European Journal of Innovation in Nonformal Education (EJINE)
Volume 5 | Issue 6 | June - 2025 ISSN: 2795-8612

Digitarizing Academic Planning Units of Nigerian Universities

Niyi Jacob Ogunode
Department of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria
niyijacobogunode@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The paper is a review study. The paper systematically explored the benefits of digitalizing academic planning units of the universities in Nigeria. The study employed the used of secondary data. The secondary data were collected from print resources and online publication. Content analysis was used for select the literatures. The paper concluded that digitization of academic planning unit in the universities in Nigeria supports effective accreditation processes, increased efficiency, aids data-driven decision making, cost savings, process automation and enhanced data security. Based on this findings, the paper suggests that the universities management should support the academic planning to fully digitalize their operations by increasing the allocation to the units. Management should provide training opportunities for academic officers working in the academic planning units to improve their digital capacity and skills. Private institutions and international organizations should support the academic planning by providing the units with digital facilities and resources.

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received: 14 Jun 2025
Received in revised form 16 Jun 2025
Accepted: 21 Jun 2025

Key words: *Digitalization, academic planning units, Universities*.

INTRODUCTION

According to the NPE (FRN, 2004), university education is expected to make optimum contribution to national development through the intensification and diversification of its programs for the development of high level human resources base within the context of the needs of the nation; make professional course contents to reflect Nigeria's national requirements; make all students, part of the general program of all-round improvement and to offer general study courses such as history of ideas, philosophy of knowledge and nationalism. Universities are expected to encourage and disseminate their research results to both government and industries. Universities are expected to inculcate community spirit in their students through projects and action research. They are expected to ensure that faculty in their professional fields have relevant industrial and specialized experience. However, the NPE states that a huge percentage of funding for university education shall be devoted to Science and Technology (Ololube, 2016).

The National Universities Commission (NUC) on realization of the need to put in place some management structure that would guide the orderly academic development of the University in the performance of its statutory functions of teaching, research and development as well as public service

proposed and established the Academic Planning Unit in Nigerian Universities in the early 1980's. Establishment of the Academic Planning Units in Nigerian universities is in response to the need to coordinate and streamline the academic policies and activities arising from sudden and sometimes uncoordinated growth, development and proliferation of programmes and units in the university system (Federal University Kasheri 2025).The function and responsibilities of academic planning units demand the application of technologies (Bright, &Kenneth, 2015;Ogunode Abubakar, Abashi, Ireogbu & Longdet, 2021)

2.0 Review of Literature

2.1 Concept of Academic Planning Unit

Academic Planning Unit also handles the collection and management of data and information to guide the academic development of universities while ensuring compliance with NUC's Minimum Academic Standards (MAS) and with the university senate's academic regulations. Structure of the Academic Planning Unit. The Academic Planning Unit is an integral part of the Vice Chancellor's office and headed by a Director. The Academic Planning Unit of Osun State University is currently headed by headed by Dr. M. O. Abanikannda, an Associate Professor of Computing/IT Education. The Director of Academic Planning Unit is complimented by other staff members. These include the Academic Planning Officer, Secretary, and Clerical Staff/Office Assistant (Federal University Kasheri 2025). From the above, academic planning in this paper is seen as a special unit or directorate established in the tertiary institutions especially the universities that is saddled with the responsible for the internal quality assurance of the physical facilities and academic equipment and accreditation development in the University. Academic planning unit is a sub-component unit in the tertiary institutions that handle academic planning function, data collection function and accreditation.

The Unit also oversees the external quality assurance carried out by the National Universities Commission (N.U.C) in terms of resource verification and accreditation of academic programmes. Academic planning unit handle critical functions in the tertiary institutions. The roles of the academic planning units cannot be underestimated. Academic planning unit is playing a crucial roles that has connection with the realization of the tertiary institutions goals and objectives. The cores functions of the academic planning units includes; resources verification and accreditation of academic programme, annual report writing, data collection, academic calendar planning and they act as a medium between national universities commission and the universities.

Functions of Director of Academic Planning:

The Director of Academic Planning of Osun State University is responsible to the Vice-Chancellor in the general superintendence over the academic and administrative affairs of the Academic Planning Unit which include the following:

1. Coordination and collation of information to National Universities Commission (NUC) for national planning purposes.

2. Promotion of the quality of teaching, learning and research in the university through periodic evaluation of academic activities in the University Monitoring and advising on the growth of department and establishment of positions in various units of the University and advise the Vice-Chancellor on the creation of new positions;

3. Monitoring the FTE (Full Time Equivalent) students enrolment in relation to staff strength; Guide academic and related units of the University on the operations of the Academic Brief and participate in the review of the academic Brief and general curriculum development, as at when due;

4. Liaise with National Universities Commission (NUC) on matters relating to academic planning and quality assurance including the University System Annual Review Meetings (USARM), system-wide

programme audit, and other academic matters that may be of interest and benefit to the University;

5. Coordinate and ensure compliance of academic and other units of the university with NUC guidelines on academic and other matters; Process proposals for the creation of new Departments and introduction of new programmes;

6. Coordinate and guide academic units/departments for purposes of programme accreditation and continuous quality assurance;

7. Coordinate and ensure the provision of conductive teaching, learning and research environment in the University;

8. Monitor the efficient and effective utilization of academic resources; Participate in the review of academic programme curricular of the University and evaluation of proposal for new academic programmes;

9. Generate and periodically update the University databank/statistics on academic and other matters and make necessary projections for the attention of the Vice-Chancellor; Generate policies for and identify priorities in the academic development of the University for the consideration of senate through the development committee;

10. Recommend desirable changes in the academic and administrative structures of the University to the Development Committee;

11. Participate in the preparation of the University Annual Budget; Maintain a computer based data bank on student and staff statistics for use in planning, budgeting and other management requirements

12. Carry out all other duties assigned by the Vice-Chancellor (Federal University Kasheri 2025; Iwerebor 2023).

Function of academic planning Unit

The services offered by the Academic Planning Unit are:

• To annually update, analyze and project population data for planning and preparation of the University's recurrent budget and resource allocation based on the approved budget of the University;

• To assist in the development of new guidelines and criteria and review of existing ones;

• To collect data on trends in University activities such as enrolments, staffing, staff training, graduate output etc and make such data available for research;

• To collect, analyze and interpret relevant data from all the units of the University;

• To prepare academic programmes for NUC accreditation by carrying out Mock accreditation exercises;

• To document and store information on all academic programmes of the University;

• To ensure that the University complies with and maintains Minimum Academic Standards;

• To make projections and advise the Vice-Chancellor on areas of major concern and vigilance;

• To participate in curriculum review activities and ensure compliance with guidelines and procedures for the establishment of new programmes;

• To provide data backed information on academic operations of the University;

• To publish University records, statistics, research reports etc;

• To regularly update and evaluate data from relevant University units to analyze the performance of the University;

• To monitor Lectures and examinations to ensure smooth conduct of academic activities (University of Osun State 2025). Academic planning role in the attainment of the university' goals cannot be underestimated (Bright & Abdulganiyu, 2015; Ogunode, & Abubakar, 2021; Ogunode, Abubakar, Abashi, Ireogbu & Longdet 2021).

2.2 Concept of digitalization of academic planning unit

Digitalization is not synonymous with the shorter term “digitization.” Digitization refers to the process of converting information into a digital format, while digitalization refers to the broader transformation of business processes and activities to take advantage of digital technologies and data. Digitization is often a step in digitalization, but it is not the whole process. Digitalization is more involved – and more powerful. Digitization is a digital transformation process that involves the integration of digital technologies into all areas of a business, leading to fundamental changes in how the business operates and delivers value to its customers. The dynamic and rapidly evolving digital landscape is driving disruptive change across all industries – including yours (Honewell 2024).

Digitalization is the conversion of analog information into texts, photographs, and voices, among others. The transformation is carried out through electronic devices such as scanners or specialized computer chips. Information is organized into bits which can be separately categorized into bytes. This serves as the binary data that computers can process. Digitalization is done to process, store, and transmit the information through digital circuits, equipment, and networks. Digitalization makes it easier to access, preserve, and share information. It is essentially a process of converting everything into digital format. Ultimately, digitalization aims to ease lives and create a more self-reliant business model that promises standardized quality and cost-efficiency (Hcltech 2025).

Digitization of academic planning unit is the process whereby activities and functions of the unit (planning, data collection and storage of data) are convert into a digital format. The result is the representation of an object, image, sound, document, or signal of the unit obtained by generating a series of numbers that describe a discrete set of points or samples. Digitalisation of academic planning unit is the process of using digital technologies to improve operation of the units and social operations within an organisation. It aims to transform how a institutions improve the efficiency and effectiveness. Digitalisation in academic planning unit aims to improve the efficiency of the unit processes, enhance the unit delivery of serviceand unit’s productivity. Digitization of academic planning unit is the process of practically and digitally converting core activities, programme and data of academic planning unit into a digital format, allowing it to be processed, stored, and transmitted through digital technologies. By integrating technologies into all areas of academic planning unit, digitalization drives fundamental changes on the operation of the unit and aid deliver value, leading to improved productivity, data-driven decision-making, and enhanced operation.

3.0 Method

The research uses an exploratory approach through literature studies sourced from Web of Science, Scopus, PubMed, Scholar, and Sinta, which are scientific databases capable of storing high quality articles. Key words used: "Benefits of digitalizing academic planning unit ". Inclusion criteria was published within the last ten years (2015-2025) to ensure the review was up to date, the full text was written in English and there was discussion about quality assurance in higher education. These articles were excluded if they did not fit the topic of discussion (adapted from Mayulu, & Tricahyadinata, 2024 in Ogunode, & Ineye-Briggs, 2025).

4.0 Result and Discussion on Benefits of Digitalization of academic planning units

Digitalization of academic planning units offers numerous benefits. Some of the benefits includes;

1) Support effective accreditation processes:

Digitization of academic planning unit in the Universities will support effective accreditation proceses in the universities. Accreditation digitization is the process of transferring traditional paper-based accreditation systems into digital formats. This can include digitizing paper forms, streamlining accreditation

processes through online portals, or creating digital databases of accredited entities. With the increasing use of technology in academia, digitalizing accreditation is becoming a more prevalent practice. This not only helps with efficiency and organization, but also allows for easier access to accreditation information and data analysis. By implementing digitalization, higher education institutions can ensure a more streamlined and transparent accreditation process (Ogunode, & Ineye-Briggs, 2025).

Digitalization of accreditation is the process of integrating modern technology and digital tools into academic programs accreditation process. This includes using digital resources for accreditation process, as well as automating administrative tasks such as, data collection verifying of resources, numbering and scoring of resources presented. The goal of digital accreditation is to enhance fast and efficient accreditation process, improved resources verification and improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of accreditation. By incorporating digital tools and resources, accreditation institutions are able to keep up with the rapidly evolving landscape of technology and provide tertiary institutions with the reliable and efficient processes (Ogunode, et al 2025).

2) Increased Efficiency:

Digitization of academic planning unit in the Universities will assist to improve and increase the efficiency in the operation of the units. Digitalization according to Equisofe (2025) automates routine tasks, reducing manual errors and accelerating processes. This leads to faster service delivery and reduced operational costs. Digitalisation allows planning processes to be automated and simplified. This leads to an increase in efficiency and effectiveness in academic planning and calendar planning in the universities as less manual work is required and the speed of data processing is increased.

3) Data-Driven Decision Making:

Digitization of academic planning unit in the universities in Nigeria will enhance data management. Academic planning unit is saddled with the function of data collection, analysis and storage in the universities. Advance analytic and real-time collection enable academic planning unit to gain valuable insights into customer behavior, market trends, and risk factors, leading to more informed and strategic decisions. Digitizing of academic planning unit in the universities will enable the units to collect and analyze large amounts of data in order to make better decisions. This leads to better planning and control of planning processes and enables universities to optimize their decision making process.

4) Cost Savings:

Digitization of academic planning unit in the universities in Nigeria will help to reduce the cost of operation. By reducing the reliance on paper and physical infrastructure, according to Equisofe (2025) digitalization helps in cutting down costs associated with document management, storage, and distribution. Digitalization can help academic planning units streamline their core function of planning, data collection and accreditation processes and reduce costs. For example, by automating routine tasks, the units can free up personnel time to focus on more strategic work. Digitalisation can reduce costs of operation. For example, using online meetings instead of Director' trips can reduce travel expenses. Using digital documents instead of paper documents can also reduce paper and printing costs.

5) Process Automation

Digitization of academic planning unit in the universities in Nigeria will support full automation operation in the units. The use of technologies to execute repetititive procedure and tasks without direct human intervention, or with minimal intervention. By converting documents and accreditation files into digital formats, academic planning can integrate them into automated workflows that improve efficiency and accuracy. Digitization of academic planning unit permits that documents can be automatically processed

according to pre-established rules. For example, an incoming invoice can be reviewed, approved and processed for payment without manual intervention. Digitization of academic planning unit in the universities helps to reduces errors that may arise when entering data, processing documents or performing calculations (Llonch, 2023)..

Digitization of academic planning unit in the universities promotes efficiency. Tasks that previously could take hours or days to complete manually, such a file and document reconciliation, can be done in minutes or seconds. Automation allows different sub-units or systems communicate with other departments and units, sharing and processing information seamlessly. Digitization of academic planning unit in the universities in Nigeria will allow notification and alert in case of irregularities, pending approval or any other important event. Digitization support pre-defined schedule and protocols, automation ensures that processes are performed I a uniform manner, resulting in consistent and predictable result (Llonch, 2023).

Digitization of academic planning unit in the universities will help to eliminating or reduce the need for manual intervention in certain tasks, employees can spend their time on more valuable and strategic activities. With automated processes, information is processed and presented more quickly and clearly, aid decision making process in the unit. Automated processes in the units are easier to scale. As the units expand and the volume of documents and invoices increases, systems can handle the additional load without the need to increase staffing level. Automation can ensure that specific protocols and regulations are followed, and also facilitates the audit process b maintaining clear and traceable record of all action taken (Llonch, 2023).

6) Enhanced Data Security:

Digitization of academic planning unit in the universities in Nigeria offer advanced security features like encryption and secure access controls, protecting sensitive customer data and reducing the risk of breaches. The set of measures, protocols and tools that protect digitized information against third part access, loss, alteration or threat. Digitalization offers multiple layers of security that often exceed the protection capabilities of physical documents. Digital systems allow specific permission and access level to be set. This means that only authorised persons can access, modify or delete specific documents Llonch, 2023).

Digital documents can be encrypted to ensure that even if someone gains unauthorised access, the cannot read or use the information without the appropriate decryption key. Digitized documents can b caked up to multiple location or to be cloud. In the event of system failures, natural disasters or any other incident, information can be recovered quickly. Digital document management systems often have logging capabilities that track who accessed a document, when and what changes were made. This is invaluable for transparency and accountability. Security update and patch. Software systems used to store digitized document are regularly update to address vulnerability and improve security (Llonch, 2023).

4.1 Finding

The study revealed that digitization of academic planning unit in the universities in Nigeria supports effective accreditation processes, increased efficiency, aids data-driven decision making, cost savings, process automation and enhanced data security.

4.2 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explored the benefits of digitizing of academic planning unit in the Nigerian' universities. The study revealed that digitization of academic planning unit in the universities in Nigeria supports effective accreditation processes, increased efficiency, aids data-driven decision making, cost savings, process automation and enhanced data security.

Based on this findings, the paper suggests that the universities management should support the academic planning to fully digitalize their operations by increasing the allocation to the units. Management should

provide training opportunities for academic officers working in the academic planning units to improve their digital capacity and skills. Private institutions and international organizations should support the academic planning by providing the units with digital facilities and resources.

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