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**ASSESSMENT OF NIGERIA CERTIFICATE IN EDUCATION (N.C.E)
HOLDERS EMPLOYABILITY IN BASIC SCHOOLS OF ILORIN WEST LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AREA, KWARA STATE**

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Abstract

Employability of holders of Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E) has been a matter of concern to stakeholders since the introduction of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria.. This study is a critical assessment of Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E) holders' employability in Ilorin West Local Government Area Basic Schools. The purpose of the study was to examine the employability of Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E) holders in the service of Kwara State Universal Basic Education Board in Ilorin West Local Government Area. Basic Schools in terms of possession of knowledge of subject content, pedagogical skills and communication skills. The study used structured questionnaire containing 25 items to elicit responses from a sample of 120 teachers randomly drawn from 13 out of 40 basic schools in Ilorin West Local Government Area. The data gathered from the questionnaire was subjected to a statistical analysis using mean value of 2.5 as benchmark for agreement with statements raised in the study. Findings from the analysis showed that NCE holders had adequate knowledge of their teaching subjects and adequate pedagogical skills but they lack communication skills. It was concluded that N.C.E holders in Ilorin West Local Government Area Basic Schools are employable though they fall short of the communication skills needed in classroom. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others that communication skills be acquired during training and that employment should be based on ability to communicate effectively with the students within and outside the classrooms.

Key words: Employability, Nigeria Certificate in Education Holders. Basic Education

Introduction

Education is a universal phenomenon which allows all human societies to develop the prerequisite knowledge, experience and skills for their preservation and growth. It is a tool for imparting knowledge, a process by which an individual acquires the physical, social, intellectual and moral capabilities required to function effectively and become a useful member of his/her society. It is an instrument *par excellence* for effecting national development (FRN, 2004) as well as for individual socio-economic empowerment and poverty reduction. For education to be useful as a tool for manpower development, it has to be functional. In recent times, quality education was brought to focus owing to the neglect and mass production of school graduates without regards to standard, procedure and process of education. Quality education is said to be the right of every citizen, not a privilege that may be granted or withheld by whoever is in-charge of its provision. For quality education to be achieved, it is important that teachers must be adequate in quality and quantity. They are to work in a conducive environment to adequately produce competent graduates for effective national development. Adepoju (1999) agrees with this assertion when he posited that societies all over the world are what they were because of the nature and type of education they have been exposed to.

From a global perspective, economic and social developments are increasingly driven by the advancement and application of knowledge. Education in general and higher education in particular, are fundamental to the construction of a knowledge economy and society in all nations (World Bank, 1999). Concerns about graduate unemployment are growing daily and at an accelerated rate in Nigeria, yet the strength of students enrolment and graduate output of the institutions of higher learning are growing rapidly. Many of the graduates of the higher educational institutions resent public service employment especially the teaching profession even though vacancies exist in such jobs at various levels. The common ambition of most fresh graduates is to be employed in oil companies or banks. These are popular because of their much higher pay. Many graduates are even willing to accept retraining in order to be employed in the oil company or the banks and some of them do train fresh graduates to acquire relevant skills before job placement. Some university students came into university as employees of establishments on in-service training. These categories of students have the opportunity of going back to their jobs when they graduate. Majority of the graduates who had no prior job experience may have some delay in joining the workforce. Observation however suggests that employment opportunities for graduates are not mainly a function of the employment system and its requirement but also of the quantitative structural skill linkages. It has been noted as well that in many countries, the views and the reputation of certain institutions and departments influence the employability of their students. Hence, some institutions of higher learning try to maintain higher competitive edge for their graduates by including different professional experiences during the course of study.

The observation is that employers' expectations vary and cannot easily be determined because of the numerous factors that may influence the need for recruitment. Sometimes, employers' views about the reputation of certain institutions and departments may tend to influence recruitment; hence some institutions of higher education try to ensure higher competitive edge for their graduates by establishing some direct professional experiences during the students' course of study (learning visits, internships, teaching practice). The responsibility of universities and colleges of education in training students is not limited to imparting academic skills. It should include training the individuals to be disciplined by instilling in them those societal desirable human characteristics such as honesty, hard work and loyalty. There have been, constantly calls from different arms of the society for a look at the problem of the increasing unemployment rate in Nigeria. Provision of employment opportunities to all graduates is a means of ensuring participation of all in the national development process.

Statement of the problem

The rate of unemployment in Nigeria is taking a dramatic turnover, According to the National Bureau of statistics (NBS), the unemployment rate in 2010 was 21.1%, it increased to 23.9% in 2011 and sky-rocketed to an alarming rate of 54% in 2012. The disturbing rate of youth unemployment was evident in the recent ill-fated recruitment exercise by the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) where no fewer than 500,000 youths turned up for a recruitment exercise to fill less than 5,000 vacancies in the service. Furthermore, recent statistics by the World Bank has put the unemployment rate in Nigeria at 22 percent, while the youth unemployment rate is 38 percent. The report shows that the bracket age of 15-35 years old account for close to 60 percent of the Nigeria's population and 30 percent of the work force.

The report also indicates that approximately 4 million people entered into the labour market every year (Subair, 2013).

The number of unemployed graduates in the labour market is alarming but more alarming and disturbing is the quality of these graduates. In the education sector, the situation is not different as most teachers turned out of various colleges of education around the country find it difficult to deliver in their choosing field. Instruction delivery in terms of effective transfer of knowledge to students is very poor. The inadequacy in the pedagogical techniques exposes to teachers in the colleges of education is pronounced. Research also revealed that most teachers are not committed to their work, this is as a result of lack of interest and the accidental admission which is against most students' choice but as a result of limited spaces in the university which the students consider as the change of career and destiny by their various institutions.

The spate of teachers' incompetence in instructional delivery is on the increase in recent years drawing inferences from various events and happenings in the education sectors. In 2008, Kwara state administered a competence test on her teachers; the result shows that only 75 teachers out of over 1500 teachers passed a primary four aptitude test which drew a wide condemnation. In Kaduna State, same scenario presented itself in 2013 when teachers performed woefully in an aptitude test administered by the state government. In Edo state over 966 teachers who took the competence test administered by the state government were declared unfit to teach and summarily retrenched from teaching due to their poor performances.

Ekiti and Ogun state are also major state of reference in Nigeria that administered competence test on her in-service teachers but this necessary exercise has been vehemently opposed by the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) in the respective states. Its either teachers boycott the test as in the case of Ekiti and Ogun or get a court injunction to bar the state government from administering such test as in the case of Edo state. From this trend in teacher education, it would not be out of point to call for a state of emergency and overall reform of the education sector with particular reference to teacher education.

Purpose of the study

The research work tends to examine the employability of Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E) holders in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Basic schools.

Specifically, the study aims at the following:

- Examining the employability of Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E) holders in the service of SUBEB in Ilorin West Local Government Area Basic Schools in terms of possession of the knowledge of the subject content.
- Assessing the employability of Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E) holders in the service of SUBEB in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Basic Schools in terms of possession of pedagogical skills.
- Assessing the employability of Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E) holders in the service of SUBEB in Ilorin West Local Government Area, Basic Schools in terms of communication skills.

Research Questions

In this study, three research questions were raised to guide the study, They include:

- Do Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E) holders in the service of SUBEB in Ilorin West Local Government Area Basic Schools possess knowledge of the subject content?
- Do Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E) holders in the service of SUBEB in Ilorin West Local Government Area Basic Schools possess pedagogical skills?
- Do Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E) holders in the service of SUBEB in Ilorin West Local Government Area Basic Schools possess good communication skills?

Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive research design to obtain the relevant and needed data on the research topic. The population for this study consists of the entire N.C.E holders in the service of Kwara State Basic Education Board in Ilorin West Local Government Area. There are a total of 40 Basic Schools in Ilorin West Local Government and 120 N.C.E holders. The researcher made use of simple random sampling techniques to select 13 out of the 40 basic schools in the local government area. A total of 120 respondents were drawn from the 13 basic schools used for this study through the use of purposive sampling technique.

The major instrument of data collection for this study was a questionnaire. A structured questionnaire with relevant items was used to gather data for the study. Therefore, the instrument was developed by the researcher and was entitled: Teachers Employability skills Inventory. In validating the instrument, the draft instrument was given to an expert in the field of research measurement and evaluation. Suggestion and corrections were made on some of the items. In order to determine the reliability of the instrument, a test re-test procedure was applied, therefore, the instrument was administered twice within an interval of two weeks. To answer the research questions any mean value that is greater than mean score of 2.5 which served as the benchmark was regarded as being in support of the statement.

Answering Research Questions

The three research questions raised were answered using data collected from the respondents on assessment of Nigeria Certificate on Education (N.C.E) holders in Kwara State Basic Schools

Research Question 1: Do N.C.E holders in the service of Kwara State Universal Basic Education Board in Ilorin West Local Government Area possess knowledge of the subject content?

To answer the above research question, data collected from questionnaire items on knowledge of content was used in table 1, using descriptive statistics of mean

Table 1

Do N.C.E holders possess knowledge of the subject content?

S/N	Statement	Disagree %	Strongly Agree %	X
1	The teacher possesses adequate knowledge of the subject matter he/she teaches in the classroom	7 (6.1%)	109 (94%)	4.81
2	The teacher is conversant and up to date with the knowledge of curriculum	1 (.09%)	115 (93.8%)	4.79
3	The teacher possesses adequate knowledge of educational theories	15 (13%)	101 (87.1%)	4.47
4	The teacher applies knowledge of educational theories to classroom activities	14 (12.1%)	102 (87.9%)	4.56
Overall Mean		4.65		

Source: Fieldwork, 2015

Table 1 shows the result on the possession of knowledge of the subject matter by N.C.E holders in the service of KSUBEB in Ilorin West Local Government Basic Schools. Respondents agreed with all the above statement. The overall mean score of 4.56 provides sufficient basis for the researchers to conclude that N.C.E holders in the service of Ilorin West Local Government Area possess knowledge of the subject. This was made manifest based on the trend of the respondents that supported all the above statement.

Research Question 2: Do N.C.E holders in the service of KWSUBEB in Ilorin West Local Government Area possess pedagogical skills?

To answer the above research question, data collected from questionnaire items on pedagogical skills was used in table 2, using descriptive statistic of mean

Table 2

Do N.C.E holders possess pedagogical skills?

S/N	Statement	Disagree %	Agree %	X
1	The teacher uses suitable teaching method that aid students understanding of subject matter	14 (12%)	102 (87.9%)	4.65
2	The teacher puts learners into consideration while selecting method of teaching	12 (10.3%)	104 (85.6%)	4.60
3	The teacher considers individual differences in his teaching method	22 (19%)	94 (81.1%)	4.40
4	The teacher allows for full participation of learners in classroom instruction	18 (15.5%)	98 (84.5%)	4.62
5	The teacher diversifies his teaching methods	16 (13.8%)	100 (86.2%)	4.43
Overall Mean		4.54		

Source: Fieldwork, 2015

Table 2 shows whether N.C.E holders in the service of Ilorin West Local Government Area Basic Schools possess pedagogical skills. *Respondents agreed with all the above statement. The overall mean score of 4.54 provides sufficient basis for the researchers to conclude that N.C.E holders in the service of Ilorin West Local Government Area possess pedagogical skills. This was made known based on the trend of the respondents that supported all the above statement and respondents that didn't support in conformity of the above statement are minimal.*

Research Question 3: Do N.C.E holders in the service KWSUBEB in Ilorin West Local Government Area possess good communication skills?

To answer the above research question, data collected from questionnaire items on good communication skills was used in table 3, using descriptive statistics of mean

Table 3
Do N.C.E holders possess good communication skills?

S/N	Statement	Disagree %	Agree %	X
1	The teacher possesses clear voice that aids teaching and learning	11(9.5%)	105(90.5%)	4.88
2	The teacher exhibit high proficiency in the use of language of instructions in the classroom	7(6.0%)	109(94%)	4.73
3	The teacher displays dexterity in the use of written languages of instruction	6(5.2%)	110(94.8%)	4.74
4	The teacher gives clear instruction devoid of ambiguity	3(2.6%)	113(97.4%)	4.85
Over Mean		4.8		

Source: Fieldwork, 2015

Table 3 shows whether N.C.E holders in the service of Ilorin West Local Government Area possess good communication skills. *Respondents agreed with all the above statement. The overall mean score of 4.8 provides sufficient basis for the researchers to conclude that N.C.E holders in the service of Ilorin West Local Government Area possess good communication skills. This was made known based on the trend of the respondents that supported all the above statements and respondents that didn't support in conformity of the above statements.*

Conclusion

The conclusion which can be drawn from the findings is contrary to the general perception held by the public that Nigeria Certificate in Education graduate teachers are ill equipped in the teaching profession. Instead, according to the findings they prove to be effective classroom teachers. This shows that some other factors can be inherent to such belief which according to Knight (2001) and Yorke (2001) consider employability to be 'synergic combination of personal qualities, skills of various kinds, and subject understanding' it is a

concept that is much more complex than relatively restricted key skills agenda. The field work which has the benchmark of 2.5 mean values for agreement level shows that all research questions raised were answered with scored mean value of 4.0 above. To this end, Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) graduate teachers in the service of Ilorin West local Government are competent and are versatile classroom teachers.

As much as there are some other teachers who are not committed to their profession, lack enthusiasm, basic knowledge of content, classroom management skills and communication skills, this is not to say that teacher education programme with regard to Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E) curriculum is not adequate in content and pedagogy. The crop of teachers produced via this mode of teacher training shows dexterity in the handling of their primary assignment according to this study. Thus it is imperative to conclude on this note Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E) graduate teachers in the service of Ilorin West local Government possess the required employability skills in the teaching profession with correctable shortcoming in the area of communication skills.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussion above, the following recommendations are made:

- There is the need to maintain and enforce the section of the National policy on Education which makes Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E) minimum requirement into the teaching profession. This is borne out of the fact that teachers are engine room of the education sector while finding of this study strengthens the high competences of teachers with N.C.E qualification. Thus, it would not be a mistake entrusting the affairs of classroom to this set of teachers.
- The Government should make Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E) a must for every aspiring teacher in the Nigerian education system.
- Communication skills be acquired during training
- Employment should be based on ability to communicate
- Lastly, efforts should be intensified by the government in the area use of languages and communication skills in N.C.E curriculum so as to remove the impediment of language barrier currently experienced with some N.C.E holders.

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