EXTENT OF ADOPTABILITY OF NCCE'S STRATEGIES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN NCE BUSINESS EDUCATION PROGRAMME BY COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN ENUGU STATE

Odo, Samuel N.
Department Of Business Education
Federal College Of Education,
Eha-amufu, Enugu State.
e-mail: serikki@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract
This study was carried out to assess the NCCE's strategies adopted by Colleges of education in Enugu state for enhancing quality in NCE Business Education Programme. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Three experts from Department of Business Education, FCE Eha-amufu validated the instruments. Cronbach Alpha reliability formula for testing the internal consistency of the instrument was employed. The population for the study was the three Colleges of education in Enugu state that offer Business education programme and 20 lecturers that teach Business education courses in these Colleges. The entire population was studied. Mean was used to analyze the data collected. The study revealed that almost all the strategies for quality assurance in NCE Business Education as contained in the NCCE minimum standard were adopted in these colleges and most of them were not adequately implemented. The study revealed further, that almost all the adopted strategies were suitable for quality assurance. Recommendations were made among them was that Agencies responsible for quality assurance in NCE Business Education Programme should intensify efforts towards ensuring that Colleges of Education adhere strictly to the standard set by them.

Introduction
Education has been described as a vital instrument for achieving government developmental objectives as well as the accomplishment of the Millennium Development Goals. As a result, the sector has been assigned the sole responsibility of generating the required man-power in the right quality and quantity. The personnel so produced are expected to possess skills and knowledge that can propel and sustain the country's developmental agenda.

The major challenge facing Nigeria as a nation appears to be getting quality teachers. Many authors have noted that of all the educational challenges that beset the nation, none is as compelling as the one relating to the training of competent teachers who directly or indirectly influence the quality and quantity of service provided by other professions (Fafunwa 1991). It is also evident that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers (FRN, 2004).

Njoku (2008) and Akpa (2008) also agreed that our educational sector as a whole (which business education cannot be isolated from) has suffered an unquantifiable amount of decay over the years. In line with this, Egwu (2008) listed the following among others as problems of education in Nigeria:
- Lack of essential facilities for effective teaching.
- Lack of qualified teachers
- Poor curriculum development
- Poor ICT development
- Inadequate budgetary allocation
- Ineffective, obsolete and outdated policies and legal framework.
- Inadequate technical/vocational schools.

The relevant question is whether effective quality assurance in vocational business education could be used to remedy these problems. This becomes dicey because according to Abelega(2009), there appears to be a disconnect between technical and vocational education which has the mandate of producing quality workforce in required quality for Nigeria's technological and industrial take-off.

The latest figure on the rate of unemployment in the country is disturbing. According to figures from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the unemployment rate has increased to all-time high rate of 23.9 percent for the year 2011 while the figure for the year 2012 was projected to rise above 25 percent (Sun Newspaper comment 17th August, 2012). The above high figure may not be unconnected with yet another survey that reveals that no fewer than three million graduates have entered the labour market between 2010 and 2011 alone (Nworgu, 2012).

If this statistics is a true reflection of realities on ground, then it is indicative of many scenarios. One of such indicators is that the trend could be a clear indication that our institutions of higher learning are churning out unemployable graduates. On the other hand, it is possible that the education system on the whole does not have in place, a programme to prepare its trainees for the new realities in the labour market despite calls for policy and other interventions to ensure this. This present situation also made Baraje (2012) to charge the Federal Government to ensure that about 80% of Nigerian youths have access to functional education capable of giving them gainful employment.

Many authors agreed that quality as a term in education has been a controversial term (Crombag, 1988; Coombs, 1985 and Afenikhe, 1988). Quality in education could possess all or any of the following criteria: process criterion, product criterion and instrumental criterion. In this content, the three characteristics will be combined thus looking into the student’s learning achievement, relevance of what is taught and learned; significant changes in input, objective and curriculum and whether or not the system has attained the goals it sets out to achieve.

Quality Business education programme for it to be effective must be based on the suggested principles for effective vocational Technical Education by Prosser&Quigley (1949). They suggested the following relevant principles among others for effective vocational education/training:

...
The training should be fashioned in the same way, same operations using the same tools and machines as for the occupation being prepared.

The programme is effective to the extent that the environment in which the trainee is prepared resembles the environment he will eventually get employment.

The trainers should have the required experience in the application of such knowledge and skills they want their trainees to acquire.

There must be a minimum level of preparation needed in order to enable the trainees to obtain and retain employment in that occupation.

A close look at the products of NCE Business education leaves one in doubt whether our colleges follow these principles given the state of facilities, paucity of qualified teachers, and unconducive environment which characterized the operation of this programme. As a result, their products are said to be ill-equipped to face world of work (Ekwue, 2009).

Quality according to Olaarar, Nwachukwu, Igbo, Onyemaechi & Ekong (1999) has to do with the level of excellence in performance which can be measured by established criteria and standard. In this study, quality will mean the availability, adequacy and suitability of inputs or resources for teaching and learning Business Education skills and knowledge in Colleges of Education.

Quality can be described as standards of something as compared to the other thing, that is, the degree of goodness or excellence (Idialu, 2007). The term quality in education simply means the relevance and appropriateness of the education programme to the needs of the society for which it intends to serve. Oladipo, Adeosun and Obi (2009) described quality in respect to education as the ability or degree with which an educational system conforms to established standard and appropriateness. Quality of business education programme could be measured in terms of quality in input, output, content, process, context etc.

Strategy on the other hand could be described as the technique or mechanism consciously put in place to maintain a standard or degree of excellence of a product or service. The term as used in this context means all the operational techniques, activities, actions etc through which business educators ensure that the services they deliver or intend to deliver serve the purpose for which they are intended and remain relevant and appropriate to the needs of the community.

Adegbesan (2011) and Ugodulunwa and Mustapha (2005) identified external moderation of examination, re-training of teachers, maintaining admission policy of students, supervision and inspection, mentoring and monitoring of academic programme, regular evaluation of the system as some important strategies for quality assurance in Nigerian educational system. In the same vain, Abelega (2009) opined that NCCE uses laying down and reviewing of minimum standard, accreditation of academic programmes, monitoring of academic programmes and infrastructure, external moderation system, laying guidelines for establishment and mounting of new programmes, train-the-trainer programmes as quality assurance strategies to engender sustainable qualities in Colleges of Education across the nation.

National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) is the agency that supervises all the Colleges of Education in Nigeria. The supervisory role by the agency includes laying down of minimum standard for all programmes of teacher education and accrediting certificates and other academic awards in the Colleges of Education (NCCE, 2008).

Business Education just like other vocational education programmes is skill oriented. The philosophy of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), Business education, is to make the Business Educators understand the concept and philosophy of the National Policy on Education as regards Business Education in National development (NCCE, 2008).

The NCCE (2008) also specified the minimum standard for the training and production of quality Business Education graduates. They include admission procedure/requirements, facilities, personnel, mode of teaching, graduation requirements, subject combination, courses and status, course description, etc. Available literatures have shone that provisions of this minimum standard have not been fully adhered to by the administrators of Colleges of education (Odo, 2007, Ekwue, 2009). The availability of the requirements is one thing, and their adequacy and suitability are different things altogether.

According to Okoro (1993), the availability and quality of facilities and equipment affect the learning activities planned for any programme. This calls for the assessment of various strategies adopted by the NCCE for enhancing quality in NCE Business Education programme in Colleges of Education to ascertain the availability, adequacy and suitability of these strategies in Colleges of Education in Enugu state.

Specifically, the study sought to

1. Identify strategies adopted by NCCE for quality assurance in Business Education Programmes of Colleges of Education in Enugu state.
2. Assess the adequacy of implementation of NCCE guidelines for quality assurance in Business Education programme by Colleges of Education in Enugu State.
3. Assess the suitability of the adopted NCCE guidelines for quality assurance in Business Education Programme by Colleges of Education in Enugu State.

Methods

Three research questions were developed and answered by the study. Survey research design was adopted for the study. Survey research design according to Nworgu (2006) is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be a representative of the entire group. The design was therefore very appropriate for this study since it was intended to obtain data from Business Education lecturers through the use of questionnaire on quality assurance strategies adopted for NCE Business Education Programme in Colleges of Education.

The study was carried out in all the Colleges of Education in Enugu State that offer Business Education Programme. The population for the study comprised 20 lecturers in Business Education Programme from the three (3) Colleges of Education that offer business
education programme as follows: Federal College of Education, Eha-amufu-9, Enugu State College of Education(T), Enugu-6, and African Thinkers College of Education, Enugu-5. The sample for the study was the entire 20 lecturers since the population size was small and manageable.

A 33-items questionnaire developed from the literature reviewed was used for the data collection. The questionnaire was divided into three categories of types of strategies adopted, adequacy of implementation and suitability of adopted strategies. The adopted category was assigned a four-point response scale of Highly Adopted- HA (4), Averagely Adopted - AA (3), slightly Adopted - SA (2) and Not Adopted - NA (1). The adequacy in implementation category was assigned a four point scale of Very Adequately Implemented - VAI (4), Averagely Adequate in implementation - AAI (3); Slightly Adequate in implementation - SAI (2) and Not Adequate in implementation - NAI (1). The suitability category was assigned a four point scale of Highly Suitable - HS (4), Averagely Suitable- AS (3), Slightly Suitable- SS (2) and Not Suitable - NS (1). Three experts from the department of business education, FCE Eha-amufu validated the questionnaire items. Cronbach Alpha reliability method was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument which gave a reliability coefficient of 0.85 on the average.

Frequency mean was used to analyze data on types of strategies adopted, adequacy of implementation of the adopted strategies and suitability of the strategies adopted. In taking decision on the type, adequacy of implementation and suitability of strategies adopted; any item with a mean score of 3.50 and above was regarded as highly adopted or very adequate in implementation or highly suitable. An item with a mean score of 2.50 to 3.49 was regarded as averagely adopted, averagely adequate in implementation or averagely a suitable strategy while an item with a mean score below 1.50 indicate not adopted, or not adequate in implementation or not a suitable strategy. Group Items with a grand mean score between 1.50 and 4.00 means that the strategies are adopted, or adequate in implementation or suitable, and below 1.50 means that the strategies are not adopted, or not adequate or not suitable.

**Presentation of Results**

The results of the study were obtained from the research questions answered and presented in the tables 1 -3 below.

**Research Question 1:** What are the strategies adopted by the NCCE for quality assurance in Business Education Programme of Colleges of Education in Enugu State?

**Table 1:** Mean scores of the respondent on the type of strategies adopted by NCCE for quality Assurance in Business Education programme of Colleges of Education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item Statements on Types of Quality Assurance Strategies Adopted</th>
<th>Mean Decisions (X)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Quality in students' admission policy</td>
<td>3.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Quality in personnel recruitment policy</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Collaborating efforts in formulating and reviewing minimum standards of Colleges Of Education</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Accreditation of Academic Programmes</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Monitoring of Academic Programmes</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Monitoring of infrastructural development</td>
<td>2.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>External Moderation System</td>
<td>3.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Guidelines for establishment and mounting of new programme</td>
<td>2.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Training the Trainer Programme</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data presented in table 1 indicate that 4 out of 9 quality assurance strategies of NCCE are highly adopted in Colleges of Education in Enugu State for Business Education Programme. The result also showed that 3 strategies (items 2, 5 and 9) were averagely adopted and item 6 was slightly adopted. Hence, all the identified strategies were adopted with the grand mean at 3.10.

**Research Question 2:**

How adequate are the strategies adopted by NCCE for quality assurance in Business Education Programme of Colleges of Education in Enugu State implemented?

**Table 2:** Mean scores of the respondents on the adequacy of implementation of strategies adopted by NCCE for quality assurance in Business Education Programme of Colleges of Education in Enugu State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item Statements on the adequacy of implementation of Strategies</th>
<th>Mean (X)</th>
<th>Decisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Curricular used in teaching of Business Education Course</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>AAI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Exposure of Business Education students to same tools and machines which they will meet in the real work situation.</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>SAI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Questions 3

How suitable are the adopted NCCE strategies for quality assurance in Business Education Programme of Colleges of Education in Enugu State?

Table 3: Mean ratings of the Respondents on the suitability of the NCCE strategies adopted by Colleges of education for quality assurance in Business Education Programme in Enugu State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Item Statements on Suitability of the Strategies Adopted</th>
<th>Mean (x)</th>
<th>Decisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Maintaining standard on the quality of students admitted to study NCE Business Education.</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>Highly suitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Improving on the quality of lecturers recruited to teach Business Education.</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>Highly suitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Monitoring of Academic Programme mounted by Colleges.</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>Highly suitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Monitoring of infrastructural development (buildings, laboratories, teaching equipment etc)</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>Highly suitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Formulating and reviewing of minimum standard for NCE business education programme</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>Highly suitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Regular accreditation of NCE business education programme</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>Highly suitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>External moderation of NCE Business Education examinations</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>Highly suitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Conducting Train-the-Trainer programme for NCE Business Education Lecturers</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>Averagely suitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Production and supervision of guidelines for the establishment and mounting of new NCE Business Education programme</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>Highly suitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Improving on the ICT capacity for NCE business education programme</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>Highly suitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Compulsory exposure of NCE business Education Students to SIWES</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>Highly suitable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In table 3 above, it can be seen that apart from item 30 which was averagely suitable, all other items were highly suitable for quality assurance in business education programme of Colleges of Education in Enugu State. Hence, all the items were suitable strategies adopted by Colleges of education in Enugu state for quality assurance in business education programmes with the grand mean at 3.58.

The data presented in table 2 showed that out of the 12 strategies listed; only item 19 was very adequately implemented. Items 10, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 were averagely adequate. It also showed that five of the items (11, 12, 20, 21 and 22) were slightly adequate in implementation while item 13 was not adequately implemented. Therefore, with the grand mean at 2.47, the strategies itemized were adequately implemented.

Improving on the quality of students admitted to study NCE Business Education Programme: 2.65 AA1

Formulating and reviewing of Minimum standards for NCE Business Education programme: 3.15 AA1

Production and supervision of guideline for the establishment and mounting of new NCE Business Education Programme: 2.40 SA1

Improving on the quality of students admitted to study business education: 3.00 Aa1

NA1 Not Adequately implemented
VA1 Very Adequately implemented
AA1 Averagely Adequately implemented
SA1 Slightly Adequately implemented
Discussion
The findings of this study revealed that NCCE adopts several strategies to regulate qualities in NCE Business Education programme. These include regulating students admission, insisting on quality in the recruitment of personnel, putting in place a collaborative efforts in formulating and reviewing minimum standards; accreditation of academic programme among others. This is in line with the position of Ugoduhuwa and Mustapha (2005) that maintaining a standard in admission policy of students, regular accreditation of academic programmes, monitoring of facilities were among the strategies for quality assurance in Nigerian education system. These strategies should therefore be inculcated into business education programme in the Colleges of education where they are not yet being practiced.

The findings also showed that most of the strategies adopted by the NCCE for quality assurance in Business Education programme of Colleges of Education in Enugu State were on the average adequately implemented. Five of the items were slightly adequate in the implementation while 6 items were averagely adequate in implementation. Only 1 item (external moderation of NCE Business Education Examination) was scored high in the adequacy of implementation while item 13 was not implemented at all. This was in agreement with the position of Ekwue, (2009) that there was need for NCCE to monitor closely the implementation of her guidelines by the Colleges of education since many of them were not implementing fully the policies as contained in the minimum standard.

The study further revealed that almost all the NCCE strategies adopted by Colleges of education for quality assurance in Business Education programme in Enugu State were highly suitable. This corroborated with the position of Abelega, (2009) that laying down and reviewing of minimum standards, accreditation of academic programmes, monitoring of academic programmes and infrastructure, external moderation system, laying down guidelines for establishment and mounting of new programmes, train-the-trainer programmes were all suitable quality assurance strategies adopted by the NCCE to engender sustainable quality in Colleges of education across the nation.

Generally, though the findings indicated presence and high suitability of strategies by the NCCE for quality assurance in Business Education programme of Colleges of Education in Enugu State, the strategies were not fully implemented leading to obvious compromised standards in the colleges.

Conclusions
The presence and suitability of different strategies for quality assurance by NCCE in NCE Business Education programme in Enugu State notwithstanding, a lot is still needed to be done to ensure their full implementation in these colleges. For effective quality assurance in the training and production of NCE graduates, the NCCE specified minimum standard should be fully implemented. It is only when this is done that the main challenge facing Business Education which is training and production of competent Business Education teachers must have been addressed.

Recommendations
Based on the findings of this study and their implications on the education sector generally, the following recommendations were made:

1. All the agencies (NCCE in particular) involved in the supervision of Colleges of Education Programme should as a matter of urgency ensure that those strategies consciously instituted in the colleges for effective techniques for quality assurance of their programmes are religiously adhered to. For instance, personnel recruitment policy, monitoring of infrastructural development, following guidelines for establishment and mounting of new programme, training-the-trainers programme among others.

2. Authorities of Colleges of Education on their own part should endeavour to implement these quality assurance policies diligently and adequately given the available resources. There are some areas that require their full implementation without involving all that money but putting in place effective monitoring strategies. For instance, monitoring of academic programme internally could be done with little stress.

3. Government and philanthropic individuals/organisations in the society should come to the aid of these colleges by providing financial assistance to help them acquire facilities to run Business Education programme. Internally Generated Revenues (IGR) should also be effectively utilized to acquire some of these facilities and equipment. It has been seen that Business Education students need a lot of exposure to real work situation by seeing and torching necessary equipment needed in the field of work realizing that Business Education programme is effective to the extent that the environment in which the trainee is prepared resembles the environment he will eventually get employment.

4. In particular, a deliberate intervention policy should be made into funding Business Education programme which is capital intensive through Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund).

5. NCCE should continue with her strategies used in assuring qualities in Business Education programme of Colleges of Education by intensifying her efforts in the area of monitoring, constant review of minimum standard, regular accreditations, train-the-trainer programme, improving on the ICT capacity among others. Consequently, Colleges of Education should ensure that they recruit only qualified Business Education lecturers who specialized purely in Business Education area.
References


