from one generation to the next. Previously, libraries were thought to be book storage facilities, to preserve rather than utilize collections of books and manuscripts. The concept of the library has shifted in recent years as Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become more involved in the library and its services. A library has evolved into a resource center where users can meet their needs without being constrained by any constraints. E-books and e-resources are becoming increasingly popular among users, thanks to the impact of ICT on libraries. Libraries serve as the focal point of one world's life-long self-education, with all libraries playing an important role in the education of millions of people. It is a genuine source of knowledge, and no educational programme can be considered complete or fruitful in the absence of libraries. Hayward (2006) perceived that "There is no uncertainty that the quality of a higher institution of learning of a country determines the quality of human resources of a country. One of the major functions of the universities is to produce a competent, skilled, and globally knowledgeable workforce for the labor market of business and industry, which is a critical factor to national growth and development." A modern educational set up is built around a well-stocked library with a diverse collection. The high cost of books, higher rates of education expenses, and the vast amount of literature entering the market have changed the conditions, objectives, and methods in higher education, to name a few factors that are increasing students' reliance on libraries.

Problem Statement
Technical Universities (TU's) in Ghana have evolved from the then existing polytechnics whose libraries capacity and requirement were meeting the then standards of polytechnics education however, with the upgrade of the institutions to universities, the same library capacities are unable to meet the current day Technical Universities needs since new university programmes with their curriculums have been introduced, which has resulted in increased in students' population. Moreover, these new programmes would have to get accreditation from Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) and the Universities Libraries have to meet certain requirements before the accreditation of each programme of study is awarded. Do the Technical University libraries able to offer their significance in the various programme accreditation from GTEC? Since academic libraries are regarded as the nerve centres of academic institutions, and must support teaching, research, and other academic programmes, as these academic libraries must be significantly resourced in accordance with the programmes offered by Technical Universities. Academic libraries in Ghana must operate in the same manner as academic libraries around the world to offer quality.

Quality is multidimensional in the context of higher education. One of those dimensions is the library's operation. As part of the quality assurance process, the relationship between academic libraries and the accreditation of educational programmes cannot be compromised.

Objectives of the Study
1.   Determine the relevance and significance of technical universities libraries holdings in relation to programmes accreditation requirements.
2.   To find out the role academic libraries play in the accreditation of programmes in TU's.

Research questions
1. How relevant are the libraries holdings in relation to accreditation requirements?
2.   What role do academic libraries play in the accreditation of programmes in TU's?

Significance of the study
The study will support librarians with the information needed by acquiring the necessary resources to fulfill their requirements for accreditation. This study will serve as a guideline for the implementation of policies to enable academic libraries to work efficiently. This study will also add to the already existing library literature. It will enable the academic libraries stakeholders to appreciate the need for sufficient funds to be made available for academic books in other to meet requirements for accreditation, and it will give priority to efficient and effective policies on improving academic books in general.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

As the number of universities in Ghana continues to increase, the monitoring and supervision of universities and their activities are becoming increasingly important to maintain good quality educational standards. Since the founding of the first university in 1948 as University College on the Gold Coast, the number of Ghanaian universities has grown geometrically and the number of courses offered by those universities and their student population has thus become even greater. According to Bello (2014), accreditation of programmes offered by universities is key to ensuring standards across the institutions.

The concept of accreditation can be closely related to that of quality assurance in education. This is evident in the definition of accreditation provided by Afolabi, (2014). Accreditation is defined by Afolabi, (2014) as a type of quality assurance process under which services and operations of tertiary educational institutions and programmes are evaluated by an external independent body to determine if existing standards are met.

In recent times, various developments have taken place relative to the monitoring, evaluation and enhancement of the quality of different gears of higher education. It is in this vein, that accreditation bodies operate to guarantee that students receive an education continually with standards for entry into practice in their respective faculties and disciplines.

The Accreditation process is an excellent prospect for schools to look at their programme, take note of the progress made as well as loopholes to be filled, thus acting as a genuine feedback mechanism. The government of Ghana established a national quality assurance agency, the National Accreditation Board (NAB), to be responsible for quality assurance in higher education in Ghana. In pursuit of its mandate, GTEC evolved a system of institutional and programme accreditation to ensure conformity with minimum standards and to enhance quality of programmes offered by an institution. Higher educational institutions have also adopted various processes and practices (such as external examiner system, programme and course approval procedures, evaluation of teaching and course, student feedback, among others) for the assurance of the quality of education being provided. The accreditation process usually involves a self-assessment of the programme by the institution, a site visits by peer reviewers, a report of that review, and a decision to accredit or deny accreditation, or put it on probation

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(or some other intermediary status). Accreditation is a way of establishing the status and legitimacy of an institution, programme or module of study.

The establishment of a national accreditation system in Ghana arose from a mandate of PNDCL (Provisional National Defense Council Law) 317 of 1993 which culminated in the establishment of NAB in 1993. This Law established NAB as the national external quality assurance agency responsible for assuring and monitoring the quality of the tertiary sector in Ghana. However, this law has since been amended into an Act of Parliament, the NAB Act 744 of 2007. The NAB Law outlines the functions of NAB in relation to the operations of tertiary institutions in Ghana. There is also a Legislative Instrument (L. I. 1700) based on the earlier law but this is being revised (as at the time of data collection) in accordance with the new law. This instrument explicitly establishes the relationship between the board and the institutions. It spells out the operational procedures and responsibilities of institutions. This paper aims to discuss the institutional and programme accreditation undertaken by NAB and to evaluate its impact on the quality of the higher education sector in Ghana. The purpose of the paper is to identify what benefits could arise from NAB's accreditation process, and what obstacles existed to its successful implementation.

Hayward (2006) perceived that "There is no uncertainty that the quality of a higher institution of learning of a country determines the quality of human resources of a country. One of the major functions of the universities is to produce a competent, skilled, and globally knowledgeable workforce for the labor market of business and industry, which is a critical factor to national growth and development."

Since no nation can develop beyond the quality of its higher education. Recent developments such as increasing student enrolments; abridged state funding for public higher education; the increasing number of private providers; internationalization cross border education have also influenced the purpose and functions of higher education. The need for global competitiveness is another recent development that has impacted higher intuitions of learning. In Ghana, some of these recent developments are reflected in the mission statement of the National Accreditation Board (NAB), which is the regulatory body set up to oversee the administration and delivery of higher education in Ghana.

Accreditation as a tool for quality assurance
University system quality assurance involves the ability of the institutions to meet the expectations of employees regarding the quality of skills acquired through their results (Ajayi and Akindutire, 2007). The ability of universities to comply with certain academic criteria, employee-student ratios, mix-by-grade staff, personnel development, physical facilities, funding and adequate library facilities could also be considered. The adequacy of the various inputs in the university system exerts an enormous influence on quality control in the university system, in terms of quality and quantity. Quality assurance can traditionally be defined as fitness for university education, meeting requirements with generally accepted standards as defined by quality assurance bodies and relevant professional and academic communities. It is also viewed by UNESCO, (2006) as an intentional and systematic process undertaken by an institution, organization, or program to decide if acceptable standards are being met, enhanced,

and maintained. It guarantees confidence in programme of study given by an institution that standards and quality are being maintained and enhanced.

Accreditation of universities be it institutional or program is a way of assessing the state of the institution concerning where it ought to be. It is a quality assurance process. It is the primary means by which universities and programs guarantee quality to students and the public. Accredited status is an indicator to students and the public that an institution or program meets at least minimal standards for its faculty, curriculum, student services and libraries. Accredited status is conveyed only if institutions and programs provide evidence of fiscal stability. Accreditation is an evaluation of whether an institution or program meets a threshold standard and qualifies for a certain status.

Kigongo-Bukenya (2005) discoursed that accreditation and certification generate a complex quality assurance mechanism known as credentialing. Credentialing refers to the process of self-regulation in which interests in the profession, business, or other fields join with one another to exercise checks and balances for the betterment of society at large. Credentialing focused on an institution or programs its accreditation, and that which focuses on individuals and seeks to license them as practitioners is called certification. Accreditation and certification are complementary in principle and ensure quality control of professionals through professional development and certification programs and continuing competence.

The role of academic libraries in accreditation

The academic library is a unique and valuable resource centre and an important source of knowledge. Carr (2007) in his study explored the role of the academic library to achieve academic excellence in an academic institution and pointed out that academic library has to play a very important role because academic institutions are incomplete without a good library. The academic library helps to impact positivity on academic achievement. It supports various educational programmes to develop students' skills in locating and using information.

Academic libraries according to Oseghale (2008) are libraries located in higher institutions of learning such as Universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges of Education, etc. Academic libraries depend on the university to which they belong. They, therefore, develop their mission, vision, targets and objectives based on their parent institution's mission, vision, objectives and objectives. Oseghale (2008) asserts that academic library collections are built to meet the specific research and information needs of the institution's academic programs. He added that the curriculum is a framework for the library collection. This implies that the university library is a cornerstone or foundation on which to rely on any academic program.

The library resources, therefore, reflect the type of programs covered by the institution and thus provide the parent institution with effective education, learning, research and community services. It mainly evaluates their collections due to accreditation. In other words, no programs or institutions with insufficient library resources and/or services will receive the accreditation to support the operation of such a program. The aid for teaching and learning is what a library stocks and as such its relevance to the quality of an academic program is glaring. This to a large extent establish the relevance of the academic library in the accreditation of a program.

Carr (2007) postulates that university libraries are obliged to respond to a variety of academic needs and interest groups. This connects the library to its fundamental ideology of service, while also emphasizing the need for them (academic libraries) in a tumultuous information world where the multiplication of literature and discipline has reached a pinnacle. Among the various needs that the university library must respond to is the support of accreditation for its parent universities and the courses that it runs (Bello, 2014).

Oseghale (2008) postulates that the library has the sole responsibility of ensuring accreditation of a program by ensuring that their collection reflects the requirements for accreditation. It can be noted that not only library resources are necessary for accrediting a program but the quality of services, resources and the competence and adequacy of library staff is necessary for the successful running of every program in an academic environment and as such, they will serve as the standards for accreditation. This proves that a library in its entirety and not only a subset of it supports the accreditation of programs in an institution.

In the same vein, when revising the accreditation criteria, the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (2016) sets out standards for the library's role in the accreditation of higher institutions in the USA. They said it is essential for teaching and training to provide adequate library and information services that are appropriate per the academic level and scope of an institution's programmes. They also stressed that academic libraries should be regarded as an integral part of every high institution and that they should provide the necessary library resources and support their programmes. They explained further that the size of collections and the budget allowed for library resources and services do not ensure adequacy but the quality, availability, accessibility, and provision of support services that decide the adequacy of an institution's efforts.

Afolabi (2014) expressed that, the library remains the heart of the activities of every academic environment, especially tertiary education. The role that is played and meant to be played by the university library makes it stand out as a locus point for accreditation at all times. This largely justifies the role of academic libraries in providing not only resources but also services and competent personnel that will aid the smooth running of an academic program.

The academic library is truly a center of academic activities, which offers very critical services and plays a very important role in the accreditation process. The National Accreditation Board has a statutory mandate for the accreditation of programs in universities across the country, and clearly states the expectations from the universities' libraries in terms of human resources and tools including procedures if they must meet the accreditation needs of their institutions and the various departments particularly.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design
The research design for this study was census design. A census provides detailed information on all or most elements in the population, and allows the researcher to focus data gathering on the identified group and carry out an in-depth study of the total population (Lohr, 2009).It is considered appropriate to gather relevant data on the relevance of the university library in the

accreditation of programs in particularly Technical Universities, since technical universities at the moment have one deputy librarian and two assistant librarians in each university making their population size small, thereby having to include all of them in the study which warrants the use of census in this research.

The sample for this research study covers all deputy librarians and assistant librarians at Technical Universities which is thirty (30) and six officials purposefully selected from Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) bringing the total sample size to thirty-six (36).A Google form questionnaire was designed as an instrument for data collection because it provides high anonymity for the studies and enhances a very sincere response for academic research. For the validity of the research instrument, the draft of the questionnaire was piloted at the Ghana Armed Forces Academic Library. The edited version of the instrument was placed on the platform of the deputy librarians and assistant librarians of technical universities via WhatsApp. The data generated informed the main research analysis. Data was analyzed using simple descriptive statistics and presented in frequency, tables, and percentages.

DATA ANALYSIS

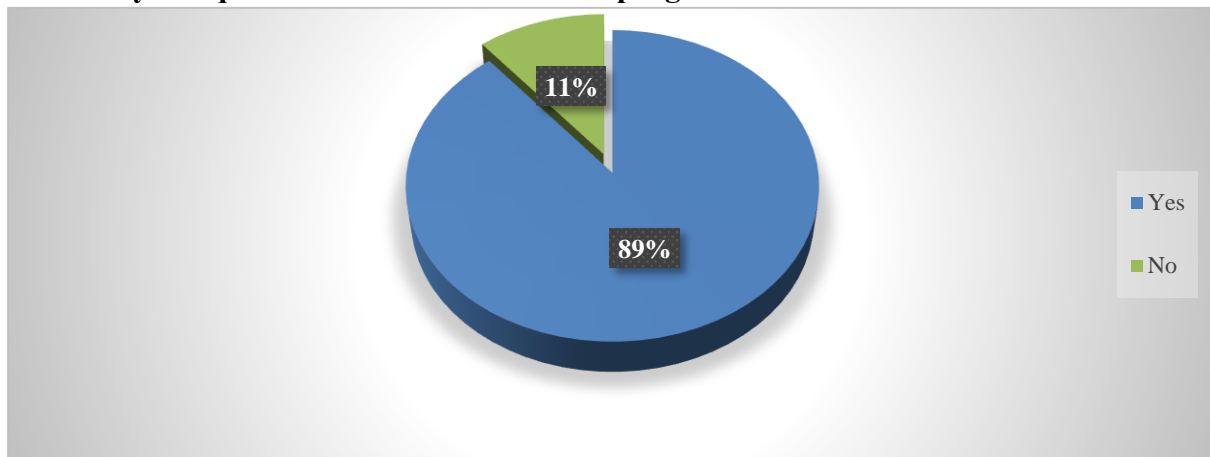**Is Library a requirement in accreditation of programmes in TU's?**

Figure 1. Library Requirements in accreditation of programmes in TTU
Source: Field Survey, 2021

Figure 1 above is the response gotten from seeking to know whether the library staff is aware of the library supporting accreditation of programs. The majority 32(89%) of the respondents selected Yes and 4 (11%) selected No which implies that a very substantial majority of the respondents as attest that libraries are indeed needed before programme accreditation in the Technical Universities.
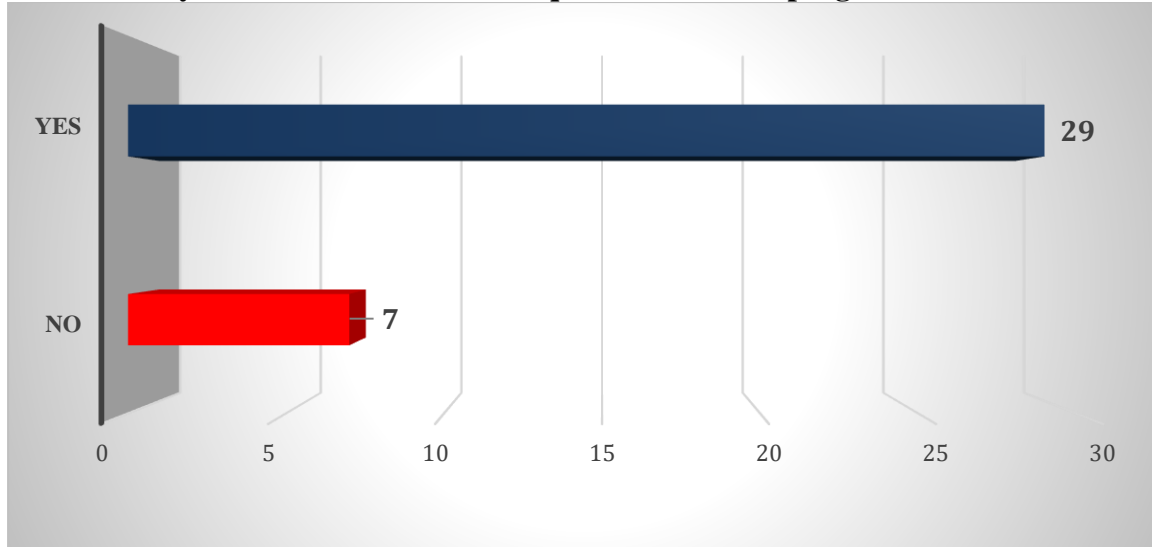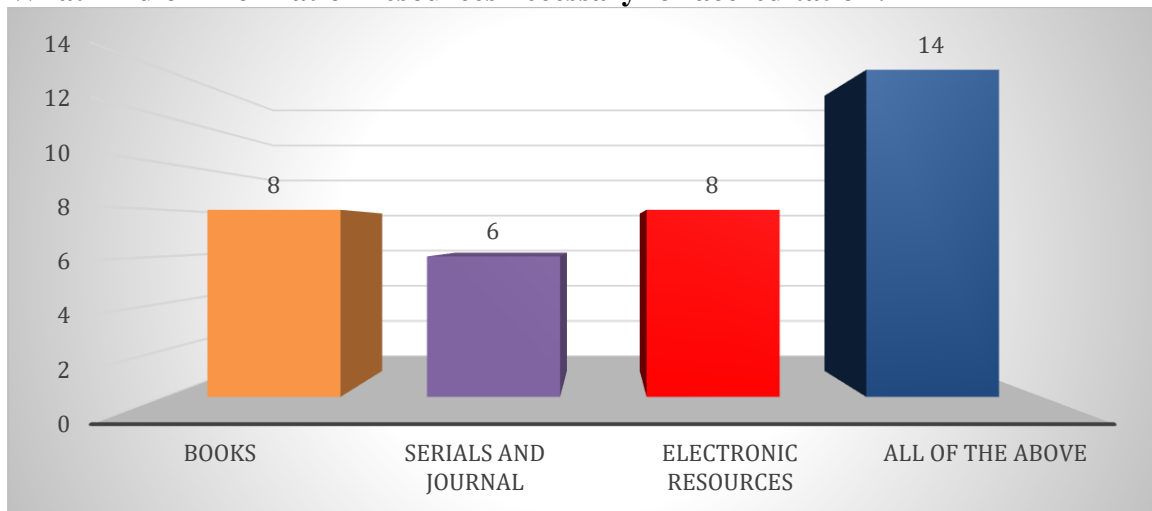
Must Library resources meet GTEC requirement before programme accreditation?

Figure 2. State of resources in Libraries before accreditation?
Source: Field Survey, 2021

Figure 2 shows that 7(19%) of the respondents indicated No that the library resources must not need to meet GTEC requirements before programmes accreditation whiles 29(81%) of the population studied expressed Yes that the library has to meet GTEC requirements before programmes accreditation which means, a significant majority attest to the notion the resources in the library must meet GTEC requirements before programmes are accredited to be run by universities.

What kind of information resources necessary for accreditation?

Figure 3. Information resources necessary for accreditation
Source: Field Survey, 2021

Concerning the information resources necessary for the accreditation, figure 3 shows that 8(22.2%) of the respondents indicated books, 6(16.6%) of the respondents indicated serials and

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journals, 8 (22.2%) of the respondents indicated electronic resources whiles 14(38.9%) of the studied population indicated all of the above which interprets that the respondents are seconding that, all the above mentioned resources in the library (books, serials, journals, and electronic resources) are all essential in the programme accreditation in TU's.

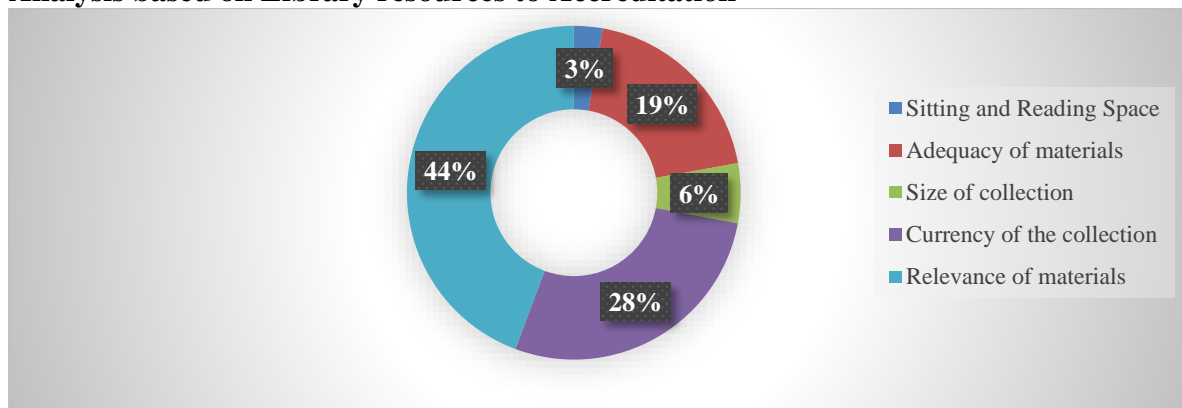**Analysis based on Library resources to Accreditation**

Figure 4. Library factors to consider for university programme accreditation
Source: Field Survey, 2021

Figure 4 shows that 3% of the respondent indicated sitting and reading space, 19% of the respondents indicated adequacy of materials, 6% of the respondents indicated size of the collection, 28% of the respondents indicated currency of the collection whiles 44% of the respondents indicated relevance of materials in the library, with all this responses one can deduce, the relevance of the materials, how current they collections of the library are and the adequacy of the materials in the libraries of TU's are really considered by librarians and assistant librarians when it comes to the resources considered for university programme accreditation.

FINDINGS

Data analysis of libraries relationship to accreditation
Figure one illustrated that the librarians are aware of the library's significance in supporting programmes accreditation with the percentage of 89, figure two shows that the resources of the libraries must meet GTEC's requirement before programmes accreditation in TU's with the percentage of 81. Concerning the information resources necessary for the accreditation, figure 3 shows that 38.9% of the respondents indicated all of the enlisted resources, 22.2% of the respondents indicated books, 22.2% of the respondents indicated electronic resources whiles 16.6% of the respondents indicated serials and journals. Figure 4 shows that 44% of the respondents indicated relevance of materials, 28% of the respondents indicated currency of the collection, 19% of the respondents indicated adequacy of materials, 6% of the respondents indicated size of the collection, whiles 3% of the respondents indicated sitting and reading space.

Analysis based on library resources to accreditation
Also, the findings further reveal that space, size of collection and source of funds are the basic factors to be considered during university accreditation. This conclusion was drawn from Nkiro and Yusuf (2007) who emphasized that the volume of collections and funds given to them to allow acquisition of library resources goes a long way in improving it quality evaluation (accreditation) process.

Analysis based on the relevance of materials that are stock in the academic library to accreditation requirements
The information resources in the library are relevant to the user's curriculum, this is in addition to the wide and pervasive coverage it has on the curriculum of users. This is in agreement with the study of Bello (2014) who maintained that the role of university libraries is indispensable in the recognition of the set objective of the parent institution by supporting the university programs through operative planning, acquisition of current and relevant information materials and making them readily available as required by the university community.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that sitting and reading space, adequacy of the materials, how relevant the materials are, the currency of the libraries of technical universities collection plays a very crucial elements in the accreditation of programmes. Knowing that available information resources are current and adequate. GTEC demands that adequacy of library information resources and information services, appropriate to the academic level and scope of an institution's programmes, is essential for accreditation. The study of Oseghale (2008) reveals that the currency of information resources is among others factors considered when academic library embarks on collection building for accreditation purpose. The research concludes that the librarians of Technical Universities are aware of the library being a requirement in the accreditation of programmes. The library is responsible for acquiring information resources in various formats in other to meet up with accreditation requirements, this is further supported by the fact that staff is aware of the role libraries play in supporting accreditation. The findings are also in agreement with Afolabi (2014). He posits that the academic library is seen as a reference point for accreditation at all times but is faced with many issues that affect the way service is provided regularly. This is why technical university libraries serve as a major gateway to the accreditation of programmes in their institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations were made:

1.   The study recommended that each technical university library must have a spacious capacity for sitting and reading to make accreditation quite easier for the university.

2.   The study suggested the collection of the libraries of the technical universities must be current to help support accreditation of programmes in their institutions.

3.   The study also recommends that the resources of the libraries must also be relevant to the programmes being offered by the various technical universities in Ghana.

4.   It also endorsed that academic library should also invest in the procurement of electronic resources, as the world is going digital.

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