




## QUALITY ASSURANCE ACCREDITATION STANDARDS AND THE FORENSIC ACCOUNTING PROFESSION IN NIGERIA



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### ABSTRACT

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This study examined the level of compliance of the forensic accounting profession in Nigeria with the Quality Assurance Accreditation Standards (QAAS), and the present state of the profession in the country, using both primary and secondary data. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data obtained from 161 respondents. A significant difference was found between the current state of the forensic accounting profession in Nigeria and the requirements of the QAAS. This study found that the profession lacks statutory regulatory institutions which enable legal frameworks in Nigeria. It was also found that the contribution of Nigerian universities to the advancement of forensic accounting is not significant due to insufficiently trained university lecturers and lack of facilities. This led to an acute shortage of qualified professionals in practice and a low standard of service delivery in the field. Many of the existing practitioners lack the requisite skills to function effectively. We concluded that the profession in Nigeria has not provided the expected impact on the fight against economic and financial crimes, and without QAAS in place the profession would remain powerless against the economic and financial crimes in the country. We recommend that the Nigerian Federal Government should create forensic regulatory institutions to ensure that the forensic accounting profession in Nigeria is focused on best practices and complies with the QAAS requirements.

**Contribution/Originality:** This paper's primary contribution is the discovery of a significant difference between the current state of the forensic accounting profession in Nigeria and the requirements of the QAAS.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The accounting profession is in a period of transition (Davis, Farrell, & Ogilby, 2010). Its environment has changed in the last two decades, and an accelerating rate of change is in prospect. The changing social attitude with the adoption of new management philosophies and the growing intensity of competition in a knowledge-driven global economy are impacting on the environment in which the profession presently operates. These have created the need to re-evaluate its objectives from a broad perspective. The profession is moving away from its traditional procedural base toward a role which emphasizes its social welfare importance (Tanko, 2013). The social welfare viewpoint is reflected in the development of social accounting, where the interests of stakeholders are expected to exert a dominating influence on the development of improved accounting policies and practices.

Consequently, studies have challenged the conventional accounting profession, in particular financial accounting and traditional auditing to demonstrate the interaction between the profession and society thereby artificially constraining the subject matter of the profession (Fagboro, Gordon, & Ehie, 2011; Okaro & Okafor, 2013a; The Forensic Careers, 2014). Based on this, The American International Institute of Certified Forensic Investigation Professionals (IICFIP) (2014) concluded that “in a situation where the needs of the society are not met, there is a need to open up a new area of research within the existing principles and practices of the affected profession”. The forensic accounting profession emerged to fill this gap as a response to economic and financial crimes and related vices, and failure of the traditional audit to tackle the menace (Fagboro, Ajibolade, & Akerele, 2014; The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria, 2013). According to the The American International Institute of Certified Forensic Investigation Professionals (IICFIP) (2014), to determine the depth and scope of economic and financial crimes and related matters, forensic accounting investigations should be conducted to investigate what is being perpetrated, when, where and how they are being perpetrated, and by whom.

The Centre for Forensic Science and Medicine (2013) maintained that “for any forensic discipline to attain world class status, its structures must be established on the QSEM”. In line with this argument, The Forensic Careers (2014) specified four structures of forensics: academic programme and research; professional training and certification processes; professional practice and engagement; and mandatory continuing professional education and development (MCPED). This study, therefore, argues that for the forensic accounting profession in Nigeria to fulfill its expected role there is a need to pay attention to its structures on the global best practices in line with the international quality assurance accreditation standards (IQAAS) through functional quality standards enforcement mechanisms (QSEM).

In Nigeria, the forensic accounting profession has been facing credibility challenges in recent times. For instance, studies have provided evidence that a significant gap exists between the current state of the profession and what the IQAAS require (Fagboro, 2005; Fagboro et al., 2014; Fagboro et al., 2011; Keshi, 2014). This has negatively impacted the quality of service delivery and, consequently, put the probative value of the profession in doubt. Globally, empirical studies on the need to strengthen the emerging forensic accounting profession for effective service delivery and credibility are scarce and are predominantly based on developed economies. It may have been presumed that the findings from these studies applied to developing nations, whereas developing nations have their own problems and peculiarities which must be solved and handled in ways that are relevant to them (Adeyemi & Fagboro, 2013).

In the past two years there have been several protests by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), which is the leading professional accounting body in Nigeria to dissuade the Senate (i.e., the law making division of Nigeria’s government) from passing a bill for the establishment of two other accounting and forensic accounting professional bodies in Nigeria (i.e., the Chartered Institute of Forensic and Investigative Auditors in Nigeria and the Chartered Institute of Forensic Accountants of Nigeria). These two new professional bodies were proposed as measures to increase the number of skilled professionals that could enhance fraud prevention and detection as well as safeguard money in the government treasury. ICAN, on the other hand, has argued that creating multiple bodies to provide the same function as theirs is an unnecessary duplication of cost and resources because, since 2009, ICAN has had the facilities to provide training for accounting members interested in specializing in forensic accounting and investigation. Also, qualified members of ICAN are given a certificate as experts and authorities in practicing as forensic accountants after they have undergone a specialist certification course that is available only to their qualified members.

The debate about the creation of another professional institute for training investigative auditors and forensic accountants has created a need to analyze the current state of the professional capabilities and competence of the practitioners within the forensic accounting profession to evaluate the contributions of the two foremost Nigerian professional accounting bodies, ICAN and ANAN (Association of National Accountants of Nigeria), to facilitate the

advancement of the forensic accounting profession. This assessment will disprove or corroborate current arguments for the proliferation of other professional bodies that would establish the level of compliance of the forensic accounting professional training and certification processes in Nigeria with the IQAAS. Hence, the null hypotheses tested in this study are:

1. *The forensic accounting professional training and certification processes in Nigeria do not significantly comply with the IQAAS.*
2. *Forensic accounting professional and engagement processes in Nigeria do not significantly comply with the IQAAS.*

This study led to the creation and application of a standardized index to measure quality standards compliance in the forensic accounting academic programme and practice. Using a standardized index allows regulators and other stakeholders in Nigeria to capture a higher degree of subtlety in their compliance measurement efforts. It allows regulators to compile specific indicators to compare performance across time or components. This study also strengthens the ability of the accounting profession to serve its purpose in society. The data used for this study were obtained from the use of questionnaires, which may be a potential source of bias, including exaggeration, attribution and selective memory, among others.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The history of the forensic accounting profession in Nigeria is brief (Fagboro et al., 2014). In 2009, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN) founded the Audit, Investigations and Forensic Accounting Faculty that offers a specialized training and certification programme in forensic accounting (Keshi, 2014). The faculty introduced its certification programme in forensic accounting in 2011. However, the ICAN Forensic Certification Training Programme is restricted to its professional members only and are qualified chartered accountants who are either associates (ACAs) or fellows (FCAs) of the Institute. According to the [The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria \(2014\)](#), those who have passed the qualifying examinations but are yet to be inducted as associate members are not eligible to enroll in the forensic programme until they are formally admitted into membership of the Institute. Currently, the institute has trained and inducted over five hundred members as Certified Forensic Accountants of Nigeria (CFANs).

### 2.1. Professional Competencies in the Forensic Accounting Profession

Forensic accounting is the crossroad between investigations by the law and accounting as it includes inquiry, legal action support and dispute resolution (Pagliero, 2011; [The American International Institute of Certified Forensic Investigation Professionals \(IICFIP\), 2014](#); [The Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants \(CICA\), 2006](#)). Now that economic and financial crime has become as complex as human nature, forensic accounting is necessary to mitigate the economic and financial crime in our society (Ribadu, 2006). Allied literatures on forensic accounting were examined to demonstrate the knowledge gap.

The significance of forensic accountants' skills was studied by Digabriele (2008). Users of forensic accounting, forensic accounting practitioners, and accounting academics were surveyed and were asked to rate their disagreement or agreement with the significance of the nine identified competencies of forensic accountants. These competencies were divided into two. The first division is associated with the ability and knowledge of forensic accountants, and the second division is associated with the performance of forensic accountants. The study found that the three sets of people agreed on all items of performance and disagreed on items of ability and knowledge but, overall, accounting academics and practitioners agreed on the significance of the skills of forensic accountants over those of users of forensic accounting services (DiGabriele, 2010). In similar studies, DiGabriele (2011) opined that vital forensic accountant skills include decisive judgment, providing solutions to amorphous problems, exploratory liveness, methodical know-how and legal knowledge.

The search for forensic accountants' skills has revealed that knowledge of civil law, criminal law and courtroom dealings, and accounting, auditing and taxation as well as the art of investigation are included as skills that a forensic accountant should possess to unearth financial fraud (Harris & Brown, 2000; Harris, 2012; Ramaswamy, 2005). The strategy behind concealed fraudulent acts can be unveiled by knowledge of psychology, creative thinking and the investigative skills of forensic accountants, and findings should be communicated concisely and clearly to interested parties that may include people without auditing and accounting knowledge (Harris, 2012). Forensic accountants need to understand the inclinations behind criminal behaviour that inspire and encourage financial fraud. Additional skills mentioned in previous studies include an ingenious way of thinking, methodical abilities, and strong verbal and written communication skills that help to communicate information about the firm (Davis et al., 2010; Dreyer, 2014; Messmer, 2004; Ramaswamy, 2005). Experience in interpersonal relationships, business acumen, management, internal controls and business operations were noted by Grippo and Ibex (2003) and Ramaswamy (2005) as vital forensic accountant skills. Ramaswamy (2005) asserted that a forensic accountant must have a strong feeling of cynicism and an ability to interrogate stubborn people to draw out information from them. To carry out a risk assessment, forensic accountants must possess the capacity to understand a firm's internal control systems.

One university that offers a model curriculum guide to educate and instruct academic institutions, academic staff, potential students, practitioners and firms (both private and public) in forensic accounting is West Virginia University (2007). Accounting postgraduates and undergraduates were examined by Rezaee (2002) to find out if forensic accounting is a feasible career opportunity; the study revealed that both categories of students believed that forensic accounting is a feasible career opportunity but that colleges and universities do not give it appropriate consideration. Academics and practitioners were approached to examine the significance and delivery of forensic accounting education by Rezaee, Crumbely, and Elmore (2006). It was found that the significance of, and demand for, forensic accounting is increasing and will continue to do so, and that the academics and practitioners believe that forensic accounting education is significant and valuable to accounting students.

Chukwunedu and Okoye (2011) opined that the addition of forensic accounting *modus operandi* in auditing would increase auditors' competence in the discovery of fraud and consequently help to bridge the audit expectation gap even though this addition may have repercussions for accounting practices and education. Forensic accounting courses include the study of academic literature while underpinning skills essential to the practice (Chukwunedu & Okoye, 2011). Studies on the opinions of stakeholders (i.e., accounting academics, forensic accounting practitioners and users of forensic accounting services) in forensic accounting on significant skills for forensic accountants are few in extant literature and research is still ongoing in this area. For this reason, this study empirically examined the views of these three types of stakeholders and will be significant in shaping the future of forensic accounting.

## *2.2. Professional Bodies and Quality Standards Enforcement Mechanism*

Quality standards enforcement mechanisms (QSEMs) are a set of interacting variables that ensure the forensic profession complies with the specifications of the IQAAS (Pratt, 2014; The American International Institute of Certified Forensic Investigation Professionals (IICFIP), 2014). The IQAAS are global best practices designed for the forensic profession to attain global best practices, credibility and acceptance (The American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS), 2014; The International Standards Organisation (ISO), 2015). Aderibigbe (2000) opined that forensic accountants need a high level of proficiency, truthfulness and openness. They have to be meticulously trained and maintain a professional attitude in their work. Aderibigbe (2000) suggested that forensic accountants must be members of an accepted accountancy body by passing appropriate examinations to prove their competence. Efiog (2012) proposed that accounting graduates need exceptional training methods to obtain specialized skills to become specialists in forensic accounting.

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

A baseline survey design was adopted for this study to develop a quality standards compliance index for the forensic accounting profession in Nigeria. The study also adopted a critical incident technique (CIT) to objectively investigate the extent to which the forensic accounting profession in Nigeria conforms to the international quality assurance accreditation standards (IQAAS). The forensic accounting building blocks were used as the performance measures (academic programme; professional training and certification processes; professional practice and engagement; mandatory continuing professional education and development (MCPED); and professional institute and statutory regulatory authorities). The sample for this study included forensic accounting professionals (in both academia and practice) in Nigeria who were trained and certified by the IICFIP and/or ICAN only, with a minimum of two years post-qualification experience as of December 31, 2014. The number of forensic accounting professionals that met these criteria was two hundred and thirty-eight.

The primary data source consisted of copies of the questionnaire administered to two hundred and eight respondents (thirty copies were used for the pilot study). Out of the copies administered, one hundred and sixty-one copies were filled out and returned, representing 78% of the total number administered. Visits were made to the IICFIP Secretariat in Ikeja, Lagos State, Nigeria and ICAN's Audit, Investigations and Forensic Accounting Faculty at Oyingbo, Lagos. The visits were made to obtain data on the membership spread, methods of training and certification process, and mandatory continuing professional education and development (MCPED) programmes. In addition, both institutes' modules were scrutinized to evaluate their levels of compliance with the IQAAS benchmarks.

#### 3.1. Extent of Compliance with the IQAAS

The extent of compliance was measured using a compliance index. A compliance index is a scoring system representing the extent to which organizations, programmes or facilities comply with the identified relevant regulatory requirements or standards (The Compliance Indexing Project, 2014). The Quality Standards Compliance Index (QSCI) was designed to measure the level of compliance of the forensic accounting profession in Nigeria using the IQAAS scorecard. This study designed the following interpretations (see Table 1) on a scale of five points for the QSCI:

**Table-1.** Interpretation of the QSCI for the forensic accounting profession.

S/N	Index	Percent	Compliance Indicator	
			Level	Remark
i	3.0 – 5.0	60 – 100%	Moderate – Very High	Good – Excellent
ii	2.50 – 2.99	50 – 59%	Average	Fairly Good
iii	0.00 – 2.49	40 – 49%	Non-compliance – Low	Poor

Key: A minimum score is zero (0%), indicating that the entity/facility is out of compliance with all relevant requirements. The maximum scale is 5 (100%), meaning that the entity/facility complies with all relevant requirements (very high level). The average compliance index = 2.5 points (50%).

One of the issues with calculating this index is the distinction between non-disclosures that are a result of non-compliance, versus one that is a result of non-applicability. The current study's scope covers only professional training and certification. The scoring index, therefore, concentrates on the IQAAS requirements for items (ii) and (iii), for which the forensic accounting profession is responsible. If the current study had not applied this approach, many scores would have been artificially low because non-applicable items would have been treated as instances of non-compliance.

Consequently, the research instrument was on the extent of compliance of the forensic accounting profession in Nigeria with the IQAAS. This section measured thirteen items. Over the years, studies on quality standards compliance in forensics have used these items either in part or whole (Dutta, 2013; Kendall, 2013; Oberholzer, 2002; The Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants (CICA), 2006; Walls, 1974) to measure quality standards in

forensics. Consequently, the current study adopted the items as drivers of, and conditions for, quality standards in the forensic accounting profession in Nigeria. A set of five-point Likert scale questions was developed for the study, and items measuring several variables were interspersed (Howard & Sheetz, 2006; Kothari, 2004). Following the guidelines provided by the American Accounting Association (AAA) (1986) and Dutta (2013), the survey instrument was designed using opinions, factual items or categorical questions as well as open-ended items.

#### 4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

##### 4.1. Professional Qualifications of the Respondents

Table-2. Respondents' professional qualifications.

Professional Title	Yes		No	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
FCFIP/CFIP	65	40.4	96	59.6
CFAN	134	83.2	27	16.8
CFE	41	25.5	120	74.5
FCA/ACA	134	83.2	27	16.8
FCCA/ACCA	14	8.7	147	91.3
CPA	5	3.1	156	96.9
FCTI/ACTI	84	52.2	77	47.8
FCMA/ACMA	14	8.7	147	91.3
CAN	18	11.2	143	88.8
Others	0	0	161	100
<b>Average</b>	<b>51*</b>	<b>31.6</b>	<b>110*</b>	<b>68.4</b>

Note: \*Total number of respondents = 161.

The respondents in this study are forensic accounting professionals in Nigeria certificated by the IICFIP and/or ICAN with a minimum of two-years post-qualification experience. Thus, as seen in Table 2, the respondents are Fellow Certified Forensic Investigation Professional (FCFIP) or Certified Forensic Investigation Professional (CFIP) of IICFIP, Certified Forensic Accountants of Nigeria (CFANs) of ICAN Forensic Certification Training Programme, or a combination of both FCFIP/CFIP and CFAN. Following the ICAN's forensic certification rule, ACA/FCA is a condition precedent for CFAN. For the forensic accounting professional training programme, ICAN only trains its existing professional members (who are holders of FCAs/ACAs) as Certified Forensic Accountants of Nigeria (CFANs). Consequently, from Table 2, the number of CFANs (134) tallies with the number of ACAs/FCAs. Furthermore, some ICAN members, as well as non-members, have looked towards the IICFIP for certification.

##### 4.2. Compliance of the Forensic Accounting Professional Training and Certification Process in Nigeria with the IQAAS

The IQAAS stipulate that a minimum of ten necessary skills should be covered in the forensic accounting professional training and certification process. However, the responses, as summarised in Table 3, show that theoretical investigative skills, multitasking skills, effective communication skills, strategic skills and negotiation skills are not covered up to the minimum required compliance index of 2.5 points in the forensic accounting professional training and certification process in Nigeria. On the other hand, technical investigative skills, problem-solving skills and expert witness skills are all covered above the minimum compliance index. Both critical thinking skills and logic are not covered. The results show that the compliance index of the basic skill requirements in the forensic professional training and certification process in Nigeria is very low (1.70) on a scale of five points, which equates to 34%. This implies that the specialized forensic accounting professional training and certification processes in Nigeria do not significantly conform to the IQAAS. Omoniyi (2004), Fagboro et al. (2011), Fagboro et al. (2014) and Keshi (2014) found that many of the existing forensic accounting practitioners in Nigeria lacked the requisite skills to function in the field of specialization effectively.

**Test of Hypothesis One:** *Forensic accounting professional training and certification processes in Nigeria do not significantly comply with the IQAAS.*

**Table-3.** Skill requirements in the professional training and certification process.

Basic Skill Requirements	MI S	Ranking	Compliance Indicator	Remark
Theoretical investigative skills	2.83	4 <sup>th</sup>	Low	Scarcely covered
Technical investigative skills	3.71	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Moderate	Covered
Multitasking skills	2.59	5 <sup>th</sup>	Low	Scarcely covered
Critical thinking skills	0.00	9 <sup>th</sup>	Non-compliance	Not covered
Problem-solving skills	3.92	1 <sup>st</sup>	Moderate	Covered
Effective communication skills	1.00	8 <sup>th</sup>	Significantly Low	Scarcely covered
Expert witness skills	3.44	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Moderate	Covered
Strategic skills	1.91	6 <sup>th</sup>	Low	Scarcely covered
Negotiation skills	1.83	7 <sup>th</sup>	Significantly Low	Scarcely covered
Logic	0.00	9 <sup>th</sup>	Non-compliance	Not covered
Overall Mean Item Score	2.23		Very Low Compliance	

**Table-4.** One-sample T-Test for hypothesis one.

	Test Value = 4					
	T	Df.	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Basic skill requirements in forensic accounting professional training and certification process	-37.992	160	.000	-1.702	-1.79	-1.61

Note:

Independent Variable: IQAAS.

Dependent Variable: Professional training and certification processes.

Table 4 shows a low significant difference between the basic skills offered in the forensic accounting professional training and certification processes and the IQAAS requirements. This implies that the ICAN Forensic Certification Training Programme does not significantly comply with the IQAAS. Thus, this study accepts hypothesis one as stated.

#### 4.3. Compliance of the Forensic Accounting Professional Practice and Engagement process in Nigeria with the IQAAS

From Table 5 we can see that the overall mean item score of the compliance index reported (1.70) is deemed very low compared to the IQAAS minimum acceptable standard of 2.5 points (The International Quality Assurance Accreditation Standards (IQAAS), 2014). This implies that the forensic accounting profession in Nigeria does not significantly conform to the IQAAS; most of the required governance structures (statutory forensic accounting institute, the association of forensic practitioners and academy of forensics) that enable legal frameworks and enforce quality standards are not in place in Nigeria.

**Table-5.** Nigeria's forensic accounting profession compliance with the IQAAS.

Determinants (IQAAS Requirements)	Mean Item Score	Remark
National Institute of Forensics	0.0	Non-compliance
National Academy of Forensics	0.0	Non-compliance
Statutory Institute of Forensic Accounting	0.0	Non-compliance
Training and Certification Process	5.0	Very high compliance
Mandatory Continuing Professional Education and Development	0.0	Non-compliance
Statutory Professional Standards and Codes of Conduct	0.0	Non-compliance
Overall Mean Item Score of the Compliance Index	1.70	Very low compliance

#### 4.4. Quality Standards in Forensic Accounting Practice and Engagement

The figures in Table 6 show that 89% of respondents agree that the hallmark of forensics is the delivery of high-quality services, 83% agree that quality standards enforcement strengthens the credibility of forensic work products, and 79% believe that quality standards are enforceable in the forensic profession. However, 49% of respondents agree that quality standards enforcement in the forensic accounting profession in Nigeria is low, and 73% agree that the forensic accounting profession in Nigeria lacks the necessary governance structures. As a result, 74% believe that the profession rests on a weak methodological foundation. The current results validate previous findings by Fagboro et al. (2014); Fagboro et al. (2011) and Keshi (2014). Regarding the determinants of the quality of the result of a forensic investigation, the respondents rate professional qualification (95%) over both educational qualification (73%) and quality of the research publications (72%) of the forensic accountant. That is, professional attainment positively impacts the quality standards in the forensic discipline.

**Table-6.** Perception of the professionals on the quality standards in the forensic accounting practice and engagement.

Quality Standards	MIS	Remark	%	Effect
The hallmark of forensics is the delivery of high-quality services.	4	Agree	89	Positive
<b><i>Determinants of the credibility of a forensic investigation include:</i></b>				
i. Educational qualification of the forensic accountant.	4	Agree	73	Positive
ii. Professional qualification of the forensic accountant.	4	Agree	95	Positive
iii. Quality of the research publications of the forensic accountant.	4	Agree	72	Positive
iv. Quality of training of the forensic accountant.	4	Agree	71	Positive
v. Skills of the forensic accountant.	4	Agree	74	Positive
vi. Experience of the forensic accountant.	4	Agree	73	Positive
vii. Competence of the forensic accountant.	4	Agree	72	Positive
viii. Quality standards enforcement strengthens the credibility of forensics.	4	Agree	83	Positive
ix. Quality standards are enforceable in the forensic profession.	4	Agree	79	Positive
x. Quality standards are enforced in forensic accounting in Nigeria.	3	Undecided	49	Neutral
xi. Forensic accounting in Nigeria lacks the necessary governance structures.	4	Agree	73	Negative
xii. Forensic accounting in Nigeria rests on a weak methodological foundation.	4	Agree	74	Negative

Note: MIS = Mean Item Score.

#### 4.5. Test of Hypothesis Two

Identification of Variables:  $Y = f(X)$ :

1.

**Table-7.** One-Sample T-test for hypothesis two.

	Test Value = 4					
	T	Df.	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Quality standards in forensic accounting practice and engagement.	-28.329	160	0.015	-1.037	-1.09	-0.701

Note:

Independent Variable: IQAAS

Dependent Variable: professional practice and engagement



Table 7 reports that there is a significant difference between the compliance level of the variable and forensic accounting practices and engagement in Nigeria. This implies that the variable quality standards compliance in the forensic accounting practices and engagement does not conform to the IQAAS. This study, therefore, retains hypothesis two as stated. This position confirms the findings of Omoniyi (2004) and Degboro and Olofinsola (2007).

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study found that the level of contribution of the Nigerian professional accounting bodies to the advancement of the forensic accounting profession in the country is low. ICAN is presently the only Nigerian professional accounting body offering specialized training and certification programme in forensic accounting. However, the programme is restricted to the professional members of ICAN. This study found variability across forensic accounting activities in Nigeria in terms of training and certification processes. These findings suggest that the forensic accounting practices in Nigeria lack uniform coordination, training, certification and accreditation standards.

The study reported on the extent to which the ICAN Forensic Certification Training Programme complied with the IQAAS basic skills requirements. The compliance index used in this study to measure the certification program's extent of compliance with the IQAAS revealed that the compliance level was low. The outcome of the study confirms the findings of Fagboro et al. (2014) and Keshi (2014), who found that a good number of the qualified forensic accounting professionals in Nigeria do not possess the requisite skills required to operate successfully. The results showed a statistically significant difference between the forensic accounting professional training and certification process in Nigeria and the IQAAS.

The level of compliance of the forensic accounting professional practice and engagement in Nigeria with the IQAAS is 0.39 on a scale of five points. For instance, the IQAAS stipulate that every professional forensic institute must conduct mandatory continuing professional education and development (MCPED) for its members at least once every two years. ICAN started its forensic accounting certification programme in 2011 and the institute is yet to conduct MCPED for its members. This confirms the submissions of Fagboro et al. (2014) and Keshi (2014) that the profession in Nigeria rests on a weak methodological foundation. Forensic accounting activities (academic programme and research; professional training and certification procedures; professional practice and engagement; and mandatory continuing professional education and development (MCPED) in Nigeria presently lack strong ties to IQAAS. Based on the above results, this study sustained hypothesis two – that there is a statistically significant difference between forensic accounting professional practice and engagement processes and the IQAAS. This study recognizes advances made in the forensic accounting discipline globally leading to greater use of forensic evidence in the court of law. However, the future of the profession lies in the active participation in continuous quality improvement strategies and support for research and development initiatives.

Although the forensic accounting profession in Nigeria is now regulated by a government agency, there is call for the profession to have a body of forensic accounting professionals to take part in the regulation of members' activities and demeanors for the benefit of the country and its citizens. It is therefore recommended that the Nigerian Federal Government, through the enabling Acts of Parliament, should uphold the decision to establish regulatory bodies, such as the Chartered Institute of Forensic and Investigative Auditors in Nigeria and the Chartered Institute of Forensic Accountants of Nigeria. These organizations should have autonomous power to pursue a strong research agenda to confirm the evidentiary reliability of methodologies used in forensic practices in Nigeria, set standards for the validity and reliability of extant forensic techniques, establish standards for their use in the courts of law, and create a system to enforce standards, push for improvements and secure the integrity of the final forensic products meeting the international quality assurance accreditation standards (IQAAS).

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