

**ASSESSMENT OF NIGERIA CERTIFICATE IN EDUCATION CURRICULUM ON
TIMELY GRADUATION IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION: A STUDY OF THE
THREE-YEAR ACADEMIC PROGRAMME**

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ABSTRACT

The mission of teacher education should strive for excellence in the preparation of teachers that would be free from the fetters of routinization of tasks, rationalized curricula and specified or sequenced role. Rather, teacher education should equip the would-be teachers with knowledge, skills and dexterity in their special areas and technical strategies to enable maximum flexibilities in responding to the dynamics of development in a progressive country (Omolade, 2024). The Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E) is the minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession, thus Colleges of Education has a great task of churning out graduands that have both the curriculum knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, in order to fulfill their roles efficiently in the Basic Education years – pre-primary education or Early Childhood Care and Education, primary education, junior secondary education, adult and Non-formal education. The study aimed at investigating into the academic programme (the N.C.E. curriculum) and how it affects students' graduation from the College of Education within the stipulated period of three academic sessions. That is, why students fail to graduate after studying for five academic sessions in Colleges of Education that has 3-year study period. Four research questions and four research hypotheses were postulated to guide the study. Literature were reviewed on history of teacher education in Nigeria, academic load and students' performance, unethical practices by lecturers that may cause students to stay longer in the school, and e-registration (closure of registration portals) that had elongated students graduation years. The research design adopted was a survey design. Three Colleges of Education in the South South Zone of Nigeria were used as the study areas; using N.C.E.1, 2, 3, Extra Year 1 and Extra Year 2 as respondents. A Questionnaire was given to the sampled respondents. The data collected were analyzed using Pearson (r) correlation statistical method.

KEYWORDS: Nigeria Certificate in Education Curriculum, Timely Graduation, Colleges of Education, Three-Year Academic Programme



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INTRODUCTION

The National Commission for Colleges of Education was established by an act in 1989 as the third leg of the tripod of excellence in the supervision of tertiary education in Nigeria. According to the Nigerian Certificate in Education Minimum Standard for General Education (2020), its mandate includes, inter alia,

- The laying down of minimum standards for all programs of teacher education,
- Accrediting their certificate and other academic awards.

Since inception, the Commission has provisioned the goals of quality assurance in producing quality teachers for the rapidly expanding basic education sector. New programs have been added to address the existing teacher's needs at the basic education level.

According to the minimum standard, the new program is now more focused through the attainment of Education for All (EFA) demands and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition to the existing two subject combinations in the N.C.E. program, which is suited for the preparation of the B.Sc. (Ed.) and B.A. (Ed.) degree programs, the new minimum standard document is now targeted at producing specialist teachers for:

- Pre-primary education or early childhood care and education
- Primary Education
- Junior Secondary Education
- Adult and non-formal education

These programmes are level specific, meaning that, special teachers are prepared for each of the five levels of basic education in Nigeria.

Apart from the Minimum Standards, an Implementation Framework has been given as a guide to N.C.E awarding institutions. The Framework sets standards for curriculum practice. It provides the background that informed the development of the new teacher education programmes and gives practical guidelines to what is expected to be done by administrators, teachers, and students in the process of implementing the curriculum.

The goals of education in Nigeria, according to the National Policy on Education (2018), are:

The goals of education in Nigeria are the following:

- a. development of the individual into a morally sound, patriotic, and effective citizen,
- b. total integration of the individual into the immediate community, the Nigerian society, and the world,
- c. provision of equal access to qualitative educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels of education, within and outside the formal school systems,
- d. inculcation of national consciousness, values, and national unity; and

- e. Development of appropriate skills, mental, physical, and social abilities, and competencies to empower the individual to live in and contribute positively to society.

The specific goals of education in Nigeria are to:

- a. ensure and sustain unfettered access and equity to education for the total development of the individual,
- b. ensure the quality of education delivery at all levels,
- c. promote functional education for skill acquisition, job creation, and poverty reduction.
- d. ensure periodic review, effectiveness, and relevance of the curriculum at all levels to meet the needs of society and the world of work;
- e. collaborate with development partners, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and local communities to support and fund education; and
- f. promote information technology capability at all levels.

According to the minimum standard, the mission of teacher education in Nigeria should include, among others:

- Production of well-motivated teachers with high personal and professional discipline, integrity, and competence for all the levels of the education system.
- Preparation of teachers with appreciable expertise in curriculum planning, development, and delivery, as well as competence in research guidance and counseling.
- Production of professionals who can combine the use of conventional teaching strategies and the world's unfolding ICT in the generation and imparting of knowledge, attitude, and skills.
- Continuous preparation and upgrading of teachers' sense of social responsibility and commitment to function effectively as constructive socio-economic, moral, and spiritual change agents needed to promote goodwill, peace, or progress not only in the country but also in the world of the 21st century.

The N.C.E. program, according to Imanam (2023), is a major sector of teacher education, generally aimed at producing teachers with high personal and professional discipline and integrity. This means teachers that are dedicated have appropriate knowledge, skills, and dexterity that will facilitate the achievement of the goals of education. He added that this is important when we note that N.C.E. is ultimately the minimum entry qualification into the teaching profession in Nigeria. With the signing into law of the Universal Basic Education Act in 2004, it encourages the production of specialist teachers for all the levels of basic education, and it is the reason why general courses are specifically designed for the training of junior secondary education teachers.

Objectives of N.C.E. Programmes

By the end of the NCE programme, the students should be able to:

- (a) Discuss intelligently the main ideas that have affected and still affect the development and practice of education generally and in Nigeria in particular.
- (b) Examine the main psychological, health and socio-economic factors that may help or hinder a child's educational performance.

- (c) Study learners appropriately to determine the most effective ways of relating to them to ensure their maximum achievement.
- (d) Professionally combine use of conventional and ICT or other innovational instructional/learning strategies in generating and imparting knowledge, attitudes and skills at Basic Education level.
- (e) Develop, select and effectively use appropriate curriculum processes teaching strategies, instructional materials and methods for maximum learner achievement.
- (f) Broaden their intellectual perspective through the General Studies Education programme for Basic Education.
- (g) Demonstrate desirable attributes in moral and character development.
- (h) Discuss intelligently major issues affecting teacher education and the teaching profession in Nigeria.
- (i) Identify major problems of education in Nigeria and their corresponding solutions
- (j) Demonstrate proficiency in measuring and evaluating learning outcomes, as well as in carrying out appropriate research in educational problems in Nigeria, particularly, at the Basic Education level.

The Nigerian Certificate in Education curriculum involves a 3-year intensive study in general education, general studies, courses in the area(s) of specialization, and teaching practice. These courses are structured to equip the teacher-trainees with in-depth knowledge in their special areas and are technically strategized to enable maximum flexibility in responding to the dynamics of development in a progressive Nigerian society. The curriculum emphasizes not only curriculum knowledge but also pedagogical content knowledge. It emphasizes the distinctive bodies of knowledge for practical application and good deliverables in a typical classroom situation. Theoretical courses that aim at equipping students with foundational knowledge that will help develop their cognitive abilities are taught especially in the first and second years of admission. These courses include history of education, sociology of education, educational psychology, philosophy of education, curriculum studies, etc. Also, practical or method courses are structured to equip the teacher-trainees with the actual practice of classroom deliverables that will help keep pupils organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on task, and academically productive during a class. These courses include Principles and Methods of Teaching, Teacher Education Practice, Practicum in Classroom Management and Organization, Educational Technology: Practice, Micro-Teaching Practicum, etc. These practical courses help teachers develop both affective and psychomotor domains that will be transferred to their pupils. General studies courses are mounted in the N.C.E. program to help students acquire a body of relevant knowledge outside their respective fields of specialization for successful living. They include courses such as general English courses, library studies, basic general mathematics, computer studies, citizenship education, entrepreneurship, political economy, science and technology, etc. They expose students to a variety of knowledge across disciplines and enable students to appreciate the interrelationship among disciplines in an integrated world, due to science and technology.

Teaching practice, as an integral part of the teacher education program, provides student teachers an opportunity to put into practice their theoretical knowledge in a real school-life situation. It helps teacher educators and managers with opportunities for practical appraisal of the effectiveness of teacher education programs. This takes place for a period of six months, at the end of the students' second year. They also offer courses in the students' area(s) of specialization.

Thus, the N.C.E. program takes care of the three domains in learning—the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor.

General Admission Requirements

The Minimum Standards set the following as the admission requirements in N.C.E programmes:

- a) A Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSCE) or National Examination Council (NECO), or General Certificate of Education (GCE) O'Level with four Credits at a maximum of two sittings, including English Language and Mathematics. Two of the Credits must be relevant to the course the candidate wishes to offer.
- b) A Grade II Teacher's Certificate (TC II) with credit or merit in four subjects including English and Mathematics. Two of the credits must be relevant to the course the candidate wishes to offer as his/her specialization.
- c) For candidates wishing to offer courses in Vocational and Technical Education, RSA or City and Guilds Intermediate Certificate, and the Federal Craft Training Certificate (FCTC) with credit/merit in at least four subjects, are acceptable qualifications.
- d) Associateship Certificate in Education awarded by an approved institution in Nigeria, or abroad, is also an acceptable qualification.
- e) All candidates wishing to be considered for admission must enroll for and pass the selection examination organized by an accredited body such as JAMB.
- f) It should be noted that some Colleges may in addition to all of the above, administer their own elimination tests, and or interviews for some courses. This is legitimate.

Mode of Teaching in Colleges of Education

A selection (as appropriate to the standards and topic being treated) is recommended from the following instructional strategies for teaching General Education courses. For purposes of putting theory into practice and enhancing students skill development, it should be emphasized that, lecturers are advised to discard the habit of exclusive reliance on one instructional technique and adopt, the practice of using a combination of two or more techniques that match the students and content they are teaching.

The Minimum Standards emphasized the frequent use of demonstration teaching by lecturers. They are also required to team-teach many of the topics in the programme. Emphasis should also be placed on students effective use of instructional learning materials. Among the generally accepted modes of teaching are:

- Problem-Based Learning Method
- Practical Excursions/Field Trips
- Seminars, Tutorials, and Group Discussion
- Correspondence Approach; Distance Education/Distance Learning System (DLS)
- Micro Teaching
- Folklore and the Play Methods
- Team Teaching
- Unit Teaching and Modular Instruction
- Group and Individual Project Method/Community Service/Work Experience/Inquiry Method
- Discovery/Inquiry Method

- Individualized Instruction (e.g. programme instruction, computer-assisted instruction/learning, integrated day/open day/workday) and or any other professionally recognized teaching procedure.

Graduation Requirements

Duration: 3 years minimum

Internship: 1 year with pay-folio

Candidates for the award of NCE Certificates are required, among others, to earn at least 30 credits in General Education Courses, 6 Credits in Teaching Practice and 18 Credits in General Studies Education (totaling 54 Credits in the Education component of the NCE Programme) to qualify for graduation.

Project:

Every candidate for the N.C.E., irrespective of any other departmental project, is expected to pass EDU 323 – Research Project.

Subject Combination: In order to qualify for the NCE, candidates are expected to combine studies in education with courses in one or two teaching subjects in the junior secondary school curriculum.

At the end of all these, a cumulative grade point average is calculated, and a grade of Distinction, Merit, Pass, or Fail certificate would be awarded to the graduand.

Statement of the Problem

The Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E.) curriculum is designed to be completed within a three –year period, yet many students in Colleges of Education (C.O.E.) face challenges in graduating within this time frame. Delayed graduation or termination of studentship can have significant implications, including increased financial burdens, prolonged entry into the workforce and potential disengagement from the academic process. This study seeks to investigate how the structure and implementation of the N.C.E curriculum affects students’ ability to graduate on time.

Understanding the root causes of delayed graduation or outright termination of studentship after a period of five academic sessions can inform improvements in the curriculum, and related academic programmes, ultimately ensuring that more students complete their education within the expected period.

The increasing number of students staying in the College more than the required three academic sessions, to complete the N.C.E programme has become a matter of serious concern in the educational circles, especially among lecturers, education administrators, and the parents who bear the brunt of this, directly or indirectly.

Records from the Examination and Records Unit of the college show that as much as 70% of students spend more than three academic sessions in order to complete their academic work in the college. In response to this ugly situation, the college management brought out a memo that

students who fail to graduate after five academic sessions automatically lose their studentship and must voluntarily withdraw from the college. Even though the students are aware of this memo and the implications, one notices that the number of extra-year students (students who register for a course after the minimum 3 years) continues to be on the increase. After a semester examination, one will see answer scripts of students with this inscription—Extra Year 1, Extra Year 2—meaning that they are in the fourth and fifth years of the NCE program.

One therefore wonders why students should stay for five academic sessions, or more, without completing a programme that is structured for three academic years. This made the researchers to become increasingly worried and interested in investigating into the possible reasons behind this “long-studentship”. From the empirical survey, the different sets of players in the educational system gave the following possible reasons.

Students:

- i) Over-loaded academic programme; the courses are too many, per semester.
- ii) Insensitivity on the part of the lecturers:
 - (a) Sorting: lecturers demanding money from students before they can pass the courses
 - (b) Sexual harassments of female students,
 - (c) Late commencement of lectures or non-completion of course outline before examination, or lecturers rushing to teach everything before examination because he was not coming to the class as at when due,
 - (d) Tough and twisted examination questions
 - (e) Lecturers hard stand on purchase of their textbooks, handouts or course materials. If a student does not buy, he/she will be made to fail the course, thus repeating it, sometimes, students are made to pay before assignment topic is given to them.
 - (f) Lecturers delay in releasing results, thus causing students who had failed the course not to register for the course, on time.
- (iii) Delay in correcting or supervising student’s projects and monetary demands by project supervisors.
- (iv) High cost of schooling, school fees and other academic materials.
- (v) Incessant lecturers or staff strike actions (NLC strikes)
- (vi) Day schooling system, i.e. students living outside the College premises.
- (vii) Long and tedious process, even monetary demands from staff before obtaining “clearance” from the different Units of the College.
- (viii) Early closure of registration portals, with late registration fine.
- (ix) Delay or non-awarding of statement of result/certificates to graduands by the College management.
- (x) They came to College of Education as their second option. They had wanted to study a different course in a University.
- (xi) Parents forced them to attend a tertiary institution as they would have loved to stop at the secondary school level.

The list goes on and on.

Opinions were also sought from lecturers, who are also active participants in this problem. The researchers, who are also lecturers asked their colleagues why ‘our’ products cannot complete a three-year programme within a period of five years. The following reasons were also given by their teachers.

i. Very poor academic background of most students seeking admission into Colleges of Education. Most of these students went to rural schools where there is a great dearth in personnel and infrastructures in the schools.

ii. Different cutoff points by the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) for university applicants and applicants seeking admission to colleges of education and polytechnics. According to the JAMB website of August 2024, for 2024/2025 admission into universities, candidates are to score 140 out of 400 marks to qualify for admission. Candidates for Colleges of Education and Polytechnics only require a paltry score of 100 out of 400 to be qualified for admission, i.e., 25% pass in the JAMB subjects.

iii. Inability of most students to express themselves fluently in English Language and some of these students cannot read or write simple and correct sentences due to their rural background. Thus, they are unable to 'defend' the A's and B's in their West African School Certificate results.

iv. Lack of proper screening exercise before students are admitted into the College.

v. Low socio-economic status of the students:

- cannot pay their fees on time before the closure of the registration portal, thus cannot take their semester's examinations.
- they cannot afford most learning materials like text books
- they have problems of poor feeding habit which may cause them to miss some school activities solve to ill-health.
- cultism on campus: students joining cult groups which may lead to examination malpractices, expulsion or death of the students.
- overcrowded classrooms (a lecturer teaching up to 300 to 400 students in General Courses), inadequate library services, empty laboratories without equipment and apparatus.

Opinions were also sought from parents whose children are studying in the College, why their children cannot complete 3 year programme in five years. These were their responses:

- Poverty: this shows its ugly head when parents cannot pay for their children's fees on time and cannot provide them with other learning materials.
- General hunger in the land.
- Late payment or no payment of their salaries, pensions and gratuities.
- Genetic traits: students with low I.Q. inherited it from their parents.
- Unemployment of their senior siblings who had completed their education, but do not have work to do. So parents feel that, taking care of these ones in the College is a waste of resources.
- They just wanted the children to go to 'Afaha Nsit' to show the neighbours that their children are in higher institution, even though they know that the child is not an academic material – "better pass the neighbour".
- Ill health of their parents.

As lecturers in the college, we noticed that our students are 'crying' daily as they spend over five academic sessions in the college, and they are asked to withdraw voluntarily. The

researchers decided to look into this problem and proffer measures and solutions that can help our students complete their academic program within the stipulated time frame set up by NCCE.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed at investigating the academic program (the NCE). The study aims at investigating the NCE curriculum and how it affects students' graduation from the College of Education within the stipulated period of three academic sessions. That is why students fail to graduate after studying for five academic sessions in colleges of education that have 3-year study periods.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify the number of courses offered in Colleges of Education and how this can affect their timely graduation. (This is a major complaint of students in all the programmes in the College).
2. Examine the reasons why lecturers involve in these 'unethical practices' with students without the fear of being penalized by the management of the institution.
3. Examine the relationship between poverty and timely completion of academic programme in the College.
4. Identify the objectives of e-registration of students by management and the threat of 'Closure of Registration portal, with a fine' on students who fail to register their courses within the time-frame for the registration.

Research Questions

1. Does the number of courses offered by students in Colleges of Education affect their performance in the semesters' examinations?
2. What are the unethical practices done by lecturers in Colleges of Education that can affect students' year of graduation from the College?
3. Does poverty or students' socio-economic status affect their timely completion of their programme in Colleges of Education?
4. Does e-Registration and closure of registration portals affect students' academic timing in the College?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between the number of courses offered by students in Colleges of Education and their academic performance in semesters' examination.
2. There is no significant relationship between unethical practices done by lecturers and students' year of graduation from the College.
3. There is no significant relationship between students' socio-economic status and their timely completion of their programme in Colleges of Education.
4. There is no significant relationship between e-Registration (closure of registration portals) and students' academic timing in Colleges of Education.

Review of Related Literature

For objective research to be conducted, several works related to the study have to be reviewed. It therefore becomes pertinent to review some scholarly works on the Nigeria Certificate in Education curriculum as it relates to students' years of graduation from colleges of education.

To give direction to the study, the review is divided into the following sub-headings:

1. History of teacher education in Nigeria.
2. Academic load and students' performance.
3. Unethical practices by lecturers and the implications on Nigerian educational system.
4. E-Registration (closure of registration portals) and students' academic timing.

History of Teacher Education in Nigeria

The following is a prayer by a School Principal. "Dear Lord, give me a teacher thrice blessed with wisdom, initiative, vision, understanding, dependability, awareness, a sense of fair play, a keen sense of humour. Give me a teacher who is sympathetic, kind and just, yet firm and courteous. Give me a teacher who has an overdose of good old-fashioned common sense, seasoned well with professional spirit. Give me a teacher who knows the value of discipline, one who at all times has control of a situation yet not dictatorial. Give me a teacher who threatens not, neither one who makes hasty decisions, nor inflict unjust and often ridiculous punishment. Give me a teacher who is willing to do, perhaps a little more than her share, and above all, one who is on the job. Give me a teacher who feels the responsibility of the school plant, one who is aware of lavatories, halls, playgrounds, and lunchroom. Give me a teacher who will cooperate and work with her fellow teachers. Give me a teacher who has a quiet dignity. Give me a teacher who has, beside a well rounded personality and good educational background, a desire not only to teach but to be a really good teacher. But, God, above all, give me a teacher who loves to teach children" (Anonymous Author).

Teacher education involves a programme of action that is carefully planned to train people for professional development in the area of teaching and learning, with the objective of providing qualitative (those that have acquired practical and applied skills in the teaching profession) and quantitative teachers for all levels of Nigerian School System (Umoh and Ekeng, 2022).

Teacher education refers to professional education of teachers towards attainment of attitudes, skills and knowledge considered desirable in order to make them efficient and effective in their working in accordance with the need of a given society, at any point in time. It includes training and or education occurring before commencement of service/pre-service) and during service (in-service or on-the-job). Teacher education is the process of preparing individuals to work in the field of education. This involves educating future teachers, improving the quality of existing teachers, and identifying ways to improve the educational system – (Ojajuni, 2023). Every society requires adequate human and materials resources to improve its social organization, preserve the culture, enhance economic development and reform the political structures. Education is often seen as a prerequisite for quality manpower development and creation of wealth, a sure path to success in life and service to humanity. Thus, teachers have important role to play to adequately prepare the young for their roles in the society in order to achieve the set national objectives. The history of teacher education in Nigeria is characterized by a series of developments and reforms aimed at improving the quality and effectiveness of teaching in Nigeria.

The origin and development of formal teacher education in the area that became Nigeria can be traced to the beginning of Western education in the pre-colonial Nigeria. The various Church Missions such as the Wesleyan Methodist, the Church Missionary Society, the Baptist, the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) and the Roman Catholic (The Big Five) were not only the

pioneers, but very active in the area between 1842 and 1860. They contributed in no small measure to the development of teacher education in pre-colonial Nigeria. (Retrieved online: www.studocu.com – 23/8/24).

During the colonial era, the British introduced Western education to Nigeria in the early 19th Century. Their arrival marked a turning point in Nigeria's educational landscape. Traditional education methods were overshadowed by Western practices. The British saw education as a tool to advance their colonial objectives, and according to Fafunwa (2014), they gave the people the three Rs - 'Rithmetic, Reading and Writing. Missionary Schools were established throughout the country, especially, the Southern part of Nigeria. This played a crucial role in setting up the first Teacher Training Colleges in the Country.

The first teacher training college was established in Abeokuta in 1859. This College aimed at producing qualified teachers for the Mission schools. The teacher training programme emphasized moral education and religious instruction. The missionaries efforts laid the foundation for formal teacher education in Nigeria.

Following Nigeria's independence in 1960, there was a significant expansion of teacher education institutions across the country. The expansion was aimed at meeting the growing demand for qualified teachers in both primary and secondary schools. (Retrieved online: www.disciplines.ng – 20/6/24). And this teacher education has witnessed tremendous growth since independence.

To improve on the training of teachers, these Colleges were established to give different certificates, at the time. They include:

- Teacher Training Colleges (TTC) which awarded Teachers' Grade II.
- Advanced Teachers' Training Colleges (ATTC), which awarded Teachers' Grade I.
- Colleges of Education (COE), which awards Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E.)
- Faculty of Education in Nigerian Universities which awards B.A. (Ed.), B.Ed., B.Sc. (Ed.), M.Ed., PhD.

Academic Load and Students' Performance

The term load, in English means burden – something to be carried. This reflects the idea that academic courses impose responsibilities and demands on students. Academic load or course load refers to the total number of courses offered and their credit units, that a student is expected to offer each semester. Course load (academic load), according to www.4icu.org(20/8/24) refers to the numbers of courses or academic credits that a student is enrolled in during a specific academic term, such as a semester, or an academic session. It is a measure of the academic requirements and responsibilities placed on a student within a given time frame. Academic load can vary significantly from one institution to another. It is a critical factor in students' academic journey, as it directly affects the TIME and EFFORT required to complete their studies.

Surajo & Umar (2019) maintained that course load significantly correlates with students' performance. In a research they conducted among Business Studies Students of five Federal Colleges of Education in the North Western States of Nigeria, they asserted that course load is one

of the major leading course to poor performance of students. They went on to say that, to compete a programme of study successfully, students are required to engage in a number of teacher and/or self-directed learning activities. Learning activities can be divided into three main types –modes of instruction (Teacher-directed) – lectures, online, seminars, research seminars, practicals, laboratory work, guided personal study, tutorials,, internships, placements, fieldwork, and project work, learning activities. Student-directed – attending lectures, performing specific assignments, practicing technical or laboratory skills, writing papers, independent and private study, reading books and papers, contributing to online discussion forums, and learning how to give constructive criticism of the work of others, and Assessments: oral/written examination, oral presentations, tests, papers/essays, portfolios, reports, continuous assessment, and (final) thesis/dissertation. They therefore advised that NCCE Minimum Standards should be reviewed in order to replace some of the theory courses with practical or skill based courses.

Umoh-Umoh (2024) while conducting a research among students in Federal Polytechnics in the South-South Zone of Nigeria, studied about 2,000 students and correlated their performance work with the number of courses they offered per semester, i.e. when they offered fewer courses and when they had more courses to offer. He concluded that the more the number of courses offered by students in the semester, the less their GPA for the semester. So he recommended that there should be a reduction in the number of courses (especially theoretical courses) offered by students in Polytechnics. More practical based courses should be offered.

In another study by Robert (2001), he asserted that, both students and advisers often assume that lighter academic load during the first year of college will resulting greater students' success. Measuring academic load in terms of credit load and course difficulty, success was also measured in terms of GPA and retention. He concluded that while the credit loads for which students register are related to academic ability and prior academic success, the difficulty level of courses for which the students' register is not weaker students might be more successful with lighter credit loads or that stronger students might be more successful with more difficult courses. Thus, no significant interactions between academic load and success were found.

Unethical Practices by Lecturers and Effects on Nigerian Educational System

In every profession, there are some ethical rules that guide the conduct of members of that profession. Ethics, as a concept belongs to the realm of moral philosophy. It is the rules or standards of conduct and moral judgment. It prescribes appropriate relationship between the practitioner (teacher) and the client (student) in such a way as to protect the client.

Ekeng (2016) maintained that, a cursory look at our tertiary institutions revealed that, most or a greater number of teachers are not role models and do not perform their moral responsibilities to their students. Ikpe (2005) outlined some observed unethical practices by lecturers of the tertiary level of education and she gave the implications of these to the educational growth of the country. The following are the unethical practices by lecturers and their implications:

S/N	Unethical Practices	Implications
1.	- Admission syndicates - Irregular Admission by some HODs	- Campuses flooded with people with forged or fake results who cannot cope with academic demands. - Overcrowded classrooms, hostels, library services not adequate, empty laboratories without equipment and apparatus, etc.
2.	Sorting by students (there is a new name now “Registering of the course”). The lecturer keeps a Register and students pay a certain amount of money, whether they pass or fail the course.	- Demands to sort may cause students to engage in heinous acts such as armed robbery, kidnapping, drug abuse and peddling, election thuggery (boys). The girls may take to prostitution. - There is a dearth of knowledge. It has made our students not to read anymore, preferring this “easy way out”. This is detrimental to our educational development. Students ‘collect’ certificates that they cannot defend the contents. - There is a chain cycle with sorting. Lecturers who sorted when they were students tend to be frontlines in this sorting malaise. So the cycle continues.
3.	Cultism by staff patrons	- Lecturers who patronize cult groups stand to risk their lives and family members. Opposing cult group can ‘strike’ anytime and they stand to be attacked. - Campuses have been made to shut down indefinitely due to cult activities. Students are therefore made to stay longer than necessary.
4.	Late commencement of lectures, non completion of course outline, tough (twisted) examination questions.	- Lecturers who do not complete their course outline stand to short change the knowledge expected to be acquired by students. Such students cannot compete favourably with their mates in other institutions. - Lecturers who give tough or twisted examinations questions do so to record mass failure and this will cause more students to come for sorting. All these thwart effective acquisition of knowledge.
5.	Commercialization of intellectual property of others (plagiarism of textbooks/ handouts).	- This discourages intellectual growth in our campuses. Lecturers who do this; some have been made to go on suspension, when they are reported, or the author of the copied text can sue such in the court of law.
6.	Publication (textbooks) without research by academics (for promotion)	- Lecturers sit in their offices, formulate data or fake research and publish some in journals just for promotion purpose. This does not help in solving identified problems in our society as researches are made to identify and solve particular problems in the society and the educational system.

7.	Forceful sale of reading materials (payment on assignment)	- Aim being to acquire ill-gotten wealth. Students who do not have money to buy these texts or handouts are failed purposely. Thus, poor students are made to repeat courses that ordinarily, they would have passed. Some may drop out of school due to this.
8.	Typing of assignment in lecturers' computer and fee attached (compulsory).	Students who do not have the money to pay are derived the 40% continuous assessment. Continuous assessment score. This automatically leads to their failure.
9.	Sexual harassment/extortion (Rape)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The lecturer has brought himself low for sexually harassing his student. - It may lead to a wildfire spread if STDs and the dreaded HIV/AIDS in our campuses. - The lecturer and the students are worse off for this as it can lead to their early grave. - In the case of rape, if the students is bold enough to report the lecturer to appropriate law enforcement agencies, he may be charged and convicted of this offence, and this may serve as a deterrent to other 'animals' in campus.
10.	Victimization of unwilling students/failed or poor grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When students are victimized, they could be made to repeat a course or drop out of school. - Poor grades can have effect finally on the students Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) which may lead to falling below a Second Class Lower Division and this may affect the student when he/she is applying for a job.
11.	Change of grades, depending on how much the student can pay.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our institutions produce candidates who cannot stand in defense of the certificate they acquire. - Our educational system becomes non-functional, parading graduates who cannot produce or contribute to the growth of the society.
12.	Writing project for students and shabbily supervision of project.	- A student may finish the school and does not know the rudiments of conducting a research.

Students' Socio-economic Status and Academic Performance

Although studies reviewing the relationship between students' socio-economic status and academic performance in primary and secondary schools are available, everywhere, Carlos, Eduardo and Eva (2020) maintained that it cannot be assumed that these results, are generalizable to the context of higher education. They asserted that socio-economic status (SES) is measured through education, occupation, income, household resources, and neighbourhood resources, while academic performance in higher education is measured through achievement, competences, and

persistence. They concluded that, prior academic achievement, university experience and working status are more strongly related to academic performance than SES.

It is widely recognized that if learners are to maximize their potential from schooling, they will need the full support of their families. According to Gobena, G. A. (2018), families play a role, not only in the promotion of their own children's achievements but also more broadly in school improvement and the democratization of school governance as these have effects on the final performance of students in the school. He went on to study a target population of students from the College of Education and Behavioural Sciences 172 students were taken from the population through stratified random sampling. The results showed that, first, family income did not bring anything new to students' academic achievement and finally family education level contributed 40.96% to students' academic achievement. It was recommended, among others that, socio-economic policies should be formulated to enable children from low economic status to have equal opportunity as children from high economic parents, to maintain the harmony among children in the nation.

In a study by Selvitopu and Kaya (2021) they sought to determine the relation between SES of students in five categories of location (U.S.A. China, Turkey, others and mixed) and academic performance (AP) and evaluate the effects of several potential moderating factors in this relation. Their findings revealed that, the relation between SES and academic performance represented a moderate positive correlation. All moderators, type of SES measure, academic performance scale, location, grade level, subjects of academic performance and year, produced significant effects, respectively.

Omeje, Anyannu, Mba and Ugwu (2020) examined the SES and tertiary academic performance in Enugu State among students in 13 higher institutions in the State. They found out that students' academic performances would significantly decrease with low SES. Furthermore, low SES has negative significant impact in students' academic performance. They recommended that government, nongovernmental organization, and other philanthropists should provide education fund concessions, such as scholarships, bursary awards and other special education interventions funds to students from poor background.

Electronic-Registration and Closure of Registration Portal and Students' Academic Timing

Electronic registration (e-registration) system means any electronic method, including, but not limited to, one broad on internet technology, of collecting, transmitting, recording and authenticating information from one or more responsible parties, which is necessary to complete a vital record and is designed to replace a manual, paper-based data collection, recordation and signature system (www.lawinsider.com-22/8/24).

Commitments towards the success of tertiary education can be achieved through innovations such as updating of information, continuous enrolment, e-payment, and online students registration as well. This innovation approach helps pioneer many of the conveniences of students. Many events have demonstrated that successful e-business are those that recognize the needs of their target users and match them with relevant contents. Thus, the benefits of e-business are also felt in the academic institutions. It can be applied in the areas of students' online registration and payment of school fees. E-registration can be accessed from anywhere with an internet connection, mostly these sites are portals. A web portal is a site that functions as a point

of access to information on the World Wide Web and portals present information from diverse sources.

Even though it has these benefits, the following are the problems inherent with this e-registration system.

1. Insufficient utilities in handling students' registration.
2. Inability of students to remotely register and access their registration number immediately.
3. Students spend too much time in processing their registration and worse, this can only be done with their physical presence on campus (www.projectmaster.com.ng-20/8/24)

They went on to state other problems that students encounter with e-registration that may affect their academics negatively. These include:

- Difficulty faced by students in retrieving their lost receipt from bursary.
- Inconveniences faced by students queuing to pay school fees and collect registration form.
- Wear and tear that occurs during retrieval and manual handling of files, sometimes, data got lost as a result.
- Increase of paperwork in the bursary department and course form registration center.
- Difficulty experienced in updating of record in a file.
- Misplacement, loss or damage of student's record.
- Inability of students to remotely register and access documents like school fees receipt
- Difficulty in locating registration at crucial times.

The Pen Press of the Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto (UDUS), in their Editorial on August 22, 2024 cried out on the recent announcement by the University management that students who fail to complete registration within the extended deadlines will face deferral of the current academic session. This, they claim, had left many students in a state of sorrow and mental distress. The Pen Press gave the following as reasons that may cause students to miss their registration deadline:

- financial situation in the country.
- students juggling between working and studying
- inability of students, even though they have paid their fees, to proceed with course registration
- discrepancies between the portal and students' handbook regarding course units.
- delay in the release of previous session results by some Heads of Departments or Faculties.

The Pen Press pleaded with the University management to consider reopening the registration portal, at least, one last time, for the sake of these students.

From the above report, the researchers noted the benefits and also negative effects of this e-registration and closure of registration portals of students. These may cause some delays in their year of graduation from the institution.

Methodology

Design of the Study

The research design adopted in the study will be a survey design. This was used because it involves the researchers observing two or more variables in order to establish a statistically

corresponding relationship between them. The aim of correlational research is to identify variables that have some sort of relationship to the extent that a change in one creates some changes in the other.

Population and Sampling Method

The study will be conducted in three Colleges of Education in the South-South Zone of Nigeria. They are: Akwa Ibom State College of Education, Afaha Nsit, Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku, Rivers State, and Federal College of Education, Obudu, Cross River State. The population of the study consisted of all the N.C.E. students – Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, Extra Year 1, Extra Year 2. A systematic random sampling technique will be used to get the sample size of 900 students i.e. 300 students from each of the three Colleges of Education.

Data Collection and Procedure

A Questionnaire will be given to the sampled 900 students; 300 each from the Colleges of Education. Their responses will be matched with the information got from Examinations and Records Unit. The researchers aim at getting the information about their year of admission, the number of courses the students have not passed and the expected year of graduation from the Admissions, Examination and Records Unit of the Colleges.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected will be analyzed using Pearson (r) correlation. This will help determine if there is a positive, negative, or no relationship between the variables as well as the statistical significance of the correlation.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1

Does the number of courses offered by students in Colleges of Education affect their performance in the semesters' examinations?

The researchers used the Departments of English (DM), Biology/Chemistry, Primary Education Studies, Agricultural Science Education, Economics/Social Studies, i.e., each Department representing the 5 Schools in the College.

Year	Department	No. of Courses	Total
NCE 1	English (DM)	EDU – 8	24
		GES – 7	
		ENG - 9	
NCE 2		EDU – 10	29
		GES – 7	

		ENG – 12	
NCE 3		EDU – 4 GES – 4 ENG – 10	18
NCE 1	Bio/Chem	EDU – 8 GES – 7 ENG - 19	34
NCE 2		EDU – 10 GES – 7 ENG – 9	26
NCE 3		EDU – 4 GES – 4 ENG – 10	14
NCE 1	PES	EDU – 8 GES – 7 ENG - 9	24
NCE 2		EDU – 10 GES – 7 ENG – 10	27
NCE 3		EDU – 4 GES – 4 ENG – 19	17
NCE 1	Agric Sc. (DM)	EDU – 8 GES – 7	29

		ENG - 14	
NCE 2		EDU – 10 GES – 7 ENG – 15	32
NCE 3		EDU – 4 GES – 4 ENG – 7	15
NCE 1	Econs/SOS	EDU – 8 GES – 7 ENG - 12	27
NCE 2		EDU – 10 GES – 7 ENG – 12	29
NCE 3		EDU – 4 GES – 4 ENG – 12	20

From the Table, it can be seen that NCE 1 in Bio/Chem offer 34 courses (1st & 2nd Semester) and NCE 2 offer 26 courses (1st & 2nd Semester) while NCE 3 offer 14 courses. This is in line with Baba, Akalor and Kenter (2024) when they conducted a research among Nigeria Certificate in Education students in the North Central Region of Nigeria. They found out that excessive or uneven workloads can lead to students fatigue and diminished performance. They highlighted the need for maintaining a balanced workload to optimize academic performance, thus preventing them from over-staying their admission in the College.

Also, in a study by Huntington-Klein and Gill on semester course load and students' performance in the Department of Economics, California State University, they concluded that there is a very strong overall positive correlation between course load and performance in class. AI Overview summed it up when it said that excessive number of courses, high intensity workloads, or unrealistic credit hours per semester is a significant factor in delaying graduation from tertiary institutions. It leads to failure and the need to extend their studies.

Research Question 2: What are the unethical practices done by lecturers in Colleges of Education that can affect students' year of graduation from the College?

Table 2: Percentage analysis of unethical practices by lecturers in Colleges of Education

Unethical practices by lecturers	Frequency	Percentage
Very High Extent	533	59.2
High Extent	208	23.1
Low Extent	94	10.4
Very Low Extent	65	7.3
TOTAL	900	100%

It could be seen from Table 2 that there is a very high extent of unethical practices by lecturers in Colleges of Education. This is in support of a study on “Ethical lapses in the Nigerian Higher Education System” by Ngonso (2022) where he concluded that tertiary education system that is not rooted in ethical principles cannot serve the 21st Century global society. Also, AI Overview maintained that unethical practices in tertiary education significantly delay graduation by creating artificial barriers to academic progress undermining the quality of education, and creating financial or emotional distress that forces studies to halt their studies. Students are made to remain in the same grade for multiple years thus postponing the completion of their educational cycles.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between students' socio-economic status and their timely completion of their programme in Colleges of Education.

Table 3: Chi-square analysis of the effects of poverty and students' socio-economic status on their timely graduation

Effects	Observed frequency	Expected frequency	X^2
Very High Extent	601	50	181.52
High Extent	182	50	
Low Extent	75	50	
Very Low Extent	42	50	
TOTAL	900		

Table 3 shows the cal- x^2 value as 181.52. Testing this value for significance at 0.05 levels, it was seen that the calculated x^2 value (181.52) was greater than the critical value of 7.88. Hence, the hypothesis was rejected. It means that there is a significant relationship between students' socio-economic status and their timely graduation in Colleges of Education. This is in line with

Adeniji (2025) when he studied undergraduate students from Federal College of Education, Abeokuta and other tertiary institutions. He concluded that poverty is a significant factor affecting education in the sample population and has serious influence on one's academic performance, students' awareness, and access to learning opportunities.

Research Question 4: Does e-Registration and closure of registration portals affect students' academic timing in the College?

Table 4: Percentage analysis of effects of e-Registration and closure of registration portals on students' academic timing in the College

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	635	70.5
Agreed	113	12.5
Disagreed	89	9.8
Strongly Disagreed	63	7.2
TOTAL	900	100%

The Table above shows that respondents who Agreed that e-Registration and closure of registration portals has significant effects on students' academic timing in the College, stands at 83% while those that disagreed stands at 17%. This means that inability of the students to register on time before the closure of the registration portals can cause serious and significant delay in their graduation from the College. This is in line with Ekeng and Usen (2025) when they noted that late registration of students can directly cause them not to graduate on time or at all. It means that this closure of portal acts as bottleneck that creates academic, administrative, and financial consequences, preventing students from meeting graduation requirements.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the research work, it was concluded that:

1. The number of courses offered by students in the semester examinations affect their overall performance on the different courses and has significant effect on their timely completion of the N.C.E. programme.
2. Unethical practices by lectures in Colleges of Education have caused significant delays in the graduation of students in these institutions.
3. Students' socio-economic status is a major determinant in students' timely graduation in Colleges of Education.
4. E-Registration and closure of registration portals significantly affect students' timely graduation in Colleges of Education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is need for curriculum development in Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E.) programme. The curriculum should embrace more of teacher education courses with science and technological biases. Education courses should be combined with a Single Major Programme. This will afford students opportunity to take less departmental courses and more courses in Education.
2. Management of the different Colleges of Education must take some drastic steps (legally) to discourage lecturers from indulging in unethical practices as these have affected not only the students' graduation but has caused a total downgrade in the nation's standard of education.
3. Entrepreneurship education must be introduced into the nation's educational system, from the Basic education years to tertiary levels. Also, government policies such as awarding scholarship and bursaries to brilliant students should be encouraged.
4. College management must look into the issue of early closure of registration portals as this has caused indigent students who could not meet up with the timing, to drop out of school.

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