

COMPLIANCE OF NIGERIAN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION WITH THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR COLLEGES OF EDUCATION (NCCE) GUIDELINES ON TEACHER-STUDENT RATIO IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This paper has pinpointed so many ways of students/teachers ratio in compliance with the NCCE regulations covering all the tertiary institutions in the country. It is in view of this that recommendations have been pointed out in the work. For further recommendations in due course there should be ample opportunities for adequate compliance of colleges of educations in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

National Commission for Colleges of Education, Abuja (NCCE) is one of tripod agencies under Federal Ministry of Education, charged with the responsibility of producing well-motivated teachers of world class with high personal and professional discipline, integrity and competence for the expanding basic education sector in Nigeria and Africa at large.

The Commission was established in 1989 with the mandate to set and maintain standards in Teacher Education at the sub-degree level. The NCCE does this through harmonization of entry requirements, development of curricula for all NCE-awarding institutions, accreditation of NCE-awarding Institutions and their programmes, monitoring of implementation of academic programmes and certification of NCE graduates. The Commission, also, conducts researches on policy issues and publishes scholarly researches and data on teacher education and related issues. The need for NCCE arose out of the desire of government to replace the activities of the various universities in catering for academic standards and certification requirements of Colleges of Education. At that time, universities lay standards for NCE certificates. Though the universities carried out these assignments commendably through their Institutes and Faculties of Education, there was no parity in standards and practices. Consequently, universities had more confidence in products of their affiliate Colleges of Education and reflected same in their admission policies. For example, most universities admitted NCE graduates from their affiliate colleges for a two year B.Ed. degree program, while providing for three-year B.Ed. programs for products of the same NCE programs affiliated to other sister universities.

On establishment as a commission to monitor and control quality among colleges of education, the NCCE took its mandate of "laying down of minimum standards" for NCE programs and setting out "criteria for accreditation of colleges of education" in Nigeria seriously. To date, it has prescribed and reviewed the minimum standards for the training of NCE teachers having in mind the mission of "producing well-motivated teachers of world class quality with high personal and professional discipline, integrity and competence for expanding the basic education sector".

In order to meet the demand of this mission, NCCE believes like any other institution, that there are specific number of students which a teacher educator should manage within a specific class session to be able to produce quality teachers for the society. In this regard, the student teacher-ratio for education courses are kept at 1:50 students while for other courses are 1:25 students. The level at which these ratios are maintained in CoEs is the reason for this workshop.

The establishment of NCCE with its responsibilities

The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) was established by Decree No.3 of April, 1989 as an agency to supervise all aspects of non-degree teacher education and teacher professionalism in Nigeria. The enabling decree was later amended by Decree No. 12 of 1st January, 1993.

Functions

The decree establishing the NCCE mandates it, among other functions, to:

- i. Make recommendation on the National Policy necessary for the full development of teacher education and training of teachers.
- ii. Lay down minimum standards for all programmes of teacher education and accredit their certificates and other academic awards.
- iii. Approve guidelines setting out criteria for accreditation of all Colleges of Education in Nigeria.
- iv. Determine the qualified teacher needs of the country for the purpose of planning training facilities and in particular; prepare periodic master plans for the balanced co-ordinated development of Colleges of Education.
- v. Advise on, and take steps to harmonize entry requirements and.
- vi. Consider any matter pertaining to teacher education as may be referred to it from time to time by the Minister.
- vii. Enquire into and advise the Federal Government on the financial needs of the Colleges and receive block grants from the Government and allocate to the Colleges based on approved formula.
- viii. Collate, analyze and publish information relating to teacher education in the country.
- ix. Undertake periodic reviews of terms and conditions of service of personnel in the Colleges of Education and make recommendations thereon to the government.
- x. Make recommendations on the development of Pre-Vocational Technical, Agricultural, Business and Home Economics Education in our Primary and Secondary Schools and advise as to what necessary facilities would be provided for them: The course requirements, the relative contribution of government and industry and how to ensure that our women take full part in these.
- xi. Recommend to the Visitor of the College that a visitation is made to the College as and when it considers it necessary.

Guidelines on the recruitment of teachers in Colleges of Education

In recruiting lecturers for CoEs in Nigeria, the candidate must meet the following criteria as stated below:

- i. The candidate must be a professionally qualified teacher with a minimum of NCE or PGDE or any other TRCN recognized qualification.
- ii. He/she must have a good Bachelor's Degree with not less than a Second-Class Lower Division in relevant discipline in the minimum qualification for appointment as an Assistant Lecturer.
- iii. A candidate with H.N.D. holders, with minimum of a Merit shall qualify to be appointed as an Instructor.
- iv. Candidates with Higher Degrees and additional qualifications in the relevant disciplines are also added advantages.

Student–Teacher Ratio

Student–teacher ratio is the number of students who attend a school or university divided by the number of teachers in the institution. For example, a student–teacher ratio of 10:1 indicates that there are 10 students for every one teacher. The term can also be reversed to create a teacher–student ratio. The ratio is often used as a proxy for class size, although various factors can lead to class size varying independently of student–teacher ratio (and vice versa). In most cases, the student–teacher ratio will be significantly lower than the average class size. Student–teacher ratios vary widely among developed countries. In primary education, the average student–teacher ratio among members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is just below 16, but ranges from 40 in Brazil to 28 in Mexico to 11 in Hungary and Luxembourg.

Relationship to class size

Factors that can affect the relationship between student–teacher ratio and class size include the number of teachers with non-teaching duties, the number of classes per teacher, and the number of teachers per class. In addition, if there are small classes for a small number of students, for example for special education or second language learners, the student–teacher ratio for the institution will be misleadingly low relative to the average student's experience. An example of this variation is that both Palestine and the United States have an average student–faculty ratio of 15, but the average class size is 21 in the United States but 27 in Palestine.

A low student–teacher ratio is often used as a selling point to those choosing schools for tertiary education. On the other hand, high student–teacher ratio is often cited for criticizing proportionately underfunded schools or school systems, or as evidence of the need for legislative change or more funding for education.

Some countries have enacted legislation mandating a maximum student–teacher ratio for specific grade levels, particularly kindergarten. When such figures are stated for schools, they often represent averages (means) and thus are vulnerable to skewing. For example, figures may be biased as follows: if one classroom has a 30:1 ratio and another has a 10:1 ratio, the school could thus claim to have a 20:1 ratio overall. In schools, such ratios are indicative of possible staff changes. If the student–teacher ratio is 50:1, the school will probably consider hiring a few teachers. If the ratio is very low, classes could be combined and teachers fired. In extreme cases, the school may close due to its apparent redundancy.

Classes with too many students are often disruptive to education. Also, too many students in a class results in a diverse field of students, with varying degrees of learning ability. Consequently, the class will spend time for less academic students to assimilate the information, when that time could be better spent progressing through the curriculum. In this way, student–teacher ratios are compelling arguments for advanced or honors classes.

NCCE Guidelines

The recommended staff/student ratio is 1:25 for Education in view of the fact that all students in the College offer the programme.

Academic Year	No. of STUDENT	No. of STAFF	STR	STD	Interpretations/Remarks
2014/2015	376939	19785	19	19:1	The class Size is adequate i.e appropriate class utilization which means the learning can be effective
2015/2016	384001	18241	21	21:1	The class Size adequate not over populated
2016/2017	342343	18345	19	19:1	The class Size is adequate due to its low STR which accepted for effective learning
2017/2018	343592	22951	15	15:1	The class Size is adequate
2018/2019	273760	14393	19	19:1	The class Size is adequate

Data from the above table shows that in 2014/2015 academic session, the student teacher ratio of 1:19 was realized. This is indicated that the STR is in line with the provision of NCCE guideline. Furthermore, the table shows 1:22 student teacher ratio in 2015/2016 academic session also falls within the set NCCE requirement of STR.

The table further displayed the student teacher ratio of 2016/2016, 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 academic sessions. The STR of these sessions of 1:19, 1:15 and 1:19 respectively was obtained from all the Colleges of Education and other NCE-awarding institutions in Nigeria.

From the data available in the above table, one can safely conclude that the student teacher ratio in Colleges of Education and other NCE-awarding is in line with the provision and requirement of NCCE guideline.

Note that the student teacher ratio of all programmes in Colleges of Education is 1:25 while that of Education and General Studies is 1:50.

Students Low Enrolment

Total student enrolment is defined as the number of students, regardless of age, enrolled in all types of tertiary educational institutions in the region, including public, private and all other institutions providing organized tertiary level (Colleges of Education) educational programmes.

Enrolment rates in tertiary education are expressed as net enrolment rates, which are calculated by dividing the number of students of a particular age enrolled in these levels of education by the size of the population of that age. Generally, figures are based on head counts and do not distinguish between full-time and part-time study.

The number of students enrolled in tertiary education is an indicator of a region's future potential for its skilled labour force. A highly educated labour force is a major factor in determining regional competitiveness in the knowledge based economy. Universities in a region are also important assets in developing an integrated regional innovation system.

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, they 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. 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).

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.

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.
2. Too Many Elementary Teachers. There is a mismatch between the majors that students choose and the personnel needs of school districts.
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 (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.

Tackling low intake in Colleges of Education

The same examination is used to admit candidates into Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. Every candidate prefers to go to University and only turns to Polytechnic and lastly Colleges of Education when it becomes clear that there is no possibility of entering the University, at least, for a particular admission session (Season). If universities can complete and close their admission early enough, candidates who have failed to secure University admission can then turn

to Colleges of Education and still have the opportunity to be admitted. A situation where Universities continue to admit up to December/January, continuously gives candidates hope of University admission until when they finally realize that they have failed, it is too late to turn to Colleges of Education.

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.
- ii. 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

Suggestion

If Universities can conduct their admission from July to October and close their doors by the end of October, there will ample time for candidates who have failed to secure University admission to then pursue admission into Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. Alternatively, we can revert to the former system of two separate exams for entrance into Universities on the one hand, and Polytechnics and Colleges of Education on the other hand.

In this way, candidates will be in position to pursue admission into Universities with the UME while at the same time trying their luck in the Colleges of Education with the COE/Poly JAMB Examination. We believe that either of these approaches will help to improve intake into Colleges of Education. The permanent solution however, is to make the teaching profession attractive enough for all Nigerian to want to be teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Nigerian Colleges of Education should sustain and consolidate on its current efforts in maintaining a low students-teacher ratio in all the programmes.
2. More effort must be put in place to improve education quality in the institutions.

CONCLUSION

So many factors accounts for low quality NCE graduates. However, among these factors, students-teacher' ratio has been seen as one of the major determinants. Previous positions of scholars who discovered a negative relationship between students-teacher ratio and education quality in the primary and secondary levels were affirmed by the discovery of a negative relationship between the two variables in Nigerian Colleges of Education. 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

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