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Enhancing Teacher Quality: The COL- NCCE Collaborative Experience

By

Federal Ministry of Education/National Commission for Colleges of Education, Abuja

A Presentation at the Seventh Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning

(PCF7) 2 – 6 December, 2013

@ International Conference Centre, Abuja, Nigeria

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Abstract

The quality of the teachers of the basic education programme in Nigeria has been a major concern of stakeholders, and especially of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) which has responsibility for the regulation, supervision and production of quality teachers in that sector. Working in conjunction with several development partners, especially the COL, DFID and UNICEF, the NCCE has been able to initiate some programmes which may change profoundly the face of teacher education programmes in this country. The purpose of this presentation is to showcase the following programmes and therefrom propose the future direction the Commission intends to move: (i) Instilling quality in the preparation/training of Pre-service teacher education delivered by the Colleges of Education using the Quality Assurance Toolkit; (ii) Instilling quality in the preparation/training of In-service teacher Education delivered through the Open and Distance Learning System (DLS) by the National Teachers' Institute (NTI). (iii) Increasing graduate output from the Colleges of Education to meet EFA/MDGs by optimizing the use of the COEs' facilities.

Keywords: Teacher Quality; Pre-Service Teacher Education; In-service Teacher Education; Distance Learning System; Quality Assurance Toolkit.

1.0 Introduction

With the start of the new millennium, many nations have been engaged in some major educational transformations. One of the commonest questions in most of these efforts is “*what kind of teachers do we need to*

meet the challenges of a rapidly changing and technologically oriented society that characterises the 21st Century?” In a way, societies are thus finally acknowledging that the **teacher matters**. Teachers are a key to the success of any educational transformation. Not only are teachers one of the ‘critical variables’ that needs to be changed in order to improve the educational system, they are also the most significant change agent in these transformations. Rivlin (1965) put it succinctly when he wrote:

One of the basic truths in education is that the quality of education depends largely upon the quality of the teacher... it is unlikely that the students will get a superior education unless the teacher is superior. With good leadership and appropriate teaching aids, the teacher’s effectiveness can be enhanced; but the most ingenious plans of inspired administrators and the best array of instructional devices are of little avail if the teacher is ignorant, unskilled or indifferent.

The double role of teachers in educational transformations – being both the subject and object of change – makes the field of teacher training a growing and challenging area. This calls for refocusing the training of teachers on the core competencies that will serve as catalyst for building the 21st Century skills more effectively.

This paper highlights the imperatives of Quality Assurance mechanisms as a catalyst for enhancing teacher quality at the basic education level within the law, policy and strategic framework of the Nigerian government. It examines the challenges posed by the teacher education programme as well as the strategies embarked upon by the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), especially through its collaborative efforts with International Development Partners (IDPs) in tackling the challenges headlong.

In an attempt to give concrete frame to the thrust of this paper, the following sections shall be addressed:

- Innovations in the Teacher Education Programmes in Nigeria;
- NCCE and Teacher Demand Issues;

- Quality Assurance and the Transformation of the Teacher Education Programme;
- The New Teacher Education Toolkit and its Uniqueness;
- Challenges/Way Forward

2.0 Innovations in the Teacher Education Programmes in Nigeria

The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) has the mandate to regulate the Teacher Education programme at the sub-degree level. Before now, the Commission has carried out its functions by laying down minimum academic standards, regular visitations, pre-accreditation visits, monitoring and evaluation of specific projects, information sharing and the accreditation of programmes in the Colleges of Education every five years. Little attention has been paid to what transpires in the classroom of the trainee teachers.

With dwindling performance of the pupils taught by graduates of the Colleges of Education (COEs), and the mounting criticism of the achievements of school leavers, NCCE has been forced to focus on the contents and methods of the teacher preparation programmes. The outcome is a revised curriculum that pays greater attention to what the trainee teacher is expected to teach (i.e the contents of the subject areas) and the methodology appropriate for teaching them.

The Commission has also observed the challenges posed by the structure of the curriculum of the Nigeria Certification in Education (NCE), which NCCE awards to graduates of the COEs. The problems became more pronounced with the enactment in 2004 of the Universal Basic Education law, which redefined and expanded the concept of basic education to include Pre-Primary, Primary, Junior Secondary, Adult and Non-Formal Education, and Special Needs Education. The Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) has responded to the new concept by designing curricula for Early Childhood Education and other new areas of the basic education programme. Following on this development, the Commission has successfully revised the NCE Curricula from the **outdated one-size—fits-all model to Specialist Level Oriented one**. In this regard, Colleges of Education in Nigeria are expected to start operating the new Specialist Curricula that are intended to produce NCE teachers who specialise in teaching in one of Nursery,

Primary or Junior Secondary School as from 2013/2014 Academic Session. The Colleges will also produce teachers who will teach Adult and Non-formal Education as well as persons who are physically challenged, persons with special needs and those whose intellectual faculties are extra-ordinary.

In response to the dwindling performance of pupils in public examinations, especially in Mathematics and English Language, the NCCE collaborated with COL in organizing series of workshops for English Language Teachers in our Junior Secondary Schools in order to improve their capacity to effectively teach English language, the medium of instruction from primary four onwards in our schools. The first leg of the workshop was conducted in Lafia, Nasarawa State followed by the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), and the NCCE intends to organize similar workshops across the Country in the near future.

Similarly, the National Mathematical Centre has been running a number of trainings/workshops for teachers of Mathematics at the various levels of basic education. With respect to the other areas of the Curriculum, the NCCE, in collaboration with the Teacher Education in sub-Sahara Africa (TESSA) consortium has developed the **Pre-Service Teacher Manuals** to support and improve the quality of teaching Basic Science and Technology, Social Studies, Life Skills, Languages and Mathematics. The Commission has encouraged the development of these education resource materials with the following three-pronged objectives:

- To make the pedagogical outfit of the 9-Year Basic Education classrooms more activity-learning based through diverse participatory, interactive, cooperative and collaborative strategies;
- To complement the academic and methodological components of the NCE courses to which the student-teachers are exposed through new learner-friendly techniques and key resources; and
- To serve as a sort of ‘hands-on’ and ‘minds-on experiences’ needed to make classroom management and learning outcomes more effective, enjoyable and rewarding.

3.0 NCCE and Teacher Demand Issues

All over the world, teacher education is widely identified as the foundation of quality and relevance of education especially at the basic school level. Nigeria has never doubted the pivotal role teachers play in the quality of its education. Indeed, this recognition informed the setting up of the National Commission for Colleges of Education in 1989, as the third leg of the tripod that regulates and supervises tertiary education in Nigeria. Amongst its major goals therefore, is the production of quality teachers for the nation's rapidly expanding basic education sector.

The teacher education policies and practices in Nigeria are guided by the National Teacher Education Policy (NTEP), the Universal Basic Education (UBE) law as well as the Roadmap for the Nigerian Education Sector. The NTEP represents the Federal Government's policy framework which stipulates standards and teacher outcomes for education and training courses that are to be linked to the age levels to be taught. More importantly, this document provides a structure around which both the NCCE and the Colleges can address the teacher quality and development issues (Junaid, 2013).

The UBE law enacted in 2004 represents the Federal Government's legal framework which recognises four distinct levels of basic education namely: ECCE, Primary, Junior Secondary School, and Adult and Non-formal Education for which teachers have to be provided. Lately, the need for teachers who specialise in teaching persons with special needs has been recognised and added to complete the five (5) basic education areas.

The UBE law has its roots in the introduction in the country of a compulsory 9 year universal basic education programme in 1999, which merged Primary Education with the Early Childhood Education and 3 years of Junior Secondary Education. This commitment which emphasised the main objective of increasing access to quality education for all (EFA) has led to significant increases in school enrolments and number of schools across the country. This increase in turn, has created tremendous demand for teachers, thereby pushing to the fore the pressing need to find more effective ways of addressing the teacher challenge.

Rising to the challenge of actualising the vision and goals of UBE would involve recognition of the important and leading role teachers must play in its effective implementation. There is no doubt that the possibilities of realising the vision and goals of universal education are greater if, through their training and practice, teachers share the same unique vision, goals and expectations of UBE and of the scholarly knowledge and skills that it is their responsibility to impart; and if, students acquire comparative and competitive competencies by the end of their schooling. Addressing the challenge posed by UBE therefore, raises concrete questions such as:

- i) What kinds of teachers are needed for the effective implementation of UBE?
- ii) Are such teachers available in adequate numbers?
- iii) If not, how can we prepare our colleges of education to produce enough numbers of these teachers?
- iv) How relevant and adequate is the existing teacher education curriculum at NCE level to what the NCE teacher will end up teaching in the basic schools?
- v) What changes do we need to introduce in the teacher education curriculum to achieve the desired goals?

Answers to these and other related questions point to the initial directions in which changes in teacher education should move. Arriving at such answers would depend on a closer examination of the existing teacher education programme in terms of its relevance, adequacy and quality in relation to the vision and agenda of the universal basic education. Thus, the UBE law provides a legal framework for the training of specialist teachers to service the various components of the redefined Basic Education concept. It is believed that the specialist programme would lead to the development of teachers that is more inclusive and more relevant to the teacher need at the basic education level. Elucidating on this point, Shuaibu (2008) opined that:

The specialist teacher education model is more likely to improve the quality of service delivery, as trainees would be exposed to the scope and depth of knowledge and

skills as well as the frame of conduct/mind that would enhance performance in a chosen level.

The introduction of UBE has raised the issues of teacher demand. The current statistics, which is provided by the Nigeria Education Roadmap, are as frightening as they are depressing and unacceptable. Going by the present rate of the Colleges of Education current production capacity of sixty four thousand (64,000) per annum, it would take Nigeria twenty (20) years to produce the required number of teachers for the basic education programme (Junaid, 2013). Nigeria needs 1,431,512 teachers to meet the demand of basic education by 2015. The following tables vividly illustrate the point being made.

Table 1: Projected Teacher Requirement for Basic Education (2005 – 2015)

Teacher Requirement Projection (2005 – 2015) (At 10% pa)			
S/No	Year	Pupil Enrolment	Qualified Teacher Requirement (1:40)
1	2005	22,076,401	551,910
2	2006	24,284,041	607,101
3	2007	26,712,445	667,811
4	2008	29,383,690	734,592
5	2009	32,322,059	808,051
6	2010	35,554,265	888,857
7	2011	39,109,691	977,742
8	2012	43,020,660	1,075,517
9	2013	47,322,726	1,183,068
10	2014	52,054,999	1,301,375
11	2015	57,260,499	1,431,512

Source: Junaid, M.I. (2013), *Teacher Education for Basic Education Programme Implementation*. P. 5

Table 2: Existing Teacher shortfalls at Basic Education Level

Teacher Demand Issues in Nigeria	
Existing Teacher shortfalls at Basic Education Level:	
ECCE:	969,078
Primary Education :	338,147
Junior Secondary:	581

Adult & Non-formal	1,580,000
Nomadic Education:	12,329
=====	
Culled from: <i>Roadmap for the Nigerian Education Sector</i>	
Average annual production rate: 64,000 NCE teachers	

Given the above projected teacher requirement and the backdrop of current shortfalls probably as a result of the unsatisfactory professional and academic qualifications of most practicing teachers in the Nigerian education system, it does not require much imagination to conclude that a radical alternative supplementary approach to the current inadequate teacher education effort is urgently required if Nigeria is to successfully implement the UBE programme. The issues may, therefore, be summarized to *how do we address the production of quality teachers in large numbers to meet the demands of the Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)?* Part of the answer to these questions has been provided by the Nigerian Education Roadmap. The Roadmap represents a strategic framework of the present administration. It provides adequate and proper guidelines and directions for effective teacher education programmes that are intended to respond to the needs of EFA/the Millennium Development Goals. Daniel (2010) recognised this and re-stated it this way:

Scaling up teacher education requires wider use of distance learning, which also provides a mechanism for the desirable reform of moving the focus from pre-service to in-service training... Distance learning can help nations create the educational ecosystems that the 21st century requires

It would therefore seem as if *Distance Learning System (DLS)* provides one way of addressing two requirements that have been professionally proved to be central to teacher education, viz:

- Recruitment of sufficient teachers to meet both the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the goals of Education for All (EFA);
- The deployment of best kind of training that is suitable to the educational needs of contemporary Nigeria citizens (Otunuyi, 2012).

4.0 Quality Assurance and the Transformation of the Teacher Education Programme

The pivot for the successful implementation of any nation's educational development plans lies in both the quantity and quality of its teaching force (Jegele, 2001). Nigeria needs a radical and pedagogically efficient approach to produce the required quantity and quality of teachers for effective implementation of the UBE programme. It is the belief of NCCE that the quality of teachers, teaching and learning in the basic education skill will improve if the teacher education institutions (TEIs) and the teacher education programme are refocused to address the existing teacher needs in the basic education sector and the pedagogical competences required to tackle them more effectively (Junaid, 2012). In matters related to the improvement of teacher quality, teacher retention and professional development, the Commission had over the years enjoyed the collaboration and cooperation of stakeholders at national level such as the National Teachers' Institute (NTI), the Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), the Education Trust Fund – now Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND), the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), and the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC). Similarly, and particularly in tackling the issues of policy reforms and innovations in teacher practices, the NCCE has also enjoyed collaboration with International Development Partners (IDPs) such as the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN), UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID, World Bank, JICA, TESSA and the British Council. The collaborative efforts of NCCE and these key stakeholders are basically towards enhancing the teacher quality from both the pre-service and in-service perspectives.

In particular, the COL in collaboration with the NCCE, provided enabling leverage for a series of workshops for the production of quality assurance instruments used in Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs). It all began between 2004 – 2006, when the Commonwealth of Learning, Vancouver, Canada and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), India, through a series of workshops, brought together teacher educators, quality assurance experts and policy makers from eleven (11) Commonwealth countries (including Nigeria) to develop the Quality Assurance Toolkit (Junaid, 2009).

In order to realise its dream of improving the relevance and quality of teacher education at the NCE level and its products, the Commission went through a multi-pronged process following the under listed strategies, among others:

- Policy dialogue in the teacher education programme with a view to identifying gaps and determining appropriate ways of filling in the gaps.
- Expanding the focus and contents of the teacher education programmes to fit the national basic education curriculum and expand opportunities to produce quality teachers for the different levels of the basic education programme.
- Review of previous quality assurance instruments and mode of accreditation to focus on the five core assessment areas that research shows are central to a good quality assurance system, namely: Leadership, Management and Organisation; Curriculum Organisation and Implementation; Infrastructure and Learning Research Resources; Assessment and Evaluation; and Student Support and progression.
- Development of professional standard for teaching and teacher educators to focus training on what teachers should know and be able to do at the various stages of their training.
- Development of teaching support materials to bolster teaching confidence and enhance teacher educators' resource base; and
- Training of teacher educators to deliberately teach and monitor students' mastery of the knowledge and core pedagogical skills vital for effective delivery of the basic education curriculum.

5.0 The New Teacher Education Toolkit and its Uniqueness

As part of the dividends of its collaboration with various stakeholders in the education industry across the globe and especially the Commonwealth of Learning and team of experts from ESSPIN/DFID, the NCCE has successfully published and circulated the “*Accreditation Toolkit for NCE-Awarding Institutions*”, which is considered first of its kind in the history of teacher education in the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Junaid, 2013). The photograph below showcases the packages in the new teacher education toolkit.

Diagram 1: Features of the *Accreditation Toolkit for NCE Awarding Institutions, 2012*.



The uniqueness of the new set of Quality Assurance Instruments packaged in the published Toolkit which has been trial-tested in six (6) Colleges of Education lies in the fact that it:

- Incorporates internal institutional and external assessments affording the teacher education institutions (TEIs) an opportunity to conduct an internal assessment which contributes to the overall assessment of their own programmes;
- Empowers the TEIs to deliberately assess the quality of their programmes using appropriate guidelines and templates;
- Includes the assessment of classroom transactions as an important measure of programme quality;
- Focuses on the quality of leadership and support services and their impact on the quality of administration and the quality of graduate output;
- Encourages and facilitates a variety of teaching methods within the institutions' Schools and Departments, that are conducted in a consultative and consensus building fashion (mentoring process);
- Ensures the choice of appropriate and credible student assessment methods relevant to the chosen learning methods;

- Focuses on outcomes and not detailed specification of curriculum content;
- Determines the quality of input, process and output variables that provide information on learning outcomes and their improvement for the purpose of decision making and decision taking.

The components of the new quality assurance toolkit are:

- a) Guidelines of Accreditation Toolkit – An Introduction
- b) Quality Indicators for Teacher Education
- c) Self Assessment and Statement of Facts Forms
- d) External Assessors Document

6.0 Challenges and way forward

6.1 Challenges

- Further development of education resource materials to bolster teaching confidence and enhance teacher educators' resource base.
- Concrete translation of the transformed teacher education curriculum into action at Colleges of Education.
- Harnessing the necessary resource base for the successful implementation of the new NCE programmes.

6.2 Way forward

- All these efforts are being directed to improve on the number and quality of trained teachers for the basic education sub-sector.
- In time, it is hoped that our institutions will be able to operate in a dual-mode capacity by providing in-service and pre-service teacher education programmes side by side in each College of Education (COE).

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