

**NIGERIA CERTIFICATE IN EDUCATION PROGRAMME:
THE NEED FOR RESTRUCTURING**

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ABSTRACT

The Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) programme was created in line with the Ashby Report on Education in 1959, which emphasized the need for the training of middle level manpower for our educational institutions. Initially, graduands from Colleges of Education, that is to say, NCE holders were employed to teach in secondary schools (both junior and senior secondary), but with the abolition of Teacher Training Colleges (who hitherto produced teachers for primary schools), NCE holders were thus redirected to teach mainly in the Basic Education years (primary and junior secondary schools). Colleges of Education (C.O.E.) as the name suggest are meant for those who want to go into teaching line. C.O.E. usually award Nigeria Certificate in Education. From the name, it is a certificate that will be recognized in any part of the country. N.C.E. serves two main purposes: one can use it to apply for teaching job, especially in primary and junior secondary schools, and the certificate can be used for admission into 200 level in degree awarding institutions. A close look at most of the programmes run in Colleges of Education shows that these Courses or Programmes are not structured to meet the new academic needs and demands of pupils in primary schools and students in junior secondary schools. NCE students are still trained as if they are to teach in both junior and senior secondary schools. Thus, this work is primarily concerned with the need to restructure the programmes run in the College of Education to enable it serve the present need for which it is meant to meet. It is on this premise that this study advocated that curriculum experts and National Commission for Colleges of Education should urgently restructure NCE programmes, (not only in Federal Colleges of Education), to address its present status and to meet the needs of the society.

Keywords: Nigeria Certificate in Education, National Policy on Education, Colleges of Education, Teaching.

Introduction

Teaching is indeed a challenging profession and the teacher is the most important factor in the learning environment, according to Peretomode (1992). Thus, teacher preparation is of utmost important in any society. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) rightly points out that no education can rise above the quality of its teachers, thus, there is need to place major emphasis on educational planning and development. The implication of this is that the success or failure of any educational system depends greatly on the teacher. So, teacher preparedness must be of utmost importance to any nation. This is why, according to the National Policy on Education, Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) is considered the minimum qualification for entering into the teaching profession in Nigeria. Enughe (2005) puts this explicitly when she said that the ultimate goal or destination of education in Nigeria is quality assurance. One desires an educational system that is not only qualitative but also assuring of a future devoid of fallen standards. She went on to say that, because education does not occur in a vacuum (and not transmitted through vacuum), the importance of a teacher becomes obvious in the attainment of educational goals. For education therefore to be qualitative and assuring, the teacher who is the instrument and chief character in the classroom must first be qualitatively and assumingly equipped to perform for qualitative and assuring results. Sadly, this is not the case in Nigeria. Ureubu (2006) posits that, equally worrisome is that most of our teacher education institutions turn out teachers that are deficient in content and methodology, thus are unable to handle teaching effectively.

The Policy stipulates that teacher education shall continue to take cognizance of changes in methodology and in the curriculum. One then wonders whether the present programmes run by most Colleges of Education are really “taking cognizance of changes in methodology and in the curriculum”. The National Commission for Colleges of Education has stressed the need for public and private Colleges of Education in Nigeria to comply with the Minimum Standard set for their operation in order to meet the requirements needed for full accreditation of their courses. These were emphasized in papers delivered by officials of the Commission, on the 2012 edition of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) Minimum Standard, and the use of Quality Assurance Toolkits for Institutions’ Assessment, held for Staff of Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo on April 3 -6, 2017. Speaking on the topic “Reforming Pre-service Teacher Education: Rationale and Implications, the Executive Secretary of NCCE – Prof. Bappa-Aliyu Muhammadu, explained that the restructuring exercise being embarked upon by the Commission is targeted at addressing crisis affecting teacher education in the country.

The crisis include: poor quality of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) graduates, abysmal performance of pupils in public examination, mounting public outcry on the quality of NCE graduates and inappropriate NCE syllabus. Others are, inability to fashion out systematic approach at matching teachers’ demand and supply, lack of linkages and partnership between Colleges of Education and State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEB), among others. He also emphasized that the New Minimum Standard is geared towards making NCE graduates become professionals and specialists in various areas which include, Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE), Primary Education, Junior Secondary School Education as well as Adult and Non-formal Education, and Special Needs Education.

Using Akwa Ibom State College of Education as our case study, the NCE programmes are flogged with courses (subjects that are not taught, relevant or offered in our Basic Education Schools; Primary 1 – 6 and Junior Secondary 1 -3. The NCE holders, most times are trained and

pushed into the labour market, where they see themselves to be treading on an unfamiliar terrains.

A greater number of them resort to dodging the teaching of some subjects (if they can), opt to teach in the lowest levels of the school (the Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) section). Others just go in to the class and teach whatever they feel like teaching thinking that the pupils “do not know anything”. Some of them may go to the extent of influencing their posting to most remote areas so that they may avoid going to work for weeks only to show-up when there are rumours of impending inspection by the Education supervisors, who most times, notify the Head teacher or the Principal of their impending visits, expecting some “fat envelopes” in return, from the Principal. There is need therefore to look at the Basic Education Programme and appraise it with the courses (subjects) run by most Colleges of Education, in the country.

Primary Education and its Goals

Primary Education is the foundation of all educational endeavours, structures, policies and programmes of any nation (Maduewesi, 2005). Thus, a poor system of primary education compromises the entire system of human capital development. It produces students who are poorly prepared for secondary and tertiary levels of education and adults who are illiterates (Lockheed and Verspoor, 1993). They went on to say that, most importantly, it does not produce enough truly educated parents, workers and managers who can contribute to development. Thus, improving the quality of education for pupils in primary school is a prerequisite for developing the human resource base requirement, to meet the changing technological demands for the 21st Century. According to the National Policy on Education (2013), the goals of primary education include the following:

- (a) Inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively.
- (b) Lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking.
- (c) Make citizenship education a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society.
- (d) Mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child.
- (e) Develop in the child the ability to adapt to the child’s changing environment.
- (f) Give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child’s capacity.
- (g) Provide the child with basic skills for further educational advancements, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

The curriculum for primary education shall include:

Primary Classes 1-3

Core Subjects: English Studies, one major Nigerian Language (Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba), Mathematics, Basic Science and Technology, Social Studies, Cultural and Creative Arts, Christian Religious Studies/Islamic Studies, Physical and Health Education, Computer Studies, Civic Education.

Electives: Pupils must offer not more than 2: Agriculture, Home Economics, Arabic Language.

Primary Classes 4-6:

Core Subjects: English Studies, one major Nigerian Language (Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba), Mathematics, Basic Science and Technology, Social Studies, Cultural and Creative Arts (CCA), Christian Religious Studies/Islamic Studies, Physical and Health Education, French Language, Computer Studies, Civic Education,

Electives: Pupils must offer not more than 2. Agriculture, Home Economics, Arabic Language

The Junior Secondary School

Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) states that the Junior Secondary School shall be both pre-vocational and academic. It shall teach basic subjects which will enable pupils to acquire further knowledge and skills. The subjects to be offered are: English, French, Mathematics, Language of the environment, one major Nigerian Language other than that of the environment. Integrated Science, Social Studies and Citizenship Education and Introductory Technology. Junior Secondary School students are expected also to offer at least one of these subjects: Agriculture, Business Studies, Home Economics, Local Crafts, Computer Education, Fine Arts and Music. Also, they must offer one in these group – Religious Knowledge, Physical and Health Education and Arabic.

A Case Study: Akwa Ibom State College of Education, Afaha Nsit

In Akwa Ibom State College of Education, Afaha Nsit, one sees that there are six Schools in the Institution. This is shown in the table below, and the various departments.

School	Department
Education	(i) Foundations (ii) Curriculum and Teaching
Art/Social Sciences	(i) Social Studies (ii) Political Science (iii) Economics
Sciences	(i) Biology (ii) Chemistry (iii) Physics (iv) Integrated Science (v) Mathematics (vi) Computer Science (vii) Physical and Health Education
Vocational/Technical	(i) Business Education (ii) Agricultural Science (iii) Home Economics (iv) Technical Education.
Early Childhood Care and Primary Education	(i) Primary Education Studies (ii) Early Childhood Care and Education (iii) Adult and Non-Formal Education.
Languages	(i) Nigerian Languages (Ibibio) (ii) French (iii) English

School of Education

This is the “Mother” of all other Schools in the Institution. The aim of the School is to satisfy the requirements for the award of Nigeria Certificate in Education and to make all graduates in the College professional teachers.

In preparing the NCE teachers, the school aims at operationalizing all the principles entrenched in the National Policy on Education with regards to the professional preparation of teachers and the structure of our educational system. Foundational courses that are taught aim at preparing the student-teacher on what he will meet in the classroom setting. Also, courses in Curriculum and Teaching and structured to equip the student-teacher on how he will carry on his instruction (teaching) in the classroom. Thus, both the methodology and content of teaching are emphasized in this School. As the policy emphasizes on the need to use instructional materials and teaching aids in the lower level of education, courses to help improvise these teaching aids are offered and the student-teachers are exposed to their uses. Thus, School of Education is a major unit in any College of Education or teacher training institution.

School of Art and Social Sciences

Social Studies is considered as one of the major subjects to be taught in the Basic Education years. Ekeng (2010) records that Social Studies is a process of education that has goals, purposes and aims at preparing a child to take up responsible roles in the society. For this to be possible, the subject trains the child and package him with values, skills and dexterity, knowledge and attitude needed for his survival in the society. Udoukpong, Emah and Okon (2006) maintain that the subject promotes students' growth as individuals and as citizens of a nation and of increasingly interdependent world. One therefore sees that Social Studies is very necessary in order to develop the inquiry and reflective minds of the young ones. Political Science and Economics are Social Sciences that deal with human behavioural pattern. These subjects are not studied in the Basic Education (Primary and Junior Secondary Schools). One wonders why these courses continue to be offered in Colleges of Education who are training teachers to teach in the Basic Education years. This negates the functionality theory of any educational system; as the knowledge gained is expected to have a direct or corresponding benefit to the society. There is therefore need to redirect our students to other departments that will help prepare them for the present education disposition and knowledge that will have direct bearing on our national development.

School of Sciences

Idris (2010) defines science education as a way of doing things, which involves observing natural phenomena, qualifying what has been observed and trying to bring meaning to this observation. He notes that Science Education is fundamental; it is something we cannot get along without because it is essential to understanding the world we live in. Omoifo (2007), who conducted a research on the programmes run by Colleges of Education, stated that her research was necessitated by the Federal Ministry of Education's directive that in Federal Colleges of Education, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, etc. should be integrated and studied as Integrated Science, but the case is not so in most Colleges of Education. The goals of science education include:

- i. Cultivate inquiring, knowing and rational mind for the conduct of life in the society.
- ii. Produce scientists for national development.
- iii. Scientific studies in technology and the cause of technological development, and
- iv. Provide knowledge and understanding of the complexity of the physical world.

With these, Science Education does the following to the pupils, according to Olodu and Osagiede (2011):

1. Science helps pupils to explain events in nature by identifying those beliefs that are superstitious.
2. Science teaches children how to think and reason in a logical manner.
3. Science teaches children how to solve simple problems they encounter on a day to day basis.
4. Science helps pupils to develop their physical skills e.g. through the proper handling of objects and microscope.
5. Science enables pupils develop social skills e.g. establishing friendship while working cooperatively in groups.
6. Science helps children satisfy their natural curiosity through opportunities to carry scientific investigation.
7. Science helps to prepare individuals for future career in medicine, pharmacy, engineering, and so on.

One sees that Biology, Chemistry and Physics are not subjects offered in primary or junior secondary schools. Awarding NCE in these sciences may not really prepare the student teacher to face what he may find in the primary science or integrated science curriculum. A new and relevant department could be created out of these subject areas, called Basic Science or Primary Science Department. In this “new department”, some basic concepts in science teaching would be thoroughly exposed to the NCE graduates. Pupils will not just be trained to remember but to understand these scientific principles and apply these in our quest for science and technological advancement.

In this ‘Basic Science Department’, the student-teacher would be exposed to the method, content and pedagogical ways of teaching science in the foundational level of education. When this science teaching is properly done, societal problems in agriculture, industry, health and socio-economic development will be taken care of. Bessong, Ekpo, Effiong and Usang (2000) record that Lagos State Government in 1993/94 built a College primarily to train teachers who will teach Primary Science in the primary schools. Omoifo (2007) maintains that the Federal Ministry of Education had directed that the preparation of Science teachers in Federal Colleges of Education be in integrated form. She says that Colleges of Education such as Federal College of Education, Okene, Abeokuta, Pankshin, Bichi and Yola no longer have departments of Chemistry, Physics and Biology. One wonders why this directive is meant only for Federal Colleges of Education and does not apply to the State owned Colleges of Education.

School of Vocational and Technical Education

The goals of Vocational Education are to:

- (a) Provide trained manpower in the applied science, technology and business particularly in craft, advanced craft and technical levels.
- (b) Provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development.
- (c) Give training and impart the necessary skills to individual who shall be self-reliant economically.

Vocational/technical education, when properly acquired, can lead to creation of sufficient job opportunities in the country. Entrepreneurship education provides the basic for the development of a private sector economy as opposed to public service oriented education where individuals are prepared for white collar jobs (Bassey and Archibong, 2005). Agbede (2011) lists the areas whereby graduands from these departments can create wealth for themselves and also transfer this knowledge to the young ones in school. The areas are: trade and crafts, weaving, technical drawing, music, agricultural education, electrical electronics, marketing, hotel and catering, home management, auto-mechanic, carpentry, textile and clothing, fine and creative arts.

One notices that this School lacks enough trained manpower who can impart the necessary knowledge, attitudes and skills to the students. Agbede maintains that vocational/technical education will, of course be efficient and effective in proportion as the teacher had a successful training and experience in the application of the knowledge and skills he undertakes to teach. There is need therefore to restructure this School and relevant courses taught; if our quest to achieve our vision 20, 20:20 is to be realized.

School of Early Childhood Care and Primary Education

The School is divided into three departments: Primary Education Studies (PES), Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and Adult and Non-Formal Education. PES concerns itself with the

preparation of the student-teacher to teach mainly in primary school while the ECCE prepares them for practical and activity-based teaching in pre-primary. Adult and Non-Formal education prepares youths and adults who may not have had opportunity or could not complete their education due to one factor or the other, to functional education, outside the formal school system. This School is considered as the most appropriate for the training of middle level manpower for our primary schools. The different subjects offered in primary schools are taught in detailed by specialized lecturers and these courses have direct bearing on what the student-teacher will experience in the classroom. Seeing the importance of this School, it is expected that Colleges of Education and Universities awarding NCE and degree in PES be encouraged as the primary level of education is the foundation to any other level in education and this level must not be toyed with.

School of Languages

Language teaching and how it affects the nations and individual developments cannot be over-emphasized. Language teaching is the bedrock of all academic activities and failure in language courses is almost synonymous to complete educational failure. There are three departments in the School – Nigerian Languages (Ibibio), French and English. As the Policy statement, p. 12 and 16 provides that the medium of instruction in the pre-primary and the first three years of primary education shall be the language of the environment, there is need therefore for the teaching and learning of Efik/Ibibio to be encouraged. Orthography in this language should be developed and many students motivated to study the language. French is considered as the second official language in Nigeria and Ezenwa (2006) maintains that there is need to motivate pupils to learn this language. She said that the French teacher can use the following strategies to do this:

- Creating awareness of French
- Creating an enabling environment for studying French (both physical and psychologically)
- Developing a learner-centered instruction.
- Using appropriate instructional materials.
- Helping unmotivated students.

With these, pupils will have more interest to study the language, as there is need for more teachers to teach this subject in our educational institutions.

English is considered as the official language in Nigeria. Isah (2006) asserts that this is because it is the language of government, education and administration as well as the general language of both national and international transactions. He maintains that English language, unlike other subjects in the school curriculum is a skill-based course. This means that students are expected to have a high level of proficiency in the use of the language. Thus, there is need to provide specialized teachers of the language to the basic education pupils, as this is the foundation to other educational levels.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the different views and analysis of this work, the writer agrees with Ebong (2006), Ekeng (2012), Udoukpong, Emah and Okon (2006) that the six important spheres of education in Nigeria – Early Childhood Care and Primary Education, Basic Education, Secondary Education, Tertiary Education, Adult and Non-formal Education and Special Need Education are based on the prevailing policy structure and governance, the physical infrastructure available, deployment

of technology, academic achievements, monitoring and inspection, the quality of curriculum, teacher quality and supply and the functioning and equity issues. It is the view of the writer that NCE graduates be made to teach only in primary schools. Education graduates (First degree holders) from the Universities should teach in Secondary Schools and higher degree holders in Education be made to teach in Colleges of Education and Faculties of Education in the Universities. This order will help promote efficiency and stabilize our educational polity in our quest for functional education system. The methodology and content of teaching be handled by educational professionals and the aim of teaching which lies in integrating the individual into a sound and effective citizen would be realized. It will also gear towards self-realization, better human relationship, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, utility, as well as social, cultural, economic, scientific and teaching progress of the nation. The recommendations shall be done based on the different Schools in the College:

- i. Seeing the importance of the School of Education in preparing the teacher-trainees, more departments should be created, instead of the present two. These could be
 - Foundations
 - Guidance and Counselling
 - Management and Planning
 - Curriculum and Teaching
 - Instructional Technology
- ii. In School of Art/Social Science, Social Studies and another department called Integrated Arts should be created as this will integrate concepts from Humanities, Social Science, Music and Arts and the teacher-trainee will be thoroughly equipped in the Arts/Social Science methodology. In this era of moral laxity and rise in vices among our young ones, there is need for a department of Christian Religious Studies where virtues desirable in the society will be taught and they are expected to pass these across to the pupils in the classroom.
- iii. The School of Sciences can create a department that integrates concepts in Biology, Chemistry and Physics and this department could be called Basic Science or Primary Science Department. This will be in line with the directives of the Federal Ministry of Education in 1992 that the preparation of Science teachers in “Federal Colleges of Education” be in integrated form. One wonders why this directive was only directed to Federal Colleges of Education. Thus, there is need for the National Commission for Colleges of Education and the Federal Ministry of Education to enforce the implementation of this directive, as this will enhance our aim for science and technological advancement. Also, computer laboratory should be well equipped and specialists employed that will de-emphasize in the theoretical aspect while promoting or encouraging the practical application of our ICT and its attendants development.
- iv. As Business Studies is a pre-vocational elective in junior secondary school, there is need therefore to train more teachers in this area, as the present enrolment is inadequate. One realizes that the School of Vocational/Technical Education has the lowest number of enrolment in the College during the 2016/2017 academic session. There is need to create awareness of the benefits accruing to students who study these vocational studies. This is the School that can prepare one to be self-reliant and this has a direct way of checking ‘unemployment plague’ in our country. Home Economics and Technical Education (Introductory Technology) department should receive more encouragement and modern

- equipment provided in the training of the students. Also, more students should be encouraged to study these subjects as there are great benefits attached to these.
- v. As School of Early Childhood and Primary Education is the major School where “real” primary school teachers are trained, it is recommended that more than half of the candidates seeking admission into Colleges of Education should be directed to enroll in this School. With this, better trained personnel will teach in our primary schools, which is the foundation for all other educational attainment.
 - vi. The training of teachers to teach Language of the immediate environment should be focused in the School of Languages, as there are dearths to these languages. This could be done by making the language of the immediate environment a single major or a compulsory combination to any other language studied. For example, a teacher-trainee who wants to study English, would be made to study English, Efik/Ibibio, not just English. Also, Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo teachers be trained as the impact of these languages are not felt outside their speaking environment’.
 - vii. There is need to promote the study of Art/Creative Art in our schools. Thus, a department of Creative Arts should be created, and this will encompass music, cultural activities of the environment, drawing and handicraft.
 - viii. In lieu of the moral decadence in our society, there is need to create Religious Studies Department in Colleges of Education and moral instruction taught to the young minds as a way of checking some social vices in the society.

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