AFRICAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

ISSN 0795 - 0063

Volume 25, No. 1, June 2024 & Volume 25, No. 2, December 2024

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CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AFFECTING EXCELLENT SERVICE DELIVERY IN TEACHER TRAINING INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

In recognising the roles of teachers as important agents of societal transformation and nation-building, the Federal Government of Nigeria established colleges of education to produce highly conscientious, competent and certified teachers for primary and junior secondary schools. These teachers are expected to satisfy the needs and expectations of parents, students and other stakeholders through quality service delivery. Excellent service delivery is the highest level of care that can be provided to parents, students and other customers within the scope of educational organisation. This paper, therefore, examined the concept of teacher education, excellent service delivery and contemporary issues affecting excellent service delivery in teacher training institutions. It was concluded that if the issues of inadequate funding, lecturers' cadre, academic staff – students relations, admission policy, management, facilities and staff commitment are not properly addressed, teacher training institutions would not be able to render excellent services to the society in the form of production of highly conscientious, competent and certified builders of the nation. It was therefore recommended that colleges of education as should be properly funded by all education stakeholders to attract and maintain highly qualified staff and equally provide better facilities to facilitate effective teaching and learning. The cadre of lecturers in the colleges of education should be changed to the cadre of lecturers in the universities.

Keywords: Excellent service delivery, Teacher education, Teacher training institutions

Introduction

According to Okebukola (2012), education is the act of keeping an individual's knowledge and skills up to date so that they can benefit both the community and themselves. Education enables people to acquire concepts, expertise, and life experience that will benefit them and society as a whole. All forms of development such as social, economic, political, physical, emotional and psychological are facilitated by education. All nations strive for growth, and education is the only means by which this can be accomplished. For this reason, Taiwo defined education in Oladimeji (2015) as the collective endeavour or efforts of a community, society, or country to elevate its social, economic, and political standards of living. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) said in its National Policy on Education that education is the best tool available for influencing national development as a result of the awareness of the importance of education in fostering national growth. Stated differently, the only true instrument available to attain national development is education. Nigeria's National Policy on Education states that the country's ultimate goal is to accomplish development through education, however it is commonly held that a country can only be as good as its instructors. Since instructors have the greatest influence over the quality of education children get, their role in achieving educational objectives cannot be understated. Ensuring that instructors possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitude is crucial to delivering high-quality education.

Nigerian colleges of education are responsible for producing highly conscientious, efficient, and creative teachers for primary and junior secondary levels of education. Nigerian colleges of education were established by the federal government of Nigeria in recognition of the important roles that teachers play in societal transformation and nation-building. Nigerian colleges of education, which are tertiary institutions under the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) umbrella, provide the Nigeria Certificate in Education as the minimum teaching qualification in Nigeria. The purpose of teacher education institutions, such as colleges of education, is to impart knowledge and skills to nation builders. The skills that are learned there must be extremely beneficial to society, as we need problem solvers, not just consumers of solutions.

According to Okebukola (2012), certain higher education institutions in Nigeria have not adhered strictly and seriously to the National Policy on Education's requirements for providing high-quality services. A portion of the institution's graduates lack employable skills. Consequently, the nation's high unemployment rate becomes the norm. Education colleges, as official institutions, bear the obligation of training teachers who are highly conscientious, competent, and certified. These teachers must meet the demands and expectations of parents, students, and other stakeholders by providing high-quality services. The ability of an organization to provide services in accordance with internal quality specifications that are created based on management's assessment of customer needs and expectations is known as quality service delivery. Since parents and students are the primary customers in the education sector, quality service delivery represents the best possible care that can be given to them and other customers within the purview of an educational organization. This paper, therefore, examines the concept of teacher education, quality service delivery and trending issues affecting quality service delivery in Nigerian Colleges of Education.

Concept of Teacher Education

Teacher education is a *type* of higher education that is given after secondary education in Universities, Colleges of education, Polytechnics, and Monotechnics including those institutions offering correspondence courses development (the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). It is an aspect of higher education designed to meet the needs and aspirations of a nation in terms of the production of highly motivated, conscientious, efficient, certified and creative nation builders (teachers). Akintunde (2019) explains teacher education as the policy and procedure designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes and skills they required to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom and the wider society. Institutions involved in the professional training of teachers are colleges of education, faculties of education in universities and institutes of education.

Purpose of Teacher Education

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) in the National Policy on Education states the following as purposes of teacher education:

- a) To produce highly motivated, conscientious and effective classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system.
- b) To encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- To help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and to enhance their commitment to the national objectives,
- d) To provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to any changing situation not only in the life of their country but in the wider world.
- e) To enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession

Excellent Service Delivery

Ensuring excellent service delivery to consumers or customers is the goal of any firm led by management. The primary goal of quality management, a business management approach, is to instill a culture of quality in all organisational procedures. Quality management is the delivery of high-quality services. Salami (2020) claims that quality management is a management concept that was created for industrial use but is currently garnering more and more interest in the educational sector. It attempts to raise the standard of the production system (knowledge and instructions) in order to generate high-quality goods with no flaws. It promotes the ongoing enhancement of academic services, administrative support services, student support services, instruction, and other related areas to help students develop into critical and creative thinkers in a rapidly evolving technological environment.

Accordingly, providing quality services to clients in the education sector means that teacher education institutions must be able to meet internal quality standards that are created based on management's assessment of the requirements and expectations of parents, students, and other clients. In the context of an educational institution, it is the best possible care that can be given to parents, students, and other clients.

Contemporary Issues Affecting Excellent Service Delivery in Teacher Training Institutions

Funding Issues: The act of contributing financial resources, typically in the form of cash or other assets like time or effort, to support a project, program, or need is known as funding. Typically, this is done by a teacher education institution. A financially stable teacher education school is more likely to draw and retain highly skilled personnel (academics, researchers, administrators, etc.) and offer superior facilities that support efficient teaching and learning. Financially challenged organizations experience inefficiencies, which may eventually have an impact on the caliber of services they provide. Bello (2020) reports that poor remuneration of academic staff in Nigerian colleges of education as a result of poor funding leads to loss or deficiency of highly skilled and experienced lecturers. This has a significant effect on the quality of teacher education by leading to the poor training of college products, reducing the quality of teacher education, resulting in disaccreditation of college programmes and loss of creative ideas among potential future teachers. High ranking institutions of higher learning in developed nations can render quality services as a result of adequate funding. The governments of those developed nations earmarked a tangible percentage of their gross domestic product to education which is regarded as a veritable tool for achieving national development.

Academic Staff-Student Relation Issue: In some Nigerian colleges of education, the relationship between academic staff and student is not always cordial and this affects students' willingness to learn. The relationship that exists between lecturer and their students is the key issue in determining quality service delivery in colleges of education. It is believed that frequent student-lecturer contact in and out of classes is a key that promoting willingness among students to be committed to their studies and to help them get through rough times.

Staff Development Policy: The recent government policy for staff development through Tertiary Education Trust Fund is not favourable to most lecturers in colleges of education. The foreign scholarship for academic staff favours only science-based disciplines. Most colleges of

education have different schools such as school of arts and social sciences, school of languages, school of vocational and technical education, school of sciences, school of education, school of general education and school of early childhood and primary education. Are staff from the school of sciences only make up the college? Are they the only staff expected to render quality service that will satisfy the needs of society? This is an issue that needs to be addressed if Colleges of Education are to discharge their responsibilities as expected. Oguntoye (2020) stated that staff development is not optional. It is a necessity in the production process. Developing human resources (staff) in the form of on-the-job training, the opportunity for staff further studies and scholarship and conference attendance enables individuals to acquire skills and knowledge needed to achieve present and future goals of teacher education.

Admission Policy: The present Joint Admission and Matriculation Board admission policy does not favour recruiting the best brain into the teaching profession. The JAMB score required for admission into the teacher education programme is very low. How can we expect teacher education programmes to be functional like other programmes such as Medicine, Engineering etc when we fail to recruit the best brain into the programme? The JAMB registrar Professor Oloyede declared that the cut-off mark for 2022/2023 admission for colleges of education is 100 marks while the cut-off for other disciplines in other tertiary institutions is above 200 marks.

Management Issues: The management team of Nigerian colleges of education includes the Provost, Deputy Provost, Registrar, Librarian and Bursar. The ability of these managers to effectively and efficiently utilize available human and material resources to achieve the objectives of teacher education is a major indicator of quality service delivery in Nigerian teacher education institutions

Facilities Issues: Some Nigerian colleges of education do not have befitting offices for the lecturers. One of the mandates of academic staff is the conduction of research. How can thorough research be conducted in an unconducive environment where there is erratic power supply, inadequate ICT facilities and poor network? Mayondo, Zaman &

Abubakar (2000) noted that facilities such as the library, buildings, textbooks, learning and living environment and other equipment that support teaching and learning processes are relevant to achieving quality education. Educational providers must ensure that these facilities are adequate and reliable to meet students' needs. Limited access to available equipment prevents students from learning effectively hence students must have access to reliable equipment. Adequate availability and effective utilization of facilities determine to a great extent quality service delivery of Nigerian teacher education institutions

Staff Commitment: Some staffers in Nigerian Colleges of education are not committed to their jobs. Alsiewi and Agil (2014) define an employee's job commitment as the willingness of an employee to invest personal resources into their tasks or jobs and thus remain in their professions. To teacher education institutions, employees' job commitment is a strong belief in and the acceptance of the institution's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the institution, and a strong desire to maintain one's membership within the institution. Employees with powerful job commitment find it easy to be interested in whatever is being carried out in the institution and such employees can get involved in the institution's activities wholeheartedly without compromising the standard. Also, committed staffers have a high level of motivation to do everything within their power or even above what they normally expected to do to move the institution forward. Without a high level of staff commitment, there would be high staff absenteeism and the achievement of teacher education goals in any teacher education institution would be impossible.

Conclusion

This paper focused on the contemporary issues affecting excellent service delivery in teacher training institution. Colleges of education are centres for imparting knowledge and skills to nation builders. They are charged with the responsibility of producing highly conscientious, competent and certified teachers that must satisfy the needs and expectations of parents, students and other stakeholders through quality service delivery. Excellent service delivery refers to the ability of

the organisation to deliver service in line with internal specifications of quality, designed according to the management's perception of customer needs and expectations. If the issues of inadequate funding, lecturers' cadre, lecturers — students relations, admission policy, management, facilities and staff commitment are not properly addressed, Nigerian colleges of education will not be able to render quality services to the society in form of production of highly conscientious, competent and certified builders of the nation.

Recommendations

Based on the roles of colleges of education in the production of competent teachers and conclusion, the following recommendations are made;

- Colleges of education should be properly funded by all education stakeholders to attract and maintain highly qualified staff (lecturers, research experts, administrators etc.) and equally provide better facilities to facilitate effective teaching and learning.
- Lecturers' Cadre / Status: The cadre of lecturers in the colleges
 of education should be changed to the cadre of lecturers in the
 universities (graduate assistant, assistant lecturer, lecturer II,
 lecturer I, senior lecturer, associate professor/reader and
 professor.
- There should be a cordial relationship between lecturers and students to promote the willingness among students to be committed to their studies and to help them get through rough times.
- 4. The cut-off mark for colleges of education should be upwardly reviewed to allow the best brain to be recruited into the teaching profession
- All staff irrespective of their disciplines should be given opportunities for a foreign scholarship to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to achieve the present and future goals of teacher education.
- 6. The management team should develop the ability to effectively and efficiently utilize available human and material resources to achieve the objectives of teacher education

- 7. All stakeholders in Nigerian Colleges of Education should ensure adequate availability and effective utilization of facilities
- 8. Staff should be encouraged to be more committed to their jobs

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