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STAKEHOLDERS MEET ON PHARM.D PROGRAMME

In Vol.1 No. 07 of 23 October, 2006 edition of the Monday Bulletin, it was reported that the Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission affirmed that the final word on the establishment of Doctor of Pharmacy programme in the Nigerian University System would be determined at a meeting of stakeholders.

The National Universities Commission recognizes B. Pharm as a graduating certificate for the Pharmacy programme as captured by the Minimum Academic Standard (MAS) in 1989 and the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standard (BMAS) in 2001 and 2005.

Thus, all Nigerian Universities, except the University of Benin, offer the B. Pharm Degree. The University of Benin had, without the approval of the NUC and the appropriate curriculum had established Pharm. D programme. The Pharmacists Council of Nigeria (PCN), Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria (PSN) and the Federal Ministry of Health were therefore in disagreement with the action of the University of Benin. As a regulatory agency, the NUC emphasized that the programme could only be approved with the support of the stakeholders in the Pharmacy profession.

The NUC, in pursuance of its objective of an orderly development of university education in Nigeria, and, particularly in forestalling needless proliferation of programmes, convened a meeting of stakeholders to discuss the B. Pharm and Pharm. D programmes on Tuesday 30th January, 2007.

Prof. Placid C. Njoku, former Director of Quality Assurance, chaired the stakeholders' meeting. In attendance were representatives of Hon. Minister of Health, PCN and PSN, and Deans of Faculties of Pharmacy in Nigerian Universities. Others were, the representative of the National Employers Consultative Association, Members of the House Committee on Health, Visiting Professors in NUC, Staff of the Departments of Quality Assurance and Academic Planning and Research.

All the Pharmacy professionals and the Representative of the Minister of Health at the meeting indicated their support for the adoption of the Pharm. D in Nigerian Universities. It was their view that the Pharm. D programme would be taught in six (6) years and that new courses in Pathology and Pharmacovigilance would be introduced. The Clinical Pharmacy component had been expanded to include other areas of the discipline. The training of Pharmacists would henceforth be patient-oriented rather than product-oriented.

At the end, the stakeholders were in concert with each other that graduates of Pharmacy profession with Pharm. D would be better equipped to handle new developments in

Healthcare Delivery and that the new direction is in line with the new National Health Policy. The issues of the placement, remuneration and conditions of service of products of the new programme would be sorted out with the Establishment at the appropriate time.

After the exhaustive deliberation that addressed the key issues in the training of Pharmacy professionals, the stakeholders:

1. Agreed to recommend a paradigm shift in the training of Pharmacists to make them sensitive to the new challenges in healthcare delivery. This involved a change from drug-oriented to a patient-oriented training of Pharmacists;
2. Agreed that forthwith, new graduates of Pharmacy in Nigeria should be awarded Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm. D) as a basic degree while the Ph. D holder would be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy;
3. Recognized the expansion in Clinical Pharmacy in the proposed BMAS submitted by PCN to enhance the capacity and value of the new graduates;
4. Agreed that the PCN draft curriculum on Pharm. D should be extensively referred by the NUC to all stakeholders for their formal comments; and
5. Agreed that the NUC should use the expected comments as guide for its final position on the programme.

The NUC, therefore, successfully managed what could, otherwise, have caused confusion in the training of pharmacists in Nigeria. The Chairman, PCN, Professor F. A. Ogunbona expressed profound appreciation for this.

Berlin Principles on Ranking of Higher Education Institutions

The 12 February 2007 edition of Monday Bulletin featured a report of the 2nd International Symposium on University Ranking at which the NUC was represented.

A major issue contained in it was the Berlin Principles on Ranking. Aware of its importance and currency in Higher Education circles, Monday Bulletin presents the principles in this edition for the education of readers.

Rankings and league tables of higher education institutions (HEIs) and programs have become a global phenomenon. They serve many purposes. These include:

- Responding to demands from consumers for easily interpretable information on the standing of higher education institutions as well as stimulating healthy competition among them;
- Providing some rationale for allocation of funds while differentiating among different types of institutions, programs and disciplines.
- When correctly understood and interpreted, they contribute to the definition of “quality” of higher education institutions within a particular country, and complement the rigorous work conducted in the context of quality assessment and review performed by public and independent accrediting agencies.

This is why ranking of HEIs have become part of the framework of national accountability and quality assurance processes, and why more nations are likely to see the development of rankings in the future.

In view of the above, the International Ranking Expert Group (IREG) was founded in 2004 by the UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education (UNESCO-CEPES) in Bucharest and the Institute for Higher Education Policy in Washington, DC. It is upon this initiative that

IREG's second meeting (Berlin, 18 to 20 May, 2006) was convened to consider a set of principles of quality and good practice in HEI rankings—the **Berlin Principles on Ranking of Higher Education Institutions**.

This initiative has set a framework for the elaboration and dissemination of rankings—whether they are national, regional, or global in scope. It is expected that the framework will lead to a system of continuous improvement and refinement of the methodologies used.

Rankings and league tables.

A) Purposes and Goals of Rankings

1. *One of a number of diverse approaches to the assessment of higher education inputs, processes, and outputs.* Rankings can provide comparative information and improved understanding of higher education, but should not be the main method for assessing what higher education is and does. Rankings provide a market-based perspective that can complement the work of government, accrediting authorities, and independent review agencies.
2. *Clarity about their purpose and their target groups.* Rankings have to be designed with due regard to their purpose. Indicators designed to meet a particular objective or to inform one target group may not be adequate for different purposes or target groups.
3. *Recognition of the diversity of institutions and the differences in their missions and goals.* Quality measures for research-oriented institutions, for example, are quite different from those that are appropriate for institutions that provide broad access to underserved communities. Institutions that are being ranked and the experts that inform the ranking process should be consulted often.
4. *Provision of clarity about the range of information sources for rankings and the messages each source generates.* The relevance of ranking results depends on the audiences receiving the information and the sources of that information (such as databases, students, professors, employers). Good practice would be to combine the different perspectives provided by those sources in order to get a more complete view of each higher education institution included in the ranking.
5. *Specification of the linguistic, cultural, economic, and historical contexts of the educational systems being ranked.* International rankings in particular should be aware of possible biases and be precise about their objective. Not all nations or systems share the same values and beliefs about what constitutes “quality” in tertiary institutions, and ranking systems should not be devised to force such comparisons.

B) Design and Weighting of Indicators

6. *Transparency in the methodology used for creating the rankings.* The choice of methods used to prepare rankings should be clear and unambiguous. This transparency should include the calculation of indicators as well as the origin of data.

7. *Choice of indicators according to their relevance and validity.* The choice of data should be grounded in recognition of the ability of each measure to represent quality and academic and institutional strengths, and not availability of data. Be clear about why measures were included and what they are meant to represent.
8. *Measurement of outcomes in preference to inputs whenever possible.* Data on inputs are relevant as they reflect the general condition of a given establishment and are more frequently available. Measures of outcomes provide a more accurate assessment of the standing and/or quality of a given institution or program, and compilers of rankings should ensure that an appropriate balance is achieved.
9. *Assignment of weights to different indicators (if used)* Changes in weights make it difficult for consumers to discern whether the change in the status of an institution or program in the rankings was due to an inherent difference or the methodology.

C) **Collection and Processing of Data**

10. *Attention to ethical standards and good practice.* In order to assure the credibility of each ranking, those responsible for collecting and using data and undertaking on-site visits should be as objective and impartial as possible.
11. *Use of audited and verifiable data whenever possible.* Such data have several advantages, including the fact that they have been accepted by institutions and are comparable and compatible across institutions.
12. *Use of proper procedure for collection of scientific.* Data collected from an unrepresentative or skewed subset of students, faculty, or other parties may not accurately represent an institution or program and should be excluded.
13. *Application of measures of quality assurance to ranking processes themselves.* These processes should take note of the expertise that is being applied to evaluate institutions and use this knowledge to evaluate the ranking itself. Rankings should be learning systems continuously utilizing this expertise to develop methodology.
14. *Application of organizational measures that enhance the credibility of rankings.* These measures could include advisory or even supervisory bodies, preferably with some international participation.

D) **Presentation of Ranking Results**

15. *Provision of a clear understanding of all of the factors used to develop a ranking to consumers.* This way, the users of rankings would have a better understanding of the indicators that are used to rank institutions or programs. In addition, they should have some opportunity to make their own decisions about how these indicators should be weighted.
16. *Compilation, organization and publication of Rankings in a way that eliminates or reduces errors in original data.* Institutions and the public should be informed about errors that have occurred.

Readers may wish to critique the principles and forward their reactions to: nucmondaybulletin@yahoo.com or to the website in the footnote¹

¹ *Adapted from International Partnership Issues: Ground Breaking Principles on Ranking of Higher Education Institutions.*
www.khep.org/organisation/press/berlin-principles-release.pdf.