

# Council of Legal Education Standards for Law Report Collection in Nigerian Universities

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## Abstract:

The study investigated the development of law reports collections in the South East Universities in relation to the Council of Legal Education standards. The scope consisted of 49 titles of local and foreign law reports listed by Council of Legal Education as accreditation bench mark and involves seven law faculty libraries in the universities South East Geopolitical zone of Nigeria that offer law programme. The instrument for data collection was the standard check list released by Council of Legal Education. This check list was found appropriate and was adopted for this study. Two research questions were formulated for the study. The findings showed that two law libraries, NAU and UNEC met the Council of Legal Education standards in foreign law reports, while three law libraries, ABSU, EBSU and NAU met the standards in local law reports. Recommendations were made which include among others, the need for adequate funding of law libraries to enable them purchase the required law materials.

**Keywords:** Law reports, Legal Education, Law Library, Council of Legal Education, accreditation,

## 1. Introduction

Ukpanah and Afolabi (2011) defined law library as a collection of legal information organized for use of those seeking to qualify as, or who have qualified as lawyers, and those enacting or administering law. It is a special library serving the specific needs of its users. The users include members of the legal profession, that is, practicing lawyers, judges, magistrates, state counsels, law teachers, law students, members of the House of Assembly, House of Representative and Senate. The contents of a law library are made up of primary and secondary sources which include Acts of Parliament, Gazettes, Reports of Cases, digests, books of law and books on law which include treatises, commentaries, journals, textbooks, encyclopedias.

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

During accreditation exercise of any faculty of law programme, the law library plays significant and prominent role in assessing and judging the faculty. In building a law library collection, efforts should be made to expose collection gaps which in some cases may or may not be totally filled during such accreditation visits which usually come up every five years. For the faculty of law libraries to maintain a balanced collection, meet the demands of students, lecturers and law professionals and pass accreditations conducted by the regulatory bodies, the National Universities Commission and the Council of Legal Education, there must be adequate collections and other law programme requirements put in place.

Accreditation of degree and other academic programmes by the National Universities Commission means a system for recognizing tertiary educational institutions (universities and programmes offered in these institutions) for a level of performance, integrity and quality which entitles them to the confidence of the educational community, the public they serve and the employers of labour. Accreditation is usually based on minimum acceptable standards. Some institutions in the past have failed accreditations because of their inability in meeting the accreditation requirements with regards to the law libraries collections. The failure of accreditation by any institution or faculty means loss of confidence by students, parents and the general public in the university concerned. According to National Universities Commission (1989), in any faculty of law accreditation exercise, if all the facilities, equipment and personnel are put in place and are adequate, but the law library collections are inadequate, the academic programme must fail accreditation.

The Council of Legal Education has provided university law libraries' collection standards. Adequate funding by universities is required to put in place an adequate library for the academic programme. According to Nwangwu (2000), under-funding has been a serious problem facing university education in Nigeria. Emphasis is laid on accreditation requirements by both National Universities Commission and the Council of Legal Education. But National Universities Commission's emphasis lies more on requirement to enable students to

pass their first degree (LL.B) and Council of Legal Education's emphasis covers all law programmes up to Doctorate degree (Ph.D.)

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

### **Research Questions:**

The following research questions guided the study.

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

### **Review of Related Literature:**

Libraries have passed through series of historical development. During the developmental process, various kinds of definitions have been given to library in consonance with its original purpose. According to Olanlokun and Salisu (1993), library is a place entrusted with the acquisition, organization, preservation, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information in whatever format it might appear. A law library, according to Ukpanah and Afolabi (2011) is a collection of legal information organized for use of those seeking to qualify as, or who have qualified as, lawyers and those enacting or administering law. It is the pivot on which the faculties of law revolve for attainment of their educational excellence, goals and objectives. It is imperative that law libraries must strive to build adequate law collections that are adequate in both quality and quantity.

Collection is the sum total of the materials a library has at a particular time. Ezema (2004), explained that collection refers to the size of materials in terms of volumes a library has in its possession at a time noting that the collection may include books in various subjects and general reading, reference books, periodicals, pamphlets, documents and manuscripts, and archival materials. Collections involve discovering weak areas of the collection that need to be empowered, as well as the strong areas that need to be evaluated with a view to reaffirming their relevance in satisfying users' demands (Duru and Onwuama, 2006).

Kotso (2007), argued that the need for standard collection for the law libraries in terms of quality and quantity cannot be over emphasized. He further said that they must have the depth of the subject of law as well as the disciplinary diversities. Other issues related to a standard law collection focus on how current and how relevant they are. The quantity should be such that the library users should not have to struggle before they can get the books to use.

It is not possible to discuss the issue of the holdings of the law library collection without relating it to funding of the library and to autonomy, either partial or full. Idowu (2006) said that no matter what standards are being set for the composition of materials, the flow of adequate funding is paramount. Some measure of autonomy on the part of the law librarian to make decisions on what to acquire and how to acquire them should be a settled matter in all universities. A situation whereby unsolicited or unimportant materials, Idowu (2006), said are acquired and stocked to gather dust should no longer be allowed to exist in our law libraries. Adequate funding is a sine qua non to an effective law library management.

Idowu (2006), made a worthy case for autonomy when he noted that: "autonomy is needed to ensure professional purity and professionally guided actions". Auyo's fear, he said, is hinged on the bureaucratic bottlenecks that go with managing funds in our public institutions. Financial independence is highly desirable in setting standards and meeting the needs of law library clientele. A situation where funds meant for the law libraries are diverted to other purposes by the university authorities is worrisome.

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

other institution of higher learning. It is only through the process of accreditation that new students, returning students, and families of students can trust that the education they are paying for is valuable and worth their time, money and effort. Accreditation status indicates that a college, university, or programme meets the standards of quality set by the accreditation organization in terms of faculty, curriculum, administration, libraries, financial well-being, and student services.

The National Universities Commission (as cited in Akomolafe, 2009) stated that the objectives of accreditation of academic programmes in Nigerian universities are to ensure that at least the provision of Minimum Academic Standards documents are attained, maintained and enhanced. Employers and other members of the community are assured that Nigerian graduates of all academic programmes have attained an acceptable level of competency in their areas of specialization. International communities are assured that the programmes offered in Nigerian universities are of high standards and their graduates are adequate for employment and for further studies.

For any accreditation exercise to be successful and approved, it must follow a set standard. There are standards in law libraries' management which covers the collections, staffing, physical structure, security, funding, services and others. On law library building, Tuyo (2007), said that the Council of Legal Education, mindful of the importance of a standard law library made it an important condition that a faculty of law must have a separate standard law library before accrediting the law faculty. The library building's layout should be such that would make administration of the library easy and efficient. Photocopying facilities, for example, should be in place, easily accessible to the users without it being too close to the entrance for security reasons, and the fees charged should also be affordable to the students.

In organizing the law library materials, the Council of Legal Education recommended the use of a standard and common classification scheme – Moys Classification Scheme for all law libraries in Nigeria. This makes for uniformity of arrangement and easy dissemination of materials. The sitting arrangement should be such that it would be close to the collections on the shelves. The tables and chairs should be durable as well as being comfortable. As we are now in the IT age, Tuyo (2007) opined that time has come for the law libraries to be connected to a network whereby interested readers should have access not only when they are in the library but also when they are outside the library.

The National Universities Commission (1989), which is the regulatory body and clearing house for universities in Nigeria has stressed the importance of good and adequate staffing in her approved document which seeks to set uniform standards for law libraries, both in terms of staffing and holdings. Marafa (2001), stated that for a law librarian, academic and professional qualification are important factors that would facilitate the execution of professional responsibilities from a position of strength... The librarian should be a hybrid professional – a lawyer and a librarian.

It is one of the requirements of the NUC that every law faculty should have a law library which is separate, and distinct from any other library the university may have (NUC 1989). It is also the provision of the Council of Legal Education that the law faculties be housed in their own physical facilities (CLE 2002). The law library in the same way should be distinct from the main library and other campus libraries. This is one of the major requirements for accreditation of a law faculty by the Council of Legal Education.

To achieve these standards requires a lot of funds. Tuyo (2007), suggested that to achieve these standards, the budget for the law library should be added to the budget of the faculty. This would ensure that the faculty would have control in the acquisition of law materials for the library. Tuyo (2007), also argued that where the budget of the law library is subsumed into the overall budget of the university library, there is the likelihood that the faculty library would not be able to acquire most of the materials it is expected to acquire.

### **Purpose of the Study:**

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

- Law reports (local) collections; and
- Law reports (foreign) collections, accreditation requirements based on the Council of Legal Education standards.

## Methodology:

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

The instrument for data collection was the check list provided by the Council of Legal Education as accreditation bench mark. The check list contained 49 titles of Law Reports (local and foreign) which were regarded as core titles by the Council of Legal Education. The researchers personally visited the university law libraries within the area of the study with the authenticated check list and checked the collections against the check list. The check list was used to crosscheck the collections of every faculty law library within the area of the study. Every law report title listed in the check list was checked against all the law libraries' author/title and subject catalogues, the checklist catalogues and the accessions registers to verify if such title was listed among the holdings of the law library.

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

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

V.P.	-	Very Poor	-	0 – 20%
P.	-	Poor	-	21 – 40%
Mod.	-	Moderate	-	41 – 60%
G.	-	Good	-	61 – 80%
V.G.	-	Very Good	-	81 - 100%

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

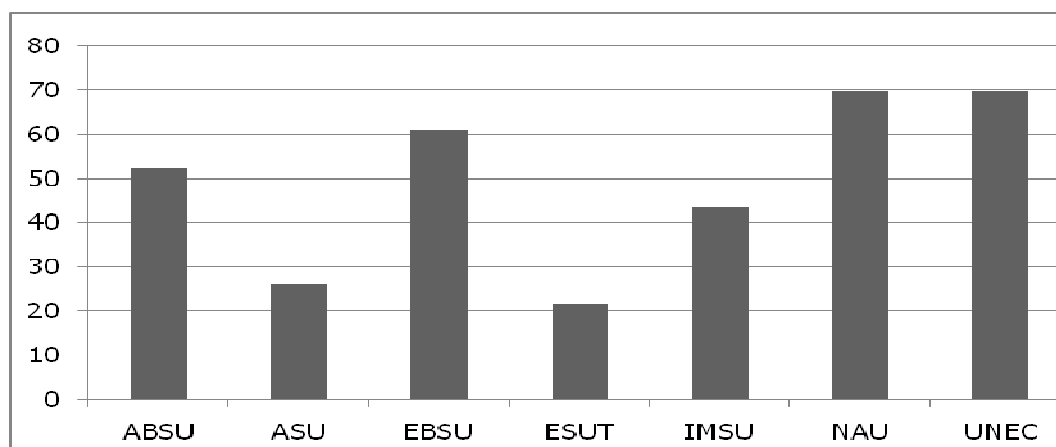
## Analysis and Interpretation of Data:

### Research Question 1:

What is the extent of the development of law reports (foreign) collections based on the Council of Legal Education standards in faculty law libraries in universities South East Geopolitical zone of Nigeria?

LAW REPORTS (FOREIGN)						
S/No	Universities	Expected Number	Available Number	Percentage Availability	Extent of Availability	Decision
1.	ABSU	23	12	52.17	Mod	Below Standard
2.	ASU	23	6	26.09	P.	Below Standard
3.	EBSU	23	14	60.87	G	Below Standard
4.	ESUT	23	5	21.74	P.	Below Standard
5	IMSU	23	10	43.48	Mod	Below Standard
6.	NAU	23	16	69.57	G	Above Standard
7.	UNEC	23	16	69.57	G	Above Standard

**Table 1:** Summary of Descriptive Analysis of Development of Law Reports (foreign) in the Faculty Law Libraries



**Figure 1:** Bar Chart showing Percentage Availability of Legal Resources - Law Reports (foreign) in the Faculty Law Libraries in South East Nigeria

**Findings and Discussions:**

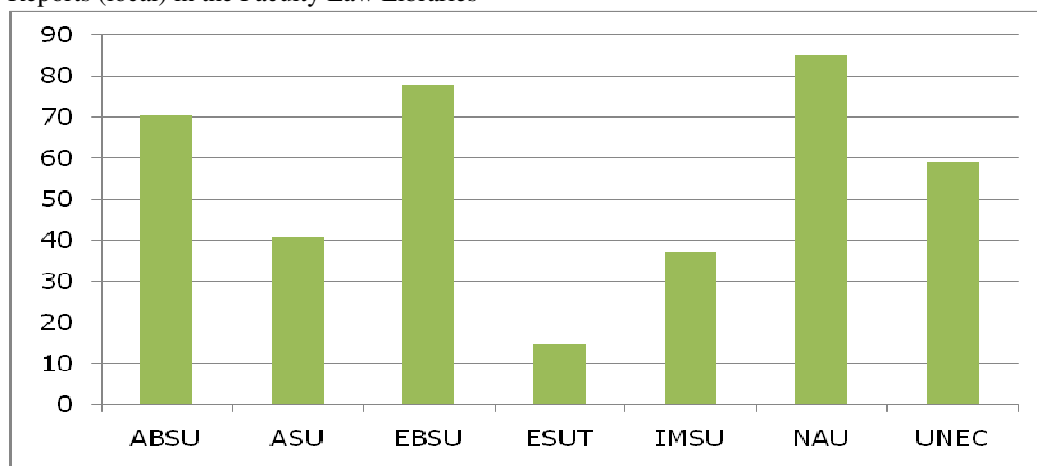
Table 1 shows that two law libraries in the zone, NAU and UNEC met the Council of Legal Education standards in foreign law reports in the South East Geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The result also showed that some law libraries in the zone have more developed collections than the others. The result further showed that the collections of EBSU (60.87%), NAU (69.57%) and UNEC (69.57%) were more than those of ASU (26.09%) and ESUT (21.74%). The above differences also showed that while EBSU (60.87%), NAU (69.57%) and UNEC (69.57%) have good (G) developed collections, ABSU (52.17%) and IMSU (43.48%) have moderately (Mod) developed collections, while ASU (26.09%) and ESUT (21.74%) have poorly (P) developed collections in foreign law reports.

**Research Question 2:**

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

LAW REPORTS (LOCAL)						
S/No	Universities	Expected Number	Available Number	Percentage Availability	Extent of Availability	Decision
1.	ABSU	26	19	70.37	G	Above Standard
2.	ASU	26	11	40.74	Mod	Below Standard
3.	EBSU	26	21	77.78	G	Above Standard
4.	ESUT	26	4	14.81	V.P.	Below Standard
5.	IMSU	26	10	37.04	V.P.	Below Standard
6.	NAU	26	23	85.19	V.G.	Above Standard
7.	UNEC	26	16	59.26	Mod	Below Standard

**Table 2:** Summary of Descriptive Analysis of Development of Law Reports (local) in the Faculty Law Libraries



**Figure 2:** Bar Chart showing Percentage Availability of Legal Resources - Law Reports (local) in the Faculty Law Libraries in South East Nigeria

Table 2 shows that three law libraries, ABSU, EBSU and NAU met the Council of Legal Education standards in local law reports collections in the South East Geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The result also showed that some law libraries in the zone have more developed collections than the others. It further showed that the collections of ABSU (70.37%), EBSU (77.78%), NAU (85.18%) and UNEC (59.26%) were more than those of ASU (40.74%), IMSU (37.04%) and ESUT (14.81%). The above differences also showed that while NAU has very good (V.G.) developed collections in local law reports, ABSU and EBSU have good (G) developed collections, ASU and UNEC have moderately (Mod) developed collections, while ESUT and IMSU have very poorly (V.P.) developed collections.

### Conclusion:

Two of the law libraries in the South East zone of Nigeria, NAU and UNEC met the Council of Legal Education accreditation standards in foreign law reports, and three of the law libraries, ABSU, EBSU and NAU met the standards in local law reports. These findings have thrown light in the adequacy of information needs and materials reflecting the curricula of the courses being taught in our law faculties, (Onwudinjo, 2014).

### Recommendations:

The following recommendations were made.

- Serious efforts should be made by law librarians to comply with the Council of Legal Education bench mark in the selection and purchase of law books.



- Periodic assessment of the collections by the regulatory bodies should be ensured to enable law libraries to improve in their collections.
- Collections should match with the curricula of the faculties.
- Efforts should be made to adequately fund the law libraries to enable them purchase the recommended core and other relevant materials.
- Law library accreditation minimum requirements should from time to time be reviewed and revised so as to increase or include important materials published newly or after the release of the minimum standards.

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