

Oghara

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Journal of
SOCIAL AND
MANAGEMENT
SCIENCE

Vol. 1 No 1 December , 2009.

ISSN 2276 - 7401



A Multi Disciplinary Journal
Published by the Association of Social
And Management Development (ASMD)
P.M.B. 03 Oghara, Delta State, Nigeria.

REFORM IN TEACHER EDUCATION TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE)

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Abstract

The contributions of the NCE curriculum towards the meaningful and realistic implementation of the primary and junior secondary schools curricular of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) make it expedient for specific restructuring of the NCE curriculum. To this end, this study through a survey descriptive design shows that the present NCE curriculum is far from meeting the demands of the primary and JSS curricular. It is therefore advocated in this study that subjects offered at the primary and junior secondary schools should be offered at the NCE level. Furthermore, there should be firm control of the colleges of Education by the NCC to ensure meaningful implementation of primary and junior school curricular.

BACKGROUND THE STUDY

Restructuring the Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE) Curriculum is a necessary condition towards the actualization of the primary and junior secondary Curricular of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme. Before the establishment of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) by Decree (now Act) No 3 of 1989, Universities were responsible for the academic and certification needs of colleges of Education, (with less regard to uniformity in standards and practices) Isyaku (2000), Anikweze, Ojo and Maiyanga (2002) to meet manpower need of secondary education. During this period, service teachers with TC 11 were mostly recruited to carryout the responsibility of reading, writing and numeracy at the primary level of the education system. With emphasis on uniformity in minimum teaching and entering qualification, standards and practices, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) becomes a regulatory and supervisory body of all colleges of Education in Nigeria. Put simply NCCE forms the tripod that regulates and supervises teacher education in Nigeria, others include NUC and NBTE. The NCCE prescribes minimum standards of education programme for teacher education programme for teacher education in colleges of education in Nigeria. Expectedly she is to make sure the various colleges of education produce motivated teachers: with personal and professional discipline, with appreciable expertise in curriculum planning, development and delivery, as well as competence in research, measurement and evaluation, teaching strategies and guidance and counseling and with high sense of social responsibility and commitment to function effectively as constructive socio-economic, moral and spiritual change agents. The NCCE intends to achieve these goals through the NCE curriculum which exposes preserve teachers to general education, general studies in education and teaching subjects.

In general education, pre-service teachers are exposed to courses in educational foundations and management, educational psychology, curriculum studies and primary education studies. Pre service teachers are also

exposed to use of English and effective communication skills in general studies. Aside, these, the would-be teachers are expected to combine two teaching subjects in the primary or secondary school curriculum, or special education plus one teaching subject in the primary and secondary school curricula. For effective organization programmes, general education is compartmentalized into departments of educational foundations and management, educational psychology and curriculum studies, which in turn accommodates specified subject combinations from the various schools, arts/social sciences, science and vocational and technical education.

The primary and junior secondary education of the UBE programme are classified as basic education (FGN 2004). It includes adult and non-formal education at primary and junior secondary education level for adults and out of school youths. This study gives consideration to the formal aspect of the basic education which involves children between the ages of six and fifteen years in the regular school system. The goals of basic education are specified in section 4, 18 (a-g) and section 5, 22 (a-h) of the National Policy on Education (FGN 2004), for primary and junior secondary education respectively. In pursuance of these specific goals, the government provides the following curricular for primary and junior secondary education.

Primary Education

1. Languages
 - a. Language of the environment
 - b. English
 - c. French
 - d. Arabic
2. Mathematics
3. Science
4. Physical and Health Education
5. Religious knowledge
6. Agriculture/home Economics
7. Social studies and Citizenship Education
8. Cultural and Creative Arts (Drawing Handicraft, Music and Cultural Activities).
9. Computer Education

Junior Secondary Education

Group A core

1. English

2. French
3. Mathematics
4. Language of the environment as L1
5. One major Nigerian Language as L2
6. Integrated science
7. Social studies and citizenship Education
8. Introductory Technology.

Group B. Pre-Vocational Electives

1. Agriculture
2. Business studies
3. Home Economics
4. Local Crafts
5. Fine Arts
6. Computer Education
7. Music

Group C. Non-Pre vocational Electives

1. Religious knowledge
2. Physical and Health Education
3. Arabic

Students who complete junior secondary school are intended to be streamed into:

1. Senior secondary school
2. Technical college
3. An out - of - school vocational training centre
4. An apprenticeship scheme

Pre-service teachers exposed to the NCE curriculum are expected to bring to bear their competence, appreciable expertise and discipline to make teaching and learning possible at the basic education level (formal school level of primary and junior secondary education).

With the coming of the UBE programme on stream certain minimum standards for some education programmes under the NCE curriculum call for revisit because the scope of the UBE programme gives consideration to early childhood care and socialization, functional literacy for young and old, special education for nomadic population, non-formal education for adolescents and youths and formal education (FGN 2000), wider area beyond the minimum structure on ground.

This study gives consideration to the formal aspect of basic education, which involves children between the ages of six and fifteen years in the regular school system.

Statement of the Problem

The realization of the goals/objectives of any educational policy and programme largely depend on the preparedness, readiness and quality of its facilitators (Okokoyo 2001). The present NCE curriculum for teacher education was designed for secondary education, with little or no emphasis for primary education. The NCE Curriculum recommended introduction to pre-primary/primary education studies (EDU. 114), education of special target group (EDU. 314) and introduction to adult education (EDU.321) to all pre-service teachers. These courses are elective courses except EDU 114, which is a compulsory course for all pre-service teachers. Pathetically, these education courses are so much relevant to the present UBE programme yet their status is of no consequence in teacher education. The pre-primary/primary education studies, PES (EDU 114) is a semester course in teacher education programme where the minimum teaching and entry qualification is NCE, yet the primary school teacher is class-based and should be knowledgeable in all the primary school subject, hence specialization in PES studies is a must. EDU 321 and EDU 314 introduce pre-service teachers to the theoretical aspects, which are more of facts and information, without any form of pedagogical implication. There are also areas of infusion of some consequential themes into the NCE curriculum, namely, drug abuse, population and family life education, women education and environmental/conservation education, STD/HIV/AIDS education etc due to their importance to national development. These themes are largely informative rather than educative and therefore lack pedagogical emphasis. The junior secondary curriculum consist predominantly of broad-based integrated courses such as integrated science, social studies, introductory technology, business education etc.

Teachers, that graduate in such subject based disciplines such as physics, chemistry, Biology, Geography, Economics etc. except, perhaps, general mathematics and English maybe ill equipped in handling the integrated courses of the J.S.S teacher education programmes at the NCE level of education in Nigeria, therefore, ought to get adjusted to cope

with the production in desired quantity, of the right quality and mix of NCE teachers to cover all the primary and J.S.S subjects specified in the NPE.

The thrust of this study therefore, is to identify areas of defect in the NCE curriculum and make proposals towards the restructuring of the NCE curriculum to meet the demands of the primary and junior secondary schools' curricular of the UBE programme.

To assist in the study, the following research questions were raised;

1. does the NCE curriculum as it is, meet with the primary and junior secondary level of the UBE programme?
2. do teachers at the primary and J.S.S levels exhibit the full range of their capabilities as they are "jack of all trade" made to teach all the subjects in the primary school curricular to a particular class of students at the primary levels?
3. is there the need to remove from the NCE curriculum subject -based disciplines that are not taught at the primary and J.S.S levels of UBE programme?
4. is there adequate production of NCE teachers in desired quantity, of the right quality and mix to cover all the primary and J.S.S subjects specified in the NPE?

The objective of the study is to identify areas of defect in the NCE curriculum and make proposals towards restructuring of the NCE curriculum to meet the demands and objective of the primary and junior secondary school curricular of the UBE programme.

The significance of the study deals with the ability and quality to identify areas of defect in the NCE curriculum of the primary and junior secondary school curricula if the result of

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Table 1: demographic characteristics of respondents:

Characteristics	Number	%
Age		
18-34	11	4.8
35-44	72	31.6
45-45	93	40.8
55 -above	52	22.8
Gender		

the study shows serious shortcomings and defect.

Methodology

The study adopts the survey descriptive research design to analyze the NCCE curriculum, and the National Policy on education (NPE) as the basis of examining the need for restructuring of the NCE curriculum to meet the demands of the primary and junior secondary curricular of the UBE programme in Nigeria.

The population for the study is made up of 120 teacher educators drawn from four Colleges of Education, College of Education, Ekiadolor Edo State, College of Education Agbor, Delta State, College of Education, Warri, Delta State, Federal College of Education (Technical) Asaba, Delta State (30 Teacher educators from each college) and 122 school administrators (Headmasters and Assistant Headmasters) drawn from all the 56 primary schools in Ika South L. G. A of Delta State during the 2005/2006 session.

The research instrument comprises of two sets of questionnaires; demographic questionnaire designed to obtain information on the demographic characteristics of respondents and a ten (10) item structured questionnaire, with likert-scale options; strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A) Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree.

The respondents were physically contacted and the two sets of questionnaire administered to them in the selected schools. After one week, the questionnaires were retrieved from the respondents with four missing. The returned questionnaires were sufficient for the study.

Male	116	50.9
Female	112	49.1
Marital Status		
Married	159	69.7
Single	69	30.3
Highest Education Obtained		
Ph.D	28	12.3
M.Ed, M.Sc, M.A	97	42.5
B.Sc, B.A, B.Ed,	101	44.3
NCE	2	0.9
Teaching Experience		
6-9	-	-
10-20	102	44.7
20-30	98	43.0
30-above	27	12.3

Fig 1- shows whether the NCE curriculum as it is, meets with the primary and junior second level of the UBE programme.

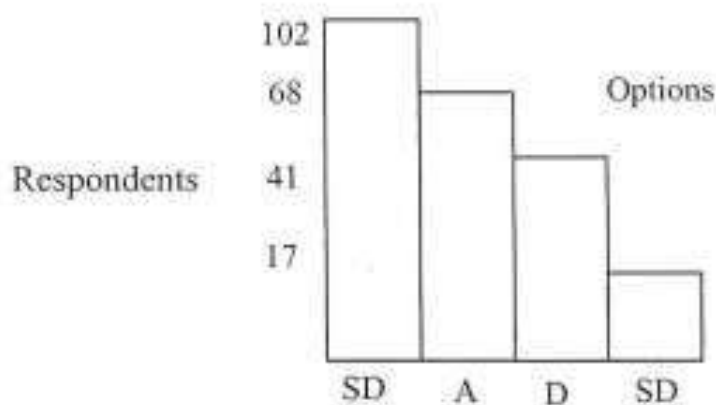


Fig. 2 shows whether teachers at the primary and J.S.S levels exhibit the full range of capabilities in spite of the fact that they are "jack of – all trade" made to teach all the subjects in primary School curriculum to a particular class of pupils.

Options

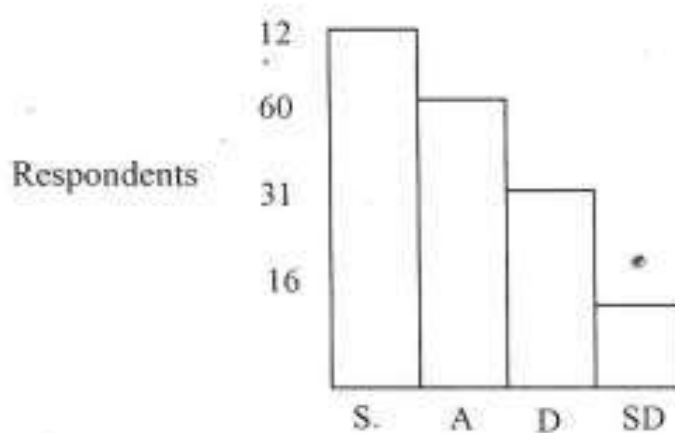


Fig 3- shows whether there is the need to remove from the primary and JSS curriculum subject based discipline that are not taught at these levels.

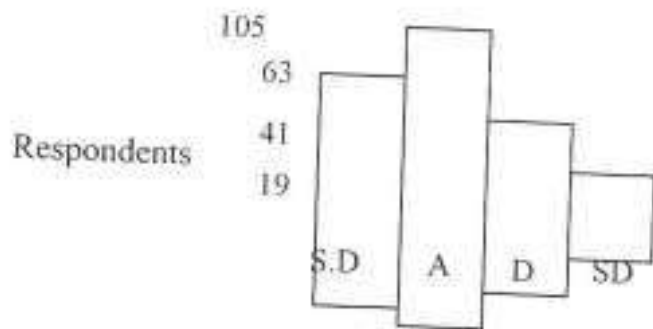
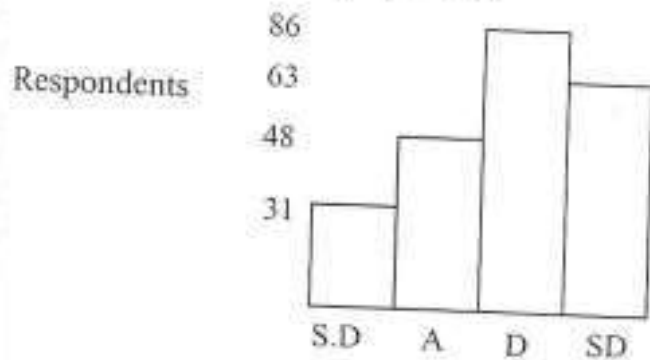


Fig 4- shows whether there is adequate production of teachers in desired quantity at the primary and JSS levels of the UBE programme.



DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study reveals that there is need to restructure the NCE curriculum to meet the demands of the formal school aspects of the UBE programme (primary and junior secondary). One of the issues highlighted is that NCE courses are more of senior secondary subjects rather than primary and junior secondary subjects. Pre-service teachers combine more of the subjects offered at the senior secondary level in other word, colleges of education still maintain courses that are not taught in primary and junior schools. Even when they are combined such exposure or knowledge acquired by the pre service teachers is not meant for primary or junior secondary education. Competence and appreciable expertise emphasized by the NCCE is in area of content mastery, which associated with senior secondary education. Whereas education at the primary and junior secondary level is more of realizing objectives.

The NCE curriculum does not give special attention to certain courses that are of relevance to the formal school aspect of the UBE programme. These NCE courses include among others, pre-primary and primary education, educational technology, special education and adolescent psychology. Pre-primary and primary education should not be a semester course for those not taking it as one of their majors. Educational technology, like special education, should be combined with a teaching subject in the primary school or junior secondary school, preferably computer education. This is because it is a common subject in both primary and junior secondary education. Educational technology as a specialist course at the NCE level, enhances curriculum development and delivery. As a matter of convenience they would be the one to improvise all the required teaching – learning materials for the schools, rather than subject teachers arranging for instructional materials. Special education should be offered by both federal and state colleges of education. Primary

and junior secondary schools need a good number of NCE teachers to bring about effective integration of the handicapped, gifted and talented children that are found in the classrooms (FGN, 2004). Adolescent psychology, like adult education, should not be an elective course for NCE pre-service teachers any longer. Since those who complete their junior secondary are streamed into either vocational or apprenticeship training for children between the ages of 15 years and above. Making adolescent psychology a compulsory course would encourage commitment and high sense of social responsibility on the part of pre-service teachers.

In the same vain, introductory technology, the future of technological advancement in Nigeria should be offered by all colleges of education. The government and other stake-holders in the education industry cannot be talking of science and technology as fulcrum of development when those that would be required to pass on such knowledge have no opportunity to study it. Ngwu (2000) study showed that only four colleges of education offered introductory technology. Worse of all, none of the Federal technical colleges offered an NCE course in the area of introductory technology. The study also revealed that cultural and creative arts, which ought to have revived Nigeria's cultural, economic and tourism potentials are not considered as a subject to be offered. Religious knowledge offered at both primary and junior secondary levels emphasizes the teaching of the two major religions in Nigeria; Islam and Christianity. These teachings do not extricate the moral decadence in the Nigeria state. Therefore moral education needs to be introduced in place of religious knowledge so that the principles underlying all moral issues found in every religion, be it traditional african religion, Islamic religion, Christian religion, even humanism – are given consideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is imperative and expedient that the NCE curriculum should be systematically restructured and co-ordinated to meet the present demands and challenges of the primary and junior secondary curricular of the UBE programme. Hence it is recommended that:

1. All the subjects relevant to primary and junior secondary schools should be offered as NCE course. With the curricular at heart emphasis should be more of realizing objectives rather than content mastery.
2. NCE programmes should de-emphasize combining primary education studies with subjects that are taught in senior secondary school, but with subjects taught at primary or junior secondary school.
3. The NCCE should stand up to her responsibility so as to ensure firm control and coordination of all the courses or programmes taught at the colleges of education, in order to attain the objectives of basic education.
4. Special education, educational technology, cultural and creative arts, introductory technology should be combined as major programmes in the NCE curriculum to ensure the attainment of the basic education programme at the primary and junior secondary education levels.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, the NCCE and colleges of education should strive to incorporate these recommendations into the NCE Curriculum so that the contributions of teacher education at the NCE level towards the implementation and realization of the UBE programmes would be meaningful and realistic.

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