

# DWINDLING STUDENTS' ENROLMENT IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: CAUSES AND REMEDIES

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## **Abstract**

*This paper examined the dwindling nature of teacher education in Nigeria, the causes and remedies. The paper discussed the concept of teacher education in Nigeria. The paper also examined the contemporary challenges confronting Colleges of Education to include apathy towards teaching profession, poor recognition and social prestige of teachers, pervasive teacher unemployment, and irregular payment of salaries and promotion of teachers. Recommendations have enunciated which include training of qualified teachers, motivation of students, funding of academic programmes in Colleges of Education, prompt payment of teachers' salary and employment for NCE graduates for improving students' enrolment in Colleges of Education in Nigeria. The paper concluded that NCE programme should be sustained and be allowed to run in all colleges of education since it does not only influence academic performance, but also increases the number of qualified teachers being produced.*

**Keywords:** *Colleges of Education, Teacher Education, Dwindling Enrolment.*

## **Introduction**

It is a fact that Colleges of Education are facing severe challenges globally. However, the case of Nigeria is different because of the leadership problem and corruption. Colleges of Education are saddled with the responsibilities of teaching and learning of courses that best equip the students for pedagogical activities, with the purpose of sharing the knowledge with the society for sustainable development. Colleges of Education are not well treated as a field of study in Nigeria. This is because majority of the Nigerian populace want to parade a University degree as against the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE). More so, it is noted that the government is the principal cause of this problem. Nigeria as a sovereign nation since her independence in 1960 has been having leadership problem, due to her political instability and quagmire. The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) is saddled with the responsibilities of co-ordinating the Colleges of Education in

Nigeria. The mandate of the teacher training programme at the NCE level, which is the recognized minimum teaching qualification in Nigeria, is to produce qualified teachers for the Basic Education Sub-sector. The Basic Education Sub-sector encompasses the following categories of education:

- i. Pre-primary Education or Early Childhood and Care Education
- ii. Primary Education
- iii. Junior Secondary Education
- iv. Adult and Non-Formal Education
- v. Special Needs Education

Each of these categories of education has an approved national curriculum which is distinctive and extensive in addition to those of the Senior Secondary education (which remain content specific). Thus, if the NCE is to remain relevant to the sub-sector it is intended to serve, it must do more than it is presently doing. It must prepare teachers with knowledge and skills required to teach effectively at the different levels and areas of the basic education programme, without being oblivious of the needs for higher education of the beneficiaries (FGN, 2012).

### **Colleges of Education and its Objectives**

Education according to Onyeachu and Onyeachu (2010) is a veritable tool for national development. This being the case according to them, there is every need to prepare teachers who will educate the citizenry. To that end, Onyeachu (2007) opined that for any nation to develop rapidly, there must be a teacher that does the work of educating its citizens. Hence, Mkpa (1987) depicted that there can be no meaningful formal education in the absence of the teacher. Education is nothing without qualified teacher. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2012) averred that no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers. As a result of the above assertion, teachers have to be well prepared practically for effective performance to their duties.

Colleges of Education, according to Olabode and Bello (2018) are the institutions that award the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), and this is obtained after a three - year post - secondary school pre - service teacher education programme.

In recognition of the pivotal role of quality teachers in the provision of quality education at all levels, teacher education shall continue to be emphasized in educational planning and development (FGN, 2014:43). Teacher education is the education given in institutions of learning after secondary education. It is through teacher education programme that teachers are prepared for effective performance of their duties. (Onyeachu & Onyeachu, 2010).

In Nigeria, Teacher Education has several levels. These according to Olayanju, Olayanju and Opatayo are: National Certificate in Education (NCE), Bachelor's degree in Education ( B. Sc (Ed) or B. Ed ), Professional Diploma in Education (PDE), Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), Master's Degree in Education (M. Ed) and Doctor of Philosophy in Education (Ph. D).

More so, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014:43) outlined the objectives of Teacher Education as to:

- a. Produce highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational system;
- b. Further encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- c. help teachers fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals;
- d. Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to changing situation and
- e. Enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

Onyeachu and Onyeachu (2010) noted further that the well-articulated objectives of teacher education cannot be achieved if teachers are not well prepared for effective performance of their duties.

### **Causes of Low Students' Enrolment in Colleges of Education:**

The Nigerian Colleges of Education are institutions saddled with the responsibility of training teachers for the primary and junior secondary schools. Similarly, the Colleges of Education in Nigeria, is the train-the-trainers' institution which trains the primary and junior secondary school teachers (Oritsebemigho, 2014). Nonetheless, the colleges had been criticized for lack of standards in its admission policy and also of lack of qualified academic personnel. Aina (2018) worried about different academic programmes mounted by these colleges which are not meant to benefit the students, but for financial purposes. These colleges are crucial in Nigeria, because the certificate awarded in these institutions is the minimum qualification a teacher can possess to teach in the country (Akindutire and Ekundayo, 2012). However, many things are affected such as teacher education, and lack of teaching and learning resources had affected these colleges.

Aina and Ayodele (2018) depicted that there are many challenges confronting Colleges of Education in Nigeria. Some of these problems according to them are: Teachers' inadequate pedagogical content knowledge, out-of-field teaching and low teachers' self-efficacy. More so, Aina and Ayodele (2018) identified many causes of the decline nature of students' enrolment among these are: the proliferation of private Colleges of Education, loss of interest by the students, lack of science equipment among others.

Furthermore, Aina and Ayodele (2018) noted that one of the main challenges confronting the Nigerian Colleges of Education is the dwindling students' enrolment nationwide, and some of these problems according to them are:

1. The proliferation of Colleges of Education: In the recent years, individuals and religious bodies have been in the business of establishing private colleges in Nigeria. The proprietors of these schools lower the admission standard to attract students. There is a particular state in Nigeria that has almost twenty private Colleges of Education. It is worrisome that these schools operated using unqualified lecturers, poor teaching equipment and lousy condition to service. The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) who supposed to monitor and

- check these colleges seems to be ineffective. These colleges offer cheap certificates to their students and that makes students prefer private colleges to the public where they will not face rigorous learning activities.
2. **Poor Quality Lecturers:** Gone are the days when quality lecturers are employed to teach in the Nigerian Colleges of Education. It is discouraging today in most of our Colleges of Education to hear that some lecturers are graduates of the sandwich programme. The sandwich programme is not to produce lecturers for higher institutions but for the in-service staff who may not have time to attend direct university education (Okpaga, 2016). The quality of education of this programme is not fit for lecturing in higher institutions. Most of these teachers in their sandwich training are poor in PCK and self-efficacy. Their teaching is not inspiring and does not create interest in learning in students. However, there are exceptional cases of some good teachers in the sandwich programme.
  3. **Lack of Interest:** Interest is vital in whatever anyone does. The students of this age have lost interest in learning. Students' interest would determine what they can learn and how well they may learn. Agbaje and Alake (2014) in their study on "The student variables as a predictor of secondary school students' academic achievement in science subjects" concluded that students' interest is vital to learning. There is no more interest in the students' learning that is why the enrolment is reducing every year in the colleges of education. Due to the loss of interest in the learning, students have developed a negative attitude towards Teacher Education. (Harry, 2011).
  4. **Lack of Science Equipment:** Science learning in many Colleges of Education has been turned into mere demonstration because there is no equipment for the right experiment. Science learning without practical activity has made learning dull and uninteresting to the students. Given this not many students are ready to enroll in Colleges of Education as it was in some decades back.
  5. **Poor Governance:** Corruption pervaded everywhere in Nigeria, and this had not allowed the citizens to enjoy the good governance. The governance affects the living standard of the average Nigerian; attending school is difficult for many who are of school age. The poverty level is on the increase every day resulting in students dropping out of schools.

Nonetheless, Will (2018) observed that there are a number of possible explanations for the decline of interest in teaching programmes. According to him, some of such reasons include the following among others:

1. The perception of teaching as an undesirable career. This perception is likely based on complaints about a lack of professional autonomy and low wages. In a remarkable sign of discontent, teachers walked out of their classroom in a half-dozen states. This spring, frustrated with low pay, crumbling classroom, and years of cuts to school funding. He further noted that almost half of the graduates who become teachers left the profession within a few years.

2. Too Many Elementary Teachers. There is a mismatch between the majors that students choose and the personnel needs of school districts. While there is not a national teacher shortage, there are some perennial shortage areas, including special education, high school mathematics and science, foreign language, and bilingual education among others.
3. Poor career counselling is also a major factor
4. Factor Need for employment

However, earlier studies have investigated the barriers to quality Colleges of Education, functional education and effective teaching with regard to human capacity development (Amadi, 2012; Ezekiel, Lawal, Ogunleye, and Williams-Oladapo, 2014; and Oyekan & Afolabi, 2017). Such basic challenges confronting Colleges of Education in Nigeria could be grouped into six categories, namely:

1. Apathy towards teaching and Colleges of Education;
2. Leadership failure and policy inconsistency;
3. Insufficient professional teacher preparation, supervision and mentorship;
4. Inadequate funding of education and training programmes;
5. Paucity of functional infrastructure; and
6. Poor remuneration, status and welfare package for teachers.

As potent indices of crisis in contemporary Nigerian education system, these above-mentioned hindrances must be timely rectified by all education stakeholders with the use of many critical resources, support services and merit-based recruitment of professionally trained teachers. The future is envisaged, assured and secured when the governments, parents and corporate community strive to provide equitable education for all. Apathy of youths toward their teachers, teaching profession and teacher education is a general problem discouraging and lowering the quality of applicants into tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria. Majority of youths detest choice of education, while they make career choice of other professions relatively considered more lucrative such as medicine, pharmacy, law, engineering, accounting, nursing, marketing and management. With introspection of life career, work compensation and job satisfaction, tertiary institutional applicants make choice of education to become teachers as the last option.

However, negative attitudes and misconception by the society towards teacher education is also an important factor negating students' enrolment in Colleges of Education. Teacher Education is often times seen as a dumping ground for the less privileged that could not make it through JAMB to the university. There exist some measures of discrimination, bias and negligence by the society towards NCE especially at the point of job entry and on the job. The society is of the opinion that NCE is meant to train students to be professional teachers of which most parents and students' are not interested in, rather parents prefer their children reading professional courses like engineering, medicine, law, accountancy, pharmacy and the like.

## **Remedies to Low Students' Enrolment in Colleges of Education in Nigeria**

Enrolment into Colleges of Education in Nigeria has dwindled down and the interest in College of Education among students has also gone down below the bet. Our children are losing interest in College of Education. This is not good for the development of education in the country.

As a result of the above, a more concerted effort to inculcate in school children the importance of College Education is needed to make government's flagship programmes on College of Education more meaningful.

Nonetheless, Anika (2018) outlined the following as some of the measures of increasing students' enrolment in Colleges of Education.

- i. Start your student recruitment activities as early as possible.
- i.. Email prospective students often
- iii. Involve parents in the college search.
- iv. Make the students, not your college, the focal point of your recruitment messaging.
- v. Design for a mobile first college enrolment experience
- vi. Integrate digital aps and texting into your channel mix.
- vii. Monitor and measure to bring it all together.

On the part of Aina and Ayodele (2018), they opined that the government should be more committed to the funding of the colleges of education academic programmes. This could be through the recruitment of highly qualified lecturers for all the educational programmes of the colleges. They noted that where some state governments no longer give monthly subvention to the colleges for the payment of staff salary is an "aberration". The payment of staff salary should be the full responsibility of the government. More so, the government should stop running Colleges of Education as a money-making venture. Education is essential for the development of every child and must be free for all citizens.

Accordingly, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) should put up several measures that will control and regulate the establishing of new colleges. The body should ensure the existing colleges follow the standards set by the government. The NCCE should close down any existing private colleges that have not met the criteria.

Similarly, Aina and Ayodele (2018) averred that the government should motivate students to learn and study in Colleges of Education by given them scholarship and bursary award.

It is essential to give lecturers the best training as much as possible as there cannot be a good education without a good teacher; because education is critical to the development of any nation and must make it viable in all institutions of learning towards sustainable development (Abdullahi & Jimoh, 2018).

## **Conclusion**

Efforts have been made in this write up to examine the dwindling nature of students' enrolment in Colleges of Education, the Causes and Remedies. Colleges of Education in Nigeria is an alternative route by which students can gain entrance into university in Nigeria. Students who came through NCE however are decreasing on a yearly basis. This is due to the negative perception of students and the society at large about the programme.

However, it is evident that those that came through NCE perform as expected as their counterparts that came through JAMB into the University

It is of paramount importance that NCE programme should be sustained and be allowed to continue in all Colleges of Education since the programme not only influences academic performance but also increases the number of better qualified teachers being produced by Colleges of Education in the country. Preparing students for three (3) years programme before actual University education programme is an alternative route by which education sector can be elevated and as such, propel national development. Similarly, students therefore should be encouraged in order to boost their intellectual growth and development.

### **Recommendations**

The author noted that the following recommendations are necessary for elevation and bringing NCE to relevance in Nigeria.

1. Awareness and orientation programme is necessary for students in secondary schools. Hence, all Colleges of Education should device programmes every year to sensitize students on the benefits of NCE programme at the secondary school level (catch them young).
2. Competent and intelligent lecturers should be provided/employed for NCE programmes nationwide.
3. Students should make up for their deficiencies before graduating so as to collect their results immediately after graduation.
4. The NCCE should form a formidable group to influence government's policies on education to improve a lot of Nigerians. More so, graduates of NCE with good grades should be given automatic employment so as to encourage hard work and young school leavers into the programme.

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