

ACCREDITATION OF COLLEGES OF EDUCATION AND IMPROVED TEACHER QUALITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This article is cursory look at the accreditation of colleges of education and improved teacher quality in Nigeria. The colleges of education (COEs) are institutions saddled with responsibility of training of teachers for Nigerian primary schools and awarding the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE). COEs are supervised by the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) who also accredits them. The instrument, standards and process of accreditation carried out by the NCCE is commendable. However, the performance of teachers from these institutions has not been encouraging despite provisions made available by government. These trained teachers employed by various primary schools have been observed to be lacking in pedagogical skills, knowledge, mastery of subject, readiness and professionalism after graduation. Consequently, one is tempted to ask if the accreditation of the COEs is a mere ritual or necessity. This paper discussed the accreditation process of COEs, quality of pedagogy and trained teachers. It also highlights the possible reasons why trained teachers from the COEs underperform in the field and the need for proper teacher education since a nation cannot rise above the quality of its teachers. It is suggested that government in conjunction with Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and NCCE should make and implement policies that will facilitate the training of the best mind as teachers. In addition, the COEs should be better funded to enhance the quality of trained teachers for an improved and quality pedagogy delivery in primary schools.

Keywords: Accreditation, College of Education, Quality Pedagogy

Introduction

Accreditation of institutions of whether of learning or not has been in existence in many nations of the world especially the developed countries. It is a very important criterion in the livelihood of an institution especially academic. According to the International Accreditation Service (IAS, 2018), accreditation is a formal, independent verification that a program or institution meets established quality standards and is competent to carry out specific conformity assessment tasks. Conformity assessment task may include, but are not limited to, testing, inspection, or certification. Clearly, accreditation of institutions or programmes is central to the overall existence of such an institution or programme to ensure that set standards are met at the best quality level and efficiency as much as possible. Recent developments in the educational sector has heightened the need for accreditation because

academic accreditation offers a valuable opportunity for an institution of higher education to receive recognition as an organization that offers quality education and research in benefit of society (Sebastian, 2019).

Consequently, for educational programmes accreditation is a review process to determine if the programme meets defined standards of quality. This, once achieved is renewed periodically to ensure that the quality of the educational program is maintained (ABET, 2019). Accreditation is not permanent but periodic in nature to check if set standards are kept, maintained or certain instructions are adhered to within a given period. Accreditation serve different purposes depending on what the set objectives are. For an institutions of higher learning, the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA, 2019), outlined some of the benefits of accreditation accruing it as:

- i. the stimulus provided for self-evaluation and self-directed institutional and program improvement;
- ii. the strengthening of institutional and program self-evaluation by the review and counsel provided through the accrediting agency;
- iii. the application of criteria of accrediting agencies, generally accepted throughout higher education, which help guard against external encroachments harmful to institutional or program quality by providing benchmarks independent of forces that might impinge on individual institutions;
- iv. the enhancing of the reputation of an accredited institution or program because of public regard for accreditation;
- v. the use of accreditation as one means by which an institution can gain eligibility for the participation of itself and its students in certain programs of governmental aid to postsecondary education; accreditation is also usually relied upon by private foundations as a highly desirable indicator of institutional and program quality.

Trusted agencies often promulgated by law are saddled with the responsibility of accreditation for specific institutions or programmes in most countries. However, some private organizations whose reliability index is excellent in some countries such as the United States, Britain, and France have license to carry out accreditation when called upon. Their judgment is deemed acceptable since these private organizations comprised of respected professionals in the relevant fields of endeavor. There are two main types of accreditation; the institutional and programmatic. Institutional accreditation reviews educational institutions, while programmatic accreditation reviews specific programs within institutions (OCD.Net, 2013). The two may be carried out simultaneously if need be for an overall quality assurance.

In Nigeria, various bodies promulgated by law are responsible for the accreditation of the institutions of leaning. Whether federal or state institution, a body regulates its affairs and ensure strict compliance with set standards for maximum efficiency; which in turn leads to an effective turnover of products that can positively affect the nation's development. Among the bodies that regulates educational institutions in the country, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) was established to regulate the various colleges of education (private, state and federal owned).

The Colleges of education (COEs) are institution responsible for the training of teachers for primary schools in Nigeria. The NCCE was established by Decree (now Act) 13 of 17th January, 1989 (Amended Act 12 of 1993) as a completion of tripod of excellence in the supervision of higher education in the country. The establishment of the commission was a

resultant effect of the utmost importance accorded to quality teacher education by the Federal Government of Nigeria. Since inception, the Commission has continuously pursued goals of quality assurance in teacher education. The pride of the commission is based on the seminal philosophy in the National Policy on Education (NAPE) which states that “no education can rise above the quality of its teachers” (Akpan, 2018; NCCE, 2019).

Over the years a lot of teachers have been trained by the COEs who were constantly being accredited by the NCCE. These trained teachers who have been employed by various primary schools have been observed to lack the necessary pedagogical skills, knowledge, and mastery of subject area. In addition, they are deemed not well read and unprofessional at their work after graduation. Studies such as O'kwu and Ako (2013) reported that NCE trainee were observed to display poor pedagogical skills evidenced by poor performance of students they have taught. Consequently, one is tempted to ask if the accreditation of the COEs is a mere ritual or necessity. This paper discussed the accreditation process of COEs, quality of pedagogy and trained teachers. It also highlights the possible reasons why trained teachers from the COE sunder perform in the field and the need for proper teacher education since a nation cannot rise above the quality of its teachers.

Functions of NCCE and Accreditation in Colleges of Education

The NCCE regulates the activities of the COEs whether private, state or federal. Some of the function of the commission (NCCE, 2019) are as follows:

- i. Make recommendations on the national policy necessary for the full development of teacher education and the training of teachers.
- ii. Lay down minimum standards for all programmes of teacher education and accredit their certificates and other academic awards after obtaining thereof prior approval of the Honorable Minister of Education.
- iii. Approve guidelines setting out criteria for accreditation of all Colleges of Education in Nigeria.
- iv. Determine the qualified teachers needs of Nigeria for the purpose of planning facilities and in particular prepare periodic master plans for the balanced and coordinated development of Colleges of Education.
- v. Inquire into and advise the Federal Government on the financial needs of the Colleges to enable them meet the objectives of producing the trained qualified teachers of the country.
- vi. Receive block grants from the Federal Government and allocate them to the Colleges of Education.
- vii. Harmonize entry requirements and duration of courses at the Colleges of Education.
- viii. Collate, analyse and publish relevant information relating to teacher education in Nigeria.

Function (ii) above deals with the issue of accreditation which as a process usually very rigorous on the part of the commission and the COE being accredited. Accreditation may start as a mock accreditation which is initiated by the Quality Assurance Directorate of the institution as an in house inspection of standards. This may be followed by an invitation of a mock accreditation team by the college from the NCCE. The NCCE mock accreditation team visits such institution and also inspects records and facilities, evaluate standards among others. They offer advice on measures, equipment, qualification of staff, infrastructures that must be put in place for a full accreditation.

The full accreditation is very rigorous, resource demanding and takes up to a week to complete depending on the institution. According to the NCCE, accreditation can only be carried out once in five years. The NCCE provides an Accreditation Toolkit made up of the following documents:

- i. Guidelines to NCCE Accreditation Toolkit
- ii. Institutional Self-Assessment and Statement of Facts Form
- iii. Quality Indicators for Teacher Education and
- iv. External Assessors Documents

These documents were prepared by the NCCE in collaboration with Commonwealth of Learning (COL) Canada and Educational Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) Maitama-Abuja (NCCE, 2012). A look at the documents shows that the documents are well prepared and valid for the purpose for which they were made.

Interestingly, page 1 of the guidelines stipulates that accreditation approach is fraught with several problems listed below:

- i. Accreditation visits can only be carried out once in a while (say every five years),
- ii. What is observed during accreditation lacks objective reality, in that institutions can and often engage in window dressing for the purpose of accreditation,
- iii. There is hardly any direct link between those issues which constitute the subject of accreditation and the issues that determine the effectiveness of teacher training and learning and
- iv. Institutions are often left in the dark as to what the assessors would be looking for.

In addition, the NCCE adopted the Quality Assurance strategy in institutions to facilitate high quality standards.

Quality Assurance and Performance of Trained Teachers from COEs

Quality assurance is a term that articulates systematic monitoring, evaluation of the various aspects of a project, service, or facility to ensure that standards of quality are being met (Ameen, 2007). The nation seeks quality in every aspect of its educational system which includes the institutional and teachers. Moreover, quality assurance is very important in the realization of the national policy on education. It is one of the most critical tasks facing every nation's educational institutions, so that the societal demands for improved education service delivery would achieve the best learning outcomes that enhance the quality of life of its citizenry (Ayeni, 2010). According to Adegbesan (2010), the major needs of quality assurance in Nigeria's education system are:

- I. To serve as indispensable component of quality control strategy in education.
- ii. To ensure and maintain high standard of education at all levels.
- iii. To assist in monitoring and supervision of education,
- iv. To determine the quality of the teacher input.
- v. To determine the number of classrooms needed based on the average class size to ensure quality control of education.
- vi. To determine the level of adequacy of the facilities available for quality control.
- vii. It would ensure how the financial resources available could be prudently and judiciously utilized.

Clearly, the performance of teachers on the job is central to achieving these qualities. Literature has consistently reported on the relationship between teachers' performance and qualification as a factor in measuring their abilities and output on the job. Trained teachers are expected to exhibit high performance as a consequence of their training. In addition, Ayeni (2018) observed those teachers' professional ethics and instructional performance correlates with students' academic performance. The study specifically reveals a significant relationship between teachers' instructional tasks performance and students' academic performance based on findings summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers' Level of Compliance with Professional Ethics

Professional Ethics	%
Punctuality	68.9
communication skill	63.3
human relations	61.6
effective time management	66.6
adequate knowledge of subject matter	67.8
dressing habit	81.2
Lesson Plan Preparation	68.9
conduct continuous assessment	73.3
maintain good classroom management	66.7
ensure students' discipline	81.1
participate actively in committees' work	75.6

Source:Ayeni (2018)

Table 1, which is a reflection of most reports from research in Nigeria suggests an above average performance of teachers. However, the reality on ground negates these statistics upholding high performance among trained teachers. The indices of poor performance of students across all levels of our educational system still stares us in the face. What could be wrong? What is responsible for the lack of standards among teachers and poor educational delivery the nation is witnessing? Can this be traced to the accreditation process of the teacher training institutions? The questions can go on and on.

The NCE has become more of a paper qualification in Nigeria than a professional one. There is a need to look at the people that enroll as teachers. Majority of people who enroll in the COEs either could not secure admission into a university or are tired of sitting at home. For some, the COEs is a place to acquire a higher certificate. How sad? Many though possess the NCE from accredited COEs lack the capacity to perform as a teacher. Quality of teaching is not governed by the qualification, knowledge, skill and competences of teachers alone but also their enthusiasm, knowledge of subject matter, morale and commitment to teaching (Adetayo, 2016).

The accredited COEs turnout teachers every year who have not been able to bring about improvement in the overall educational system at the elementary level. This is evident in the product of students in secondary schools and tertiary institution of learning in Nigeria. A look at the workforce also shows similar trend of people taught by these teachers. It's a vicious circle of poor performance and unprofessionalism that needs to be truncated for an overall national progress. The stipulate of the national policy on education which is "no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers" must be taken seriously.

Quality and Improvement of Pedagogy Delivery in COEs

A central theme in the meaning of the word 'pedagogy' is teaching. According to the Collins Dictionary (2019), pedagogy is the study and theory of the methods and principles of teaching. It is the function and/or work of a teacher, it is the art and science of teaching. By extension, pedagogy delivery refers to instructional methods delivery in classrooms. Quality and improved pedagogy delivery is very important in education at every level. **Teaching can be seen as** engagement with learners to enable their understanding and application of knowledge, concepts and processes. It includes design, content selection, delivery, assessment and reflection.

Pedagogical delivery in the COEs can be a pointer to what trained teachers from the institutions practice when they graduate. Naturally, teachers are model for their students which explains why students behave sometimes like their teacher when they become teachers themselves. Clearly, there is a latent connection between the teacher and the student learnt pedagogical skills.

Reasons why Trained Teachers from the COEs under Perform in the Field

There are many reasons why trained teachers from the COEs underperform in the field or on the job. Some of these reasons are latent but evident in the performance of students they teach.

Poor Mastery of subject Area

The problem of teachers' mastery of subject area has since been a long standing issue in the teaching profession. Akpan, Essien and Obot (2008) submitted that one of the most important teacher variables that enhance their effectiveness is the mastery of the subject matter. Observation shows that trained teachers from the COEs lack mastery of their subject area. Poor mastery of subject area by teachers affects instructional delivery, students' interest in the subject and their performance (Fakeye, 2012; Bot, 2014; Timayi & Ibrahim, 2017).

Poor Pedagogical skills

The pedagogy and teaching are synonyms. It is what a teacher does. A teacher with poor pedagogical skills will underperform on the job. Good pedagogical delivery is very important in the classroom. Learners themselves appreciate these skills when they are exhibited. Studies such as Odumosu, Olisama and Areelu (2018) reported that teachers' pedagogical knowledge affect students' performance hence only teachers with in-depth knowledge should be allowed to teach. This clearly advocates for good pedagogical skills among teachers.

Poor Communication Skills/ Competence

Poor communication skills among teacher has become an aberration in the teaching profession. Teachers are known to be vast in language skills of listening, speaking, writing and reading which learners are expected to be proficient in at various level of their education. Teachers' proficiency in these skills is needed for quality pedagogical delivery and instruction. Studies such as Amadi and Paul (2017) reported that teachers' communication influences students' academic achievement and it is important in effective teaching and learning. Communication skill is as good as content knowledge in defining teaching effectiveness. One is not subject to the other if teaching must be effective. The present practice in teacher education emphasizes knowledge of content while subordinating skills in communication. Teacher Communication Skill is advocated in the curricula of teacher education across levels (Okoli, 2017).

Anxiety for Teaching

Perhaps this is one psychological variable that affects teachers in the classroom especially when they teach subjects that deals with numeracy. Akinsola(2014) asserted that pre-service teachers had anxiety for teaching. Interestingly only few studies dealt with teacher anxiety for teaching. Timayi and Ibrahim (2017) postulated that most teachers especially in the primary school tend to exhibit anxiety in their teaching of mathematics. Anxiety for teaching could result from poor mastery of subject area and poor communication skills among others.

Lack of Passion for the job

Without passion for teaching, teachers become mechanical in the classroom and in the discharge of their duties. Passion drives the teacher to teach. This is because for the passionate teachers, teaching does not so much complement their expertise as it completes it. For them, knowing a subject fully is being able to teach it. These are the people in whom teaching and publishing work not at cross purposes, but interact for mutual enrichment (Smoot, 2013).Moreover, passionate teachers are distinguished by their commitment to achievement of their students. Commitment is an essential element of successful teaching. Committed teachers are concerned with the development of their students and they profoundly struggle how to keep students' learning (Mart, 2013).

Juliana (2015) postulated that teachers who are passionate about teaching breed innovation. They learn new techniques and methods needed to activate or enable understanding of concepts in their students. However, some teacher started with passion and lost it on the way while other simply did not have it from the start. According to Thomas (2019:1):

Teachers abandon the profession at a high rate: half of trained teachers quit within five years. Many more, including some of the best qualified and most dedicated scholars, never consider a career in education in the first place. We think of teaching as a respected profession, supremely important to the community. But compared with other careers, teaching scores consistently low in compensation and consistently high in burn out.

Lack of passion among teachers for the job is a malady that contributes to students' observed poor performance in the Nigerian educational system.

Conclusion

From the discussions presented in this paper it is evident that the accreditation of COEs is a laudable exercise worthy of praise. On the other hand, products from these accredited institutions are observed to be lacking in pedagogical skills, knowledge, mastery of subject, readiness and professionalism after graduation. Consequently, one is tempted to ask if the accreditation of the COEs is a mere ritual or necessity. Apparently, something is wrong because accreditation is supposed to check standards and adherence to quality and regulation set by the NCCE. An inference here may be that accreditation was faked or the teachers were not properly trained taught or both. Alternatively, the issue of people not interested in teaching, lack of passion for the profession and inadequate motivation may be indicted.

Suggestions

Based on the discussions made and the conclusions the following suggestions are made:

- i. The federal and state governments in conjunction with Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and NCCE should make and implement policies that will facilitate the training of the best mind as teachers.
- ii. The COEs should be better funded by the federal and state governments to enhance the quality of trained teachers' turnover for an improved and quality pedagogy delivery in primary schools.
- iii. The federal and state governments in conjunction with TRCN, UBEC, NCCE and other stake holders in education work on a harmonized salary structure that will put teachers on equal terms with other professional. This will make the teaching profession lucrative and attract the best mind to it.
- iv. The federal and state governments in conjunction with TRCN, UBEC, NCCE and other stake holders in education introduce scholarships schemes for teachers at all level of education to encourage them take up and continue their career as teachers.
- v. The accreditation process need to be more holistic: the teachers in training should also be examined during their teaching practice to establish their mastery of pedagogical skills. NCCE should work out a modality to check students during the teaching practice.

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