

# Expansion in Academic Programmes in the Colleges of Education Through the Dual Mode: A Stitch in Time

BY

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**Abstract** - This paper *Expansion in academic programmes in the Colleges of Education through the dual mode: a stitch in time* is aimed at providing relevant information to support the need for immediate action on the re-positioning of the Colleges of Education in Nigeria. It showed the purpose for which the institutions were established and how reviews of the academic programmes by NCCE have successfully achieved it, making the Colleges very relevant and desirable to secondary school leavers until recent times. By presenting a vivid picture of the apathy for Colleges of education and a current high quest for first degree certificates, using JAMB application and admission statistics, the paper emphasized the urgency required to revisit their structure as proposed and pursued by stakeholders over a long time. Finally, the paper concluded that, considering the view that the minimum teaching qualification in Nigeria should be first degree and the COVID-19 experience which calls for a new paradigm in teaching (in the digital 21<sup>st</sup> Century age), there should be no more delay in implementing the dual mode for Colleges of Education, as passed in the immediate past national assembly.

**Keywords:** Academic Programmes, B Ed., Colleges of Education, Dual Mode, NCE.

## Introduction

The events which gave birth to the setting up of Colleges of Education can be traced to the Ashby report of 1960, titled "Investment in Education" [2]. The Ashby Commission [2] recommended the establishment of Teachers grade one Colleges to combat the dearth of qualified teachers which was prevalent at that time. The modification of the report resulted in the establishment of the first five Advanced Teachers' Training Colleges (ATTC) from 1962 to 1968 located at Lagos, Zaria, Ondo, Owerri and Abraka. Later they were elevated to the status of Colleges of Education, producing quality teachers for the Secondary Schools [15]; such that by 1973, there were 13 of them in Nigeria. The academic programmes of Colleges of Education are the courses or combination of subjects offered by students so as to obtain the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) on successful completion of their study. Until the establishment of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) in 1989 [13], all the Colleges of Education and the Advanced Teachers' Training Colleges were affiliates of the Institutes or Faculties of Education of Universities which also provided their respective academic programmes. These academic programmes were different for each College and there was the need for harmonization of standards. This need became more glaring when the national policy in 1981 made NCE the minimum teaching qualification in Nigeria [7]. With this policy the academic programmes of the Colleges of Education has been geared towards the production of middle level manpower for teachers for the primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. However, with the establishment of NCCE, via the Act of 1989, it was stipulated in section 5 (c) and (d) that the commission shall:

(c) "Lay down minimum standards for all programmes of teacher education and accredit their certificates and other academic awards" and (d) "Approve guidelines setting out criteria for accreditation of all Colleges of Education in Nigeria" [13].

There has been a steady expansion and improvement of the academic programmes in Colleges of Education, through the regular review and production of the Curriculum "The Minimum Standards for NCE" [13]. The reviews which are carried out within a minimum period of five years, by NCCE takes cognizance of global trends in addition to needs and innovations in the education sector in Nigeria. This paper shall attempt to present some changes which has taken place in the academic programmes of Colleges of Education, the needs which were addressed by the changes, the current challenges in the operation of the Colleges of Education, the prevailing needs in the education sector of Nigeria and how the expansion of the academic programmes in the Colleges of Education through the dual mode should be considered with profound urgency.

## Academic Programmes of Colleges of Education: Background of Past Reviews

**The first edition of the Minimum Standards for NCE:** The first milestone in the review and structuring of the academic programmes of Colleges of Education was the production of the first edition of the Minimum Standards for NCE in 1990 by NCCE (FRN, 1990)[8] according to the mandate by the Act (of 1989) establishing it. The driving force for this edition was to harmonize the various standards from the respective institutes/faculties of education to which the Colleges were affiliated. By this time the educational system was evolving from the former 6 – 5 – 4 to the 6 – 3 – 3 – 4 system but there was still need to prepare more teachers for the new one. Admission in the Colleges of Education was growing since there was employment for NCE graduates, because the policy on education (FRN, 1981) stated as follows:

*“Once the six-year secondary system has been started, this will mean that the NCE will ultimately become the minimum basic qualification for entry in the teaching profession” p-39.*

Consequently the part-time mode of NCE run in the Colleges attracted large population of candidates who desired to upgrade their certificates from Teachers’ Grade Two to NCE. The one year Pre-NCE programmes were also running in affected Colleges for candidates who are deficient to some considerable degree in the admission requirements for NCE.

**The second and third editions of the Minimum Standards for NCE:** The second and third editions (1994/1995, 2002/2003) came up at period of significant changes in the national policy on education and subsequently, the curriculum of primary schools. The 6 – 3 – 3 – 4 system was fully in place and emerging subjects such as Computer Science and Integrated Science (in the revised form to fit the 3 – 3 secondary education) and the need to produce teachers for these subjects informed the reviews of the Minimum Standards for NCE. Within this period the departments of Computer Science and Integrated Science were fully added to the School of Sciences. Many courses with Computer combinations emerged, computer appreciation courses were included in the General Studies in Education (GSE) list of courses. The primary education studies department was made compulsory to be established in all Colleges of Education. The teaching qualifications below NCE were eventually phased out in the school system in 1998. Hence, enrolment into the new course Primary Education Studies was high since its admission requirement was not as tough as that of other combinations. There were five schools in the conventional College of Education namely:

- School of Education.
- School of Sciences.
- School of Arts and social Sciences.
- School of Vocational & Technical Education.
- School of Languages.

**The fourth Edition of the Minimum Standards for NCE:** The 2008 edition ushered in significant expansion in the academic programmes of the Colleges of Education. The robust national policy on education (FRN, 2008) [10] which included a 4-year strategic plan for Development in the Education sector: 2011-2015, in the then transformation agenda of the Federal Government, propelled a ripple in expansion of academic programmes in the Colleges of Education. There was a mandate to produce specialist teachers for the nine-year basic education which has replaced the 6 – 3 – 3 – 4 system in 2007.(FRN, 2007) [9]. The number of schools in a conventional College of Education remained five but the courses were modelled after the nine-year basic education curriculum. As an example the primary education studies course was made a double major instead of single major in previous edition. The early Childhood and Care Education (ECCE) department came into existence. The 2008 edition was described as another milestone in which the first step to address the pressing need for producing specialist teachers was addressed. It was based on the harmonization of the NCE curriculum with the new nine-year basic education curriculum. Within the period of implementation of this edition, there is dearth of employment of every category of graduates and non-graduates in Nigeria. This affected enrolment unto the Colleges adversely as many products of the institutions were not employed except in private schools where they were paid peanuts of salary. Choosing to study in Colleges become unpopular as candidates prefer polytechnics education (where they acquire more practical skills to establish ‘own’ businesses as entrepreneurs, or the University Education where they have greater chance of continuing in academics.

**The 2012 edition of the Minimum Standards for NCE:** The 2012 edition of the Minimum standards conveyed a profound expansion in the academic programmes in the Colleges of Education. Hinging on the mandate to produce quality teachers for the basic. Education sub-sector, NCCE (2012) continued to focus on harmonizing the NCE curriculum with the basic education curriculum. In this edition, an implementation framework to guide all NCE-awarding institutions, in addition to Minimum Professional standards for teacher educators were produced. The implementation framework is a peculiar feature which the Internal Quality Assurance Units of various Colleges should use as a tool to achieve same standard across institutions,

making external accreditation of Colleges less laborious. New programmes are added to the existing one so as to produce specialist teachers in accordance with categories of education at the basic level. The categories of education at the basic level are as follows:

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

This edition also focused on global issues like Education for All (EFA) and The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Hence the number of schools increased from five to seven:

- i. School of Education.
- ii. Early Childhood and Care & Primary Education.
- iii. School of Sciences.
- iv. School of Arts and Social Sciences.
- v. School of Vocational and Technical Education.
- vi. School of Languages.
- vii. School of Adult and Non-Formal & Special Education

Entrepreneurship education was fully embedded in the curriculum to enable pre-service teachers acquire practical skills in the dearth of unemployment in the formal sector.

The 2012 NCE Minimum Standards is both for new and the future of teacher education. Hence it retained the 2-subject combination of single-major subjects to allow for the preparation of would-be teachers in the senior secondary school and as entry qualification into the B.Sc. (Ed)/B.A(Ed) programmes. However, this period has witnessed the lowest enrolments in the Colleges which has attracted the attention of stakeholders (Egede, 2009). This adverse situation is such that, in my College which has the capacity of admitting up to 6,000 (six thousand) students, enrolment was as low as 290 in a particular session. Every mode of study (weekend, outreach and sandwich) was adversely affected in enrolment rate. There is imminent need for a review of the operation of the Colleges so that they will continue to be functional.

### A Current Challenge in the Colleges of Education

**Growth in Colleges of Education:** As teacher education institutions which respond to changes and needs in the nation, Colleges of Education have been growing in quality and quantity, especially with regular accreditation exercises, by both NCCE and National Universities Commission (for Colleges running degree programmes as affiliates of Universities). Consequently, there is increase in the number of staff in terms of qualification and specialization and in infrastructure. Through the interventions of (formerly Education Tax Fund (ETF) and present Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND), many buildings (lecture halls, school complexes, laboratories and workshops, libraries etc.) have been constructed in both federal and state Colleges. Secondly, academic and non-academic staff have been motivated, through TETFUND scholarship and the hosting of degree programmes in Colleges, to pursue and obtain Ph.D. There are e-libraries, computer literate lecturers and secretaries and e-learning takes place in some courses. Despite these improved qualities of the Colleges of Education, the problem of poor enrollment has beset the institution in recent times.

**Dwindling Enrolment in Colleges of Education:** The dwindling enrollment in the Colleges had attracted the attention and reaction from stakeholders especially provosts (Umeh, 2015[21], Olarenwaju, 2017, [18] Ojeme, 2016[16]). The following statistics will elucidate how enrollment in Colleges of Education in the country has declined.

**Table 1. Total enrollment in Colleges of Education (COE) in Nigeria from 2005/2006 to 2008/2009.**

S/N	Session	Total enrollment in all COEs
1	2005/2006	290,318
2	2006/2007	305,829
3	2007/2008	315,426
4	2008/2009	346,006

**Source:** Nigeria. Digest of Education Statistics 2006 – 2010.

**Table 2. Statistics for JAMB admissions in Colleges of Education (COE) from 2010 to 2015.**

S/No	Year	Total admission in all COEs
1	2010	7,832
2	2011	14,192
3	2012	11,920
4	2013	17,153
5	2014	8,384
6	2015	13,447

**Source:** Joint Admission & Matriculation Board (JAMB) Application & Admission Statistics, 2010 – 2016.

**Table 3. JAMB application statistics for Colleges of Education (COE) from 2010 to 2019.**

S/No	Year	Applications for all COEs
1	2010	23,311
2	2011	22,631
3	2012	24,987
4	2013	28,912
5	2014	26,033
6	2015	17,722
7	2016	17,673
8	2017	17,338
9	2018	24,524
10	2019	34,141

**Source:** JAMB Application and Admission Statistics (for 2010-2016)

The statistics in table 1 showed that admission into the Colleges of education in those sessions was booming. In a session total enrolment in all Colleges was above three hundred thousand students. Table 2 showed that the number of students admitted in three successive years is not up to 50,000, (which is one-sixth of that of the previous decade. Table 3 showed that actual applications for admission into the Colleges for three successive years will not yield up to one-quarter of the total enrolment per session in table 1, if all of them were to be admitted. So admission has dwindled to about 1/6<sup>th</sup> of what it used to be prior to 2010. The current challenge in the Colleges of Education is very low enrolment of students. In 2018, the applications for admission into Polytechnics (N.D), was 69,712 in comparison to 24,524 for Colleges of Education NCE, while in 2019, it was 43,605. (N.D) and 34,141 (NCE). JAMB (2019) [11], indicating a preference for studying in Polytechnics.

**Possible reasons for dwindling enrolment:** Stakeholders have tried to explain this current apathy for Colleges of Education (and NCE) among secondary school leavers. Their explanation includes: -unemployment of NCE teachers, high tuition (especially for Private and State – owned Colleges), and Parents’ advice against choosing teaching career. [18]. other strong factors include the facts that the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) admission process does not favour the choice of Colleges, and the prevalent quest (or passion) for University education in the nation [21]. In the present dearth of employment opportunities, candidates prefer to go to the Polytechnic to acquire practical skills for self-employment. To buttress this fact of dwindling enrolment from my experience, my department (primary Education) which used to have over 150 students admitted in a session had only 5 and 8 for the last two sessions 2018/2019, and 2019/2020 respectively, and my department has 5 Ph.D. holders out of the six full-time lecturers, with a large school complex in construction. This situation portrays a waste of infrastructure and human resources in the Colleges of Education.

### The Problem in the Education Sector and Proposed Solutions

**Low admission rate:** A prevalent problem in the higher education sub-sector is that there is very high quest for University Education which cannot be satisfied. Every session, many candidates (recently, more than a million in number) apply for University admission through JAMB but only a low percentage of them gains admission. Worse, still some who are qualified are not admitted. This adverse situation is largely due to inadequate carrying capacity of existing Universities, and insufficient number of Universities to absorb qualified candidates. The table 4 illustrates the situation; which has been prevailing since 1990s. (Egede, 2009)[6].

**Table 4. Statistics on applications and admissions into all Nigerian Universities 2010 – 2016.**

S/No	Year	Application	Admission	Percentage Adm.
1	2010	1,329,876	353,697	11
2	2011	1,493,598	98,296	7
3	2012	1,503,933	376,411	25
4	2013	1,669,314	400,208	24
5	2014	1,632,172	379,793	23
6	2015	1,428,379	384,442	27
7	2016	1,543,739	-	

Source: JAMB Application and Admission Statistics (2010 – 2016)

**Table 5. Statistics of Overall JAMB applications in all institutions and in all the Universities for 2017 – 2019, and percentages.**

Year	Application			Admission	
	All institutions	Universities	% Universities	All institutions	% Overall admission
2017	1,722,269	1,687,551	98	566,719	33
2018	1,653,127	1,558,686	94	549,763	33
2019	1,881,488	1,803,742	96	-	

Source: JAMB Statistics ([www.jamb.gov.ng/](http://www.jamb.gov.ng/)).

From table 4, it can be seen that less than 30% of applicants for admission into the Universities prior to 2016 are offered admission. Table 5, showed that very high percentage (above 90%) of all applicants opt for University Education in the specified (recent) years and only a percentage of 33 of all applicants for all institutions are offered admission.

**Degree Programmes in Colleges of Education in Affiliation with Universities:** In the past, part-time degree programmes of Universities were mounted in the Colleges of Education, to tackle this problem but due to irregularities observed in the programmes, it was scrapped by National University Commission (NUC, 2012). It has been replaced with full-time programmes of accredited Nigerian Universities hosted in Colleges of Education within approved boundaries with the mother institution. The 33% admission rate shown in table 5, is not an indication that the affiliate degree programmes have solved the problem.

**Proposal for Upgrading of Colleges of Education to degree-awarding status:** For more than a decade, renowned educators have proposed the upgrading of Colleges of education to become degree awarding institutions so as to solve this problem partly (Okebukola, 2009)[17]. The challenges of poor infrastructure and lack of academic staff with Ph.D. militated against the proposal, in addition to the fact that Colleges of education were attracting enough students then. As stated earlier in this paper, these two factors have been taken care of. Lecturers must possess Ph.D. to be promoted beyond the position of principal

lecturer, as suggested by Okebukola [17]. The committee of Provosts (COP) in their 76<sup>th</sup> regular meeting proposed the upgrading/restructuring of Colleges to award B.Ed. degree without affiliation, [16] in their communique which was released to the press. The COP also suggested that admission into Colleges be detached from UTME process in that meeting [16]. The restructuring of the Colleges should make NCE to run for two (2) years, so that graduates will require another 2 years to complete their B.Ed. programme in the same system. In this vein, it is obvious that the law establishing the NCCE which supervises the Colleges should be modified and COP proposed a new name National Commission for Teacher Education (NCTE) to replace NCCE in the new structure.

**The bill for Upgrading Colleges of Education to operate in dual mode:** As more pressure was mounted on the Federal Government to restructure the Colleges of Education, a bill was eventually raised in this regard and passed in 2018 by the then National Assembly. The position of the Colleges of Education Staff Union (COEASU) and NCCE as major stakeholders were crucial in the passing of the bill to review the establishment Acts of the Federal Colleges of Education (FCEs) and the NCCE. The position of COEASU titled the *imperatives of strengthening the Colleges of Education as the main teacher education system*, called the attention of the public to previous efforts and reports on the degree awarding status of colleges of education:

*"1999: Brief on the report of committee to look into the modalities for mounting degree programmes in selected polytechnics, colleges of education..."*

*"2007: The report of the Presidential Technical Committee for the Consolidation of Federal Tertiary Institutions..."*

*"2014: The report of the Technical Committee on dual Mode with Regards to degree awarding status by Colleges of Education"*

Among others, a cogent reason/benefit identified for the dual mode of operation of the colleges is easier access to degree Programme by candidates which should help in solving the problem of low enrolment in the colleges and low admission rate for degree programmes. However, the passing of the bill in 2018 could not guarantee its implementation as the president of the federation did not assent to it before that national assembly became defunct. It has been represented to the current national assembly. These are evidences of the concerted efforts which have been made to achieve academic restructuring in Colleges of Education, without success.

**"The time and tide that waits for no man" in the implementation of the dual mode in Colleges of Education in Nigeria.**

**The time and the tide:** Interventions for development in any sector is time – bound. When it was time to establish Colleges of Education to solve the tidal problem of lack of quality teachers in the schools, the intervention of Ashby Commission solved the problem and there was development in the education sector. There are strong tidal waves of global and national situations requiring interventions in the academic restructuring of the Colleges of Education, in this period of Nigeria's development. Specifically two of them are discussed as follows.

**B.Sc. (Ed)/B.A(Ed) may replace NCE as minimum teaching qualification in Nigeria soon:** A former Minister of Education, Shekarau (2015) talked about plans to make the first degree the minimum teaching qualification in Nigeria, while welcoming the Finns ambassador to Nigeria. It should be noted that Finland, the leading nation in Education has Master's Degree as her minimum teaching qualification. In the same vein, Egbo (2015)[5] pointed out that many developing countries had since adopted B.Ed. as the minimum qualification for teaching, and added in her words *"perhaps it is time to do away with the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE)"*. Definitely, the tide is not rolling in the direction where NCE will continue to be the minimum teaching qualification after replacing the TG TC in the 1980s and effectively in 1998, 22years ago. But the NCE curriculum which is already structured for the basic education is still very relevant, for providing specialist teachers. Following the tide of development in education globally, the teaching profession in Nigeria should be made to attract the best of brains as it is done in Finland. Hence, the implementation of the dual mode in the Colleges of Education should be done *urgently*. This will enable the next review of the curriculum of Colleges of Education to be restructured so that NCE holders can continue to obtain first degree in the Colleges, thereby satisfying the condition of specialist teachers for basic education in addition to having a first degree to enhance quality in the teaching profession.

**Online Teaching/Learning, Virtual Classrooms/Blended Online Teaching require appropriate review of Teacher Education Curriculum:** The current tide of the COVID -19 pandemic has suddenly turned the attention of the Nigerian government to what developed/developing nations have been practicing as part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century digital age. As Nigerian students continued to stay at home after four weeks of lockdown, the minister of education directed that teaching in tertiary

institutions should continue online as it is done in other nations Adamu (2020)[1]. This directive is in tandem with the practice of online in teaching China (China, 2020) [3], UK (Department of Education, 2020) and many other Countries which have provision for online teaching even from the primary school level [4]. But these countries like China (Kayange & Msiska (2016) [12] and Finland (Sadeharju, (2019) [19] have prepared their teachers for online teaching and at times using online programmes also. Hence lecturers should undergo in-service training on facilitating learning online while pre-service teacher education curriculum should be reviewed to include online teaching skills. Consequently restructuring the academic programmes of the Colleges of Education, *now* to dual mode will give apt opportunity to fix online teaching skills in the reviewed curriculum. Is there still time to wait and continue to keep our school children at home without learning in times like COVID -19 periods in the future?

## Conclusion

This paper outlined the background to the establishment of Colleges of Education in Nigeria, and discussed some major changes which has taken place in the institutions in response to changes in the educational system. Colleges of Education tend to have outlined the initial purposes for which they were established and need to be relevant to serve the current purposes of solving some teething problems in the higher education sub-sector to satisfy the quest for degree programmes. The facts and figures presented in this paper is to elucidate the reality that the time to implement the dual mode of operation of Colleges of Education is *now*. Doing so will definitely be a *stitch in time* which will move the teaching profession in Nigeria, higher from the minimum qualification of NCE, positioning Nigerian teachers to practice within the 21<sup>st</sup> century digital age so as to compete favorably in the global education system.

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