

# Transforming Teacher Education in Nigeria

## *A Case Study of comprehensive institutional change at Oro College of Education*

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### *Summary*

A Case Study of curriculum transformation at a college of education provides the lens through which to analyse teacher education in Nigeria. The curriculum at this college has undergone a comprehensive transformation resulting in a college curriculum policy, a new institutional structure in terms of schools and departments as well as a new set of teacher education programmes. The developments have been a collaborative exercise with the Federal teacher education oversight body. Experiences at the college are set to influence a transformation in the overall teacher education programme in Nigeria and thus are likely to result in changes in all State college of education.

### **1. Introduction**

Nigeria is in the midst of comprehensive education reform. The introduction of Universal Basic Education and the change in its curriculum towards competency-based learning have a direct impact on the preparation of teachers. The curriculum transformation underway in teacher education is presented through the lens of a case study of institutional transformation at College of Education Oro, in Kwara State, Nigeria.

The UK Department for International Development (DfID) is funding a six-year education development programme in Nigeria, the 'Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria' (ESSPIN). This paper is based on a part of this Education Sector Programme: the development of better pre-service Teacher Education. ESSPIN is also involved in in-service education, school development, school inspection and support services, development of Education Management Information Systems, involvement of communities and accountability in education and other activity areas.

The enhancement of Teacher Education in Nigeria started out through an institutional and curriculum development programme at Kwara State College of Education, Oro. As one part of this development programme the *management* of the college is looked at; through developing an enhanced ministerial oversight regarding teacher requirements for Kwara State (in terms of subject areas and numbers of new teachers) and a better overall institutional budget provisioning, as well as through improved internal management. The other part of the programme concerns the development of better *curriculum* practices. This paper deals with the latter part of this programme.

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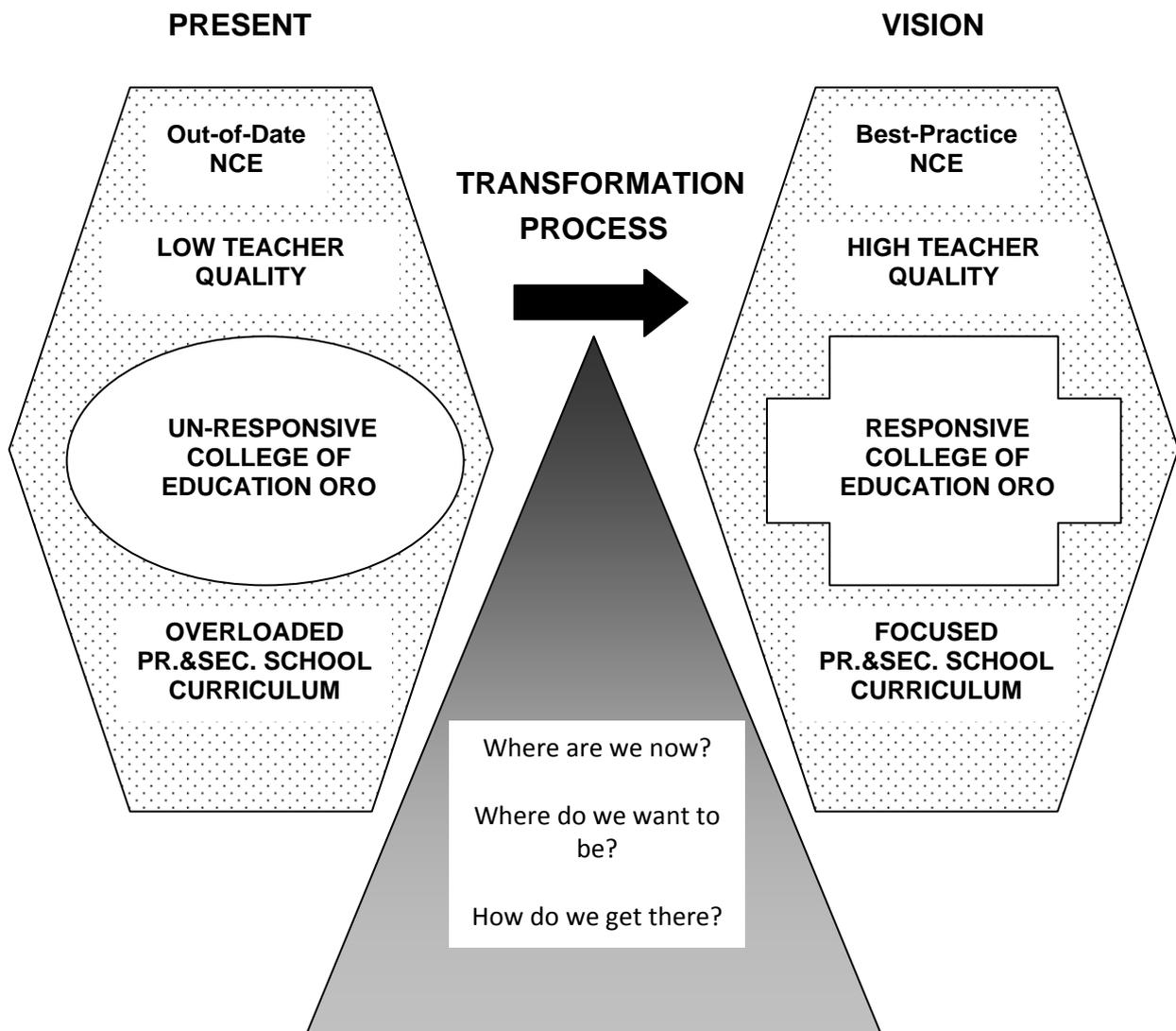
## 2. Curriculum Transformation Diagram

The identification of issues, design of interventions and the overall aim of the curriculum transformation at Oro College has been guided by the diagram below. This diagram is based on the following steps:

- 1a. Environmental Scan: What is the environment in which Oro operates?
- 1b. Internal Scan: How is Oro doing?
2. What is the vision for a transformed college/curriculum?
3. How can Oro transform towards this vision?

The steps as outlined above will be described briefly, with particular emphasis (in section 3) falling on the minimum standards for Teacher Education as presented in the description of the curriculum for the National Certificate of Education (National Commission for Colleges of Education, 2002). Section 4 will provide a brief description of the vision for quality teacher education that has given rise to the various transformation activities. After this description the results of the various transformation processes will be described in section 5. This will be followed in section 6 by a discussion of the various parties involved in what eventually has become also a federal, nation-wide, process to enhance the curriculum for Teacher Education in Nigeria.

*Diagram 1: Curriculum Transformation for College of Education Oro*



## **2.1 The environment in which Oro College operates**

Located in western Nigeria, Kwara State has a population of 2.4 million (2006) with 48% of its population being under 15. Its economy is based on subsistence farming, with some small-scale manufacture, and government-driven economic activity. Its capital, and only sizable city, is Ilorin. Kwara State is among the six poorest states in Nigeria and is also characterised by a substantial poverty gap, again being among the six worst States; additionally it is among the few States to experience a worsening incidence of poverty between 1996 and 2004. However, the current State Government is committed to a reform agenda and the Commissioner for Education, with the Governor's support, is keen to improve the quality of education in the State, one aspect of which is seen to be teachers' low levels of subject knowledge and pedagogical skills.

## **2.2 Reform Agenda**

The unifying theme for the Kwara State Education reform is "Every Child Counts". This positions the child as the central motivation of the reform efforts and seeks to focus strongly on the issue of equity. It represents a pact between the government of Kwara State and the people and is built around two key related questions:

- 1) "When parents send their children to school in Kwara State, what should they expect?"
- 2) "When a child attends school in Kwara State, what should we expect the child to be able to do at every stage of schooling?"

"Every Child Counts" is built around four key components:

Teaching quality improvement, incorporating teacher quality evaluation, identification and development of a core team of "mentor teachers", teacher skills development, teacher recruitment policy development, developing a range of incentives and reward system for teachers.

Strengthening inspectorate capacity aimed at harmonising the various education inspection units in the State (Ministry of Education, Inspectorate Units of the State Universal Education Board (UBE) and the Teaching Service Commission (TSC)) through the establishment of a Kwara State Education Quality Assurance Unit drawn from the three existing organs. There will also be a shift from inspection to quality assurance in schools.

College Education Turn-around which seeks to position the College of Education as a centre of excellence in the training and production of high quality teachers for primary and junior secondary schools in the State. Key actions are envisaged as: evaluating existing practices in the institution, identifying and executing key actions that will position the College to play a lead role in driving quality basic education in the State in line with international best practices, strengthening the management of the institution to make it more responsive to the challenges of managing change, conducting curriculum assessment with a view to bringing the College curriculum in line with the practical demands of teaching in primary schools and developing a strategic profile for the College.

Institution building which seeks to strengthen the supply side educational institutions, through improving work practices and institutional arrangements within the Ministry and its parastatals and agencies. In addition it also aims to increase accountability.

The College of Education reform, relates to all components in some way or other. Quality Teacher Training relies on a focus on clearly identified high-demand knowledge, skills and attitudes for teachers as indicated partly through Quality Assurance systems in Basic Education

carried out by the Inspectorate. Pre-service teacher training can only be achieved with a measure of quality when the college as an institute is clearly focused, has strong management capacity, realistic resource allocation and uses, and a clear vision for teacher quality improvement.

### 2.3 Primary School Curriculum

The curriculum for primary schools for Kwara State has been reviewed in March 2008. The focus was on streamlining the curriculum for the first two phases of Basic Education: the Lower and the Middle Basic level. The table below provides the status quo and the recommendations made. Recommendations were made tentatively as the review committee did not have the legal status to recommend far-reaching reform.

*Table 1. Proposed Changes to Primary School Curriculum*

<b>LOWER BASIC LEVEL</b>		
	<b>Status Quo</b>	<b>Proposed Changes</b>
Core Subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English</li> <li>• One major Nigerian Language</li> <li>• Mathematics</li> <li>• Basic Science &amp; Technology</li> <li>• Social Studies</li> <li>• Civic Education</li> <li>• Cultural and Creative Arts</li> <li>• Religious Studies (I.R.K./C.R.K.)</li> <li>• Physical and Health Education</li> <li>• Computer Studies</li> </ul>	<p>Greater emphasis to be laid on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English Studies</li> <li>• Mathematics</li> <li>• Basic Science and Technology</li> <li>• Local Language</li> </ul> <p>Include alphabet and grammar in English.</p>
Elective Subjects (at most 2, at least 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Home Economics</li> <li>• Arabic Language</li> </ul>	

<b>MIDDLE BASIC LEVEL</b>		
	<b>Status Quo</b>	<b>Proposed Changes</b>
Core Subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English</li> <li>• French</li> <li>• One major Nigerian Language</li> <li>• Mathematics</li> <li>• Basic Science &amp; Technology</li> <li>• Social Studies</li> <li>• Civic Education</li> <li>• Cultural and Creative Arts</li> <li>• Religious Studies (I.R.K./C.R.K.)</li> <li>• Physical and Health Education</li> <li>• Computer Studies</li> </ul>	<p>Greater emphasis to be laid on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English Studies</li> <li>• Mathematics</li> <li>• Basic Science and Technology</li> <li>• Local Language</li> </ul> <p>Include alphabet and grammar in English.</p>
Elective Subjects (at most 2, at least 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Home Economics</li> <li>• Arabic Language</li> </ul>	

The review report also makes important recommendations regarding assessment, quality assurance, remedial work for learners and teachers' professional development, that all seek to enhance the quality of both the teachers and the learning that takes place in the first two levels of Basic Education. Particularly the quality of mathematics and English teaching is dealt with and it is recommended that teachers are provided with professional development opportunities and that new teachers in these areas should be of a high professional quality. Rote learning is to be avoided and genuine functional literacy and numeracy should be developed.

## 2.4 Oro Management

The College of Education has been operating within a policy vacuum. There has been no effective policy direction from government. As a consequence student numbers have increased to a level at which they bear no relationship to the needs of schools in terms of trained teachers. This increase has been driven by a need for student fee income to compensate for low levels of government funding. Thus there is a need for the government to establish a strategic framework in terms of:

**Student numbers:** government should review the number of teachers that will be required and set student number targets that more closely align supply and demand. The College of Education should become focused on providing trained teachers, rather than being a general entry point for students who are unable (for whatever reason) to enter university.

**Funding arrangements:** government should review its funding policy to ensure that funding is at an adequate level to provide quality training. It should be for government to decide on the distribution of funding between government subvention and tuition fees, but the College should not be in a position of having to increase student numbers to an excessive level in order to pay basic staff salaries.

## 2.5 Teacher education: overall status quo

The minimum teaching qualification in Nigeria's primary and junior secondary schools is the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), a three year post-secondary course offered by all Colleges of Education, some polytechnics and the National Teachers' Institute (NTI). It is centrally designed and accredited by the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE). NCCE is responsible for ensuring the quality of teacher education and conducts periodic visits to institutions as a result of which the various programmes are assessed and, if appropriate, accredited.

### Teacher quality

Table 2 shows the qualifications of teachers. Over half of primary teachers have the National Certificate of Education and another 12% are university graduates. Grade II and unqualified teachers account for only 20% of all teachers employed at government primary schools. Although the percentage of qualified teachers varies considerably between LGEAs (Local Government Education Authority) there is nothing to suggest that, on average, that lack of qualified teachers is a major contribution to poor-quality student outcomes.

However, a major determinant of effective learning is teachers' knowledge and in this respect "Despite the fact that the large majority of teachers are now qualified, Kwara's teachers do not have adequate knowledge". The ESA continues:

"Complaints about newly appointed teachers, who have low levels of numeracy and literacy skills as well as inadequate knowledge in their chosen areas of subject specialisation, are commonplace. The low quality of graduates from the teacher training colleges and universities who are joining the teaching profession is a major issue, and the three Colleges of Education are seriously under-resourced given the very rapid increase in enrolments during the last five years. The assessment tests .... make it clear that students enter colleges and universities with very low levels of cognitive skills. It is impossible for tertiary institutions to remedy the lack of such skills in the time available – and it makes no sense for expensive tertiary institutions to spend time teaching basic skills that should have been properly taught in primary and secondary school. Kwara's students are caught in a cycle of low achievement, teachers with inadequate cognitive skills, and then further low achievement by students."

**Table 2. Teacher qualification profile by level of education and gender, 2005 (percentages)**

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Primary</b>			
Graduate with teaching qualification	10.3	14.4	12.3
Graduate without teaching qualification	1.3	2.1	1.7
National Certificate of Education	67.5	41.8	54.7
Diploma	5.1	14.7	9.9
Grade II	11.4	14.5	12.9
Others	4.4	12.5	8.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Secondary</b>			
Graduate with teaching qualification	63.3	62.6	62.9
Graduate without teaching qualification	9.7	14.3	12.0
National Certificate of Education	23.9	16.8	20.3
Diploma	2.1	4.8	3.5
Grade II	0.1	0.2	0.2
Others	0.9	1.3	1.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

**Notes:** The 'Others' category includes Grade I, HSC/GCE A' level, Special Teachers and WASC/GCE 'O' level/SSCE

**Source:** ESA Second Draft (March 2008) Table 18 p45 EMIS 2005

### 3. Review of the NCE Programme at Oro College Of Education

Analysis of curricula can be done usefully through considering the following three stages in the process of arriving at envisaged student learning:

- Intended Curriculum:** the curriculum as set out in formal documents (in this case the Minimum Standards for NCE Teachers).
- Implemented Curriculum:** the curriculum as developed for practical implementation on the basis of the intended curriculum (in this case the materials developed, the teaching methods, the organisation of courses, assessment, infrastructure, facilities, etc. at Oro College).
- Perceived Curriculum:** the curriculum as perceived by the learners (in this case what the learners perceive to be the focus and purpose of their learning, i.e. what students at Oro College eventually learn).

#### 3.1 Intended Curriculum

The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) oversees the design and quality of teacher education at college level. The National Certificate in Education (NCE) – designed under the auspices of the NCCE - is Nigeria's main qualification for teachers. Reviewed in 2002, it describes a 3-year programme of teacher education with the following main ingredients:

- General Education 36 credits
- General Studies Education 14 credits
- Teaching Practice 6 credits (equivalent to 12 weeks)
- Teaching Subject (one or two majors) 74 credits
- **Total 130 credits**

The programme runs over three years, each with two semesters that have about 15 weeks of effective teaching.

**Credit units** represent work in the following manner:

1 credit course:	1 lecture hour per week for 15 weeks
2 credit course:	1 lecture hour and 2 practical hours per week for 15 weeks
1 credit 'workload':	1 lecture hour; 2 seminar hours or 3 lab hours per week

Students are supposed to gain 18-24 credits per semester. Lecturers are supposed to teach at least 8 credits per semester (most courses having either 1 or 2 credits).

In all, the workload for students and for staff is not unreasonably high. Seeing that college staff are not involved in research as university staff would be, their workload might be considered on the light side. The high numbers of students in certain courses, however, would also have to be taken into account. Indeed, at Oro College of Education, this does seem to present a problem, with a high student : staff ratio. Students have a workload that appears more or less suitable.

**Assessment:** each course is assessed with 40% of continuous assessment and 60% summative assessment. Continuous assessment should include varied work, practical, fieldwork, projects etc. Assessment papers for summative assessment must be moderated by external peers.

**General Education** represents philosophy, sociology, history, psychology of education and comparative education and educational management.

**General Studies Education** – although categorised as part of the *education* component of the NCE, this actually provides basic 'general knowledge' in areas such as English, maths, computers, health, science and technology in society and citizenship. It appears to be most useful when seen as part of a kind of preliminary studies programme, ensuring that students have the basic knowledge and skills to successfully complete a study at the College.

**Teaching Practice** is scheduled to take place in year 3 in one block of 12 weeks.

**Teaching Subject** represents one double major course or two single courses in specific teaching subject areas open to choice (with certain restrictions) such as history, geography, music, political science, social studies, language, religious studies, economics, mathematics, chemistry, physics or biology.

### 3.1.1 NCE as Classic Teacher Education Curriculum

The NCE represents a classic design of teacher education:

- General Education is designed along a division of the field of Education according to classic academic subject areas, which however, are not always to be found any longer in up-to-date teacher education programmes.
- Subject areas are described mainly through the listing of content, although a list of objectives preceding the content offers more general skill-oriented aims.
- Subject Methodology – the focused study of teaching methods and approaches in a specific content area such as English, economics, history or physics – is absent in some subject areas (i.e. economics, Islam,) and where given more attention, still rather sparsely represented (i.e. integrated science).

- Teaching Practice is not described in great detail.

As mentioned above, each study course is introduced with ‘Objectives’ that define a relatively useful set of skills, knowledge and attitudes to be achieved through the curriculum. However, it is not clear how assessment will provide explicit evidence for achieving these objectives. There is some likelihood that the students’ learning and the formal assessment both focus on establishing theoretical content knowledge rather than higher cognitive skills or the development of hierarchical conceptual progression in subject area content knowledge as well as up-to-date and subject-area integrated pedagogical approaches.

The NCE document’s foreword quotes the former Minister of Education as saying:

***‘We cannot compromise on accountability and poor quality in teacher education will be a national disaster which we must avoid by insisting on only the best.’***

The present state of teacher education and indeed school education, shows that a lot of work still needs to be done. Most notably, a study of the NCE documents shows the following:

1. The General Education course is designed along lines that to some extent lack up-to-date approaches to educational theories and especially the integration of education theory in context-based, issue-based learning programmes.
2. Objectives of the courses aim at relevant sets of skills, knowledge and attitudes, but the overall course design and the aims of assessment do not provide a helpful base to find evidence of students indeed acquiring such high-level cognitive and pedagogical skills that would make them professional educators.
3. Teaching Practice is not clearly designed as the most important and most suitable point to integrate everything that a student-teacher needs to be able to do, know and show based on all courses followed in his/her study programme.
4. Subject Methodology is underplayed in the NCE design, creating the danger of not developing the essential pedagogical content-knowledge so essential in becoming an effective and professional teacher. There is a minimum of 0 credits and maximum of 8 credits per subject area for methodology; representing a meagre 0-12% of the total 3-year programme.
5. The overall Education Component in the 3-year programme effectively represents around 30% of total study and work load. This is fairly low, especially considering that the NCE prepares students to become teachers for the first 9 years of formal school education. Especially for primary education, pedagogy that is fully integrated in subject knowledge is an essential requirement. The apparent lack of integration between Teaching Practice, Subject Methodology and Education Studies diminishes the effectiveness of the Education Component.
6. Teaching materials described mention library books in a ratio of 10 books per student for courses. However, apart from technical/physical teaching aids (blackboard, tapes, instruments, lab equipment, etc.) there is very little mention of actual student lecture books, study guides etc.
7. The anticipated general academic weakness of entrants into the NCE necessitates the General Education Studies. But it is questionable whether as a relatively small course this is effective. It could be considered whether such a preliminary study course should not be formed into a general preliminary year as the College has indeed already started to offer. This might ensure that, after a year of thorough grounding in the required knowledge and skills, the NCE study is more effective and of a higher cognitive level than it is at present.

## 3.2 Implemented Curriculum

### *Curriculum's institutional environment*

There is an overly large student population (in terms of demand for new teachers; facilities available, representation in relatively low-need school subjects) at the College. This does not contribute to the overall quality of the curriculum that is being delivered.

Infrastructure is of varying quality. There are some large lecture halls, where public address systems are used, but student benches are old and dilapidated., there are two computer labs with 25 computers each, for a student population of about 8000. There is a library with about 15,000 volumes; this number represents 10% of the NCE aim of 10 books per student.

Student hostels do not meet the demand for accommodation. Many students find rooms in the town of Oro, making it more difficult to study on campus in evenings, use the library, the computer labs etc.

Education Study courses are compulsory for all students. With an enrolment of 2000-3000 in a single year-group this creates huge classes. The year group is divided into 8 or so sub-groups that can then just fit into the largest lecture halls but are taught by different lecturers.

### *Curriculum Organisation*

In general, the structure of the programme in terms of credits and content outline as provided in the NCE is adhered to closely (Oro College Handbook, 2004-2009). But it is not clear how the proscribed minimum standards of the NCE are enriched at the College to attain high-quality learning. One notable difference is that Teaching Practice does not take place in the 3rd year only as one period of 12 weeks, as the NCE document suggests, but that it is split in 6 weeks in year 2 and 6 weeks in year 3.

Heads of Department were also able to show the detailed course outlines as prescribed through the NCE document and which are used as a basis for teaching. They also showed examination papers and moderators' reports. In discussions with Heads of Department both as a group and individually, the following was observed:

- **Course Materials:** There is a heavy reliance on lecturers' individual handwritten notes, and/or reference books available to lecturers only, which are used for lecture preparation. Students are required to copy notes from the blackboard as the main source of building up a knowledge base in any course. Most subject lecturers have written booklets of course content which students are invited to buy from the lecturers, on a voluntary basis, and which cost N150-300 per booklet. About 40-80% of students buy these booklets. Those that cannot afford them do without. There are no course materials offered to all students of any particular course as an integral part of the learning process.
- **Developing a Professional Teaching Praxis:** Staff could not clearly explain how the four main NCE ingredients of General Education, Method Courses (where they exist), Teaching Practice and Content Courses are integrated to provide student teachers with the opportunity to develop a coherent professional teaching praxis.
- **Student and Learning Quality:** the discourse around student and learning quality is contradictory. Emphasis is laid on the lack of knowledge and academic ability of students when they come from secondary schools, yet it is stated that almost all students are generally passing all courses without much difficulty.
- **Teaching Practice:** staff stated that SUBEB (State Universal Basic Education Board) does not allow student teachers to go on TP in primary schools. Student teachers only go to Junior Secondary or Senior Secondary schools to practise how to teach in the 9 years

of Basic Education. This puts great pressure on finding places for students. Often students find themselves unable to teach the subject they are studying and land up teaching a cognate subject (i.e. mathematics instead of the physics they study). Moreover students often teach only a handful of lessons. Supervision is not always done by a teacher in the same subject as the student teacher is teaching. There was no clear agreement on whether one period of TP of 12 weeks, or even a year, would be the way to go, or whether the absence of students from the college for an entire semester or more would prevent the delivery of all courses in time.

- **Assessment:** Summative assessment through standard exam papers reflects a uni-dimensional view of learning. A scan of some hundred exam papers shows a predominance of questions that ask students to: 'list,' 'define,' 'describe,' 'contrast,' 'draw,' 'explain'. Continuous assessment in some courses includes a mark for students' attendance, apart from 1 test and 1 piece of practical work or an 'assignment', in some cases also 'fieldwork.' Moderators report for the exam papers are generally positive, but do not provide much guidance to improve the standard of the papers/courses.
- **Primary Education Studies:** only 10% of the college enrolment follows Primary Education Studies. This is the only course that explicitly sets out to prepare students for teaching in the primary school in an integrated and focused manner. The last accreditation visit has resulted in the suggestion that the Department of Primary Education Studies be enlarged to be given the status of a School and be provided with more resources and staff.
- **Existing Primary School Curriculum:** Staff expressed the opinion that there was not a sufficiently strong link between the presently operating curriculum at primary schools and the NCE curriculum at the College to prepare students to become effective teachers for this curriculum.

### 3.3 Perceived Curriculum

Discussions with other role players in Education in Kwara State reveal the following paradox which militates against the development of a high-quality professional praxis as seen from the students' own perspective:

**Costly Investment:** Students have to pay about N20,000 in annual fees to attend the College (fees are required in order to raise funds for the augmentation of lecturers' salary) and then have to finance their accommodation (mostly in the town of Oro) as well as their food. If they are able to, they will then also buy the booklets that the lecturers themselves have written for sale to students. This is a high cost for students, parents and/or guardians to bear. Most importantly, it severely jeopardises the striving for equity in educational opportunity.

**Status of Tertiary Qualification:** Many students opt to go to a college of education as a last resort. University entrance would be preferable to many. However, any tertiary qualification is thought to be useful in only a formal sense (not because of what is to be learnt, but because of the certificate obtained) as it is believed to open up opportunities for well-paid employment.

**Status of Education:** Primary Education is generally looked down upon as a professional field, and within the last resort option for college education it comes at the end of the queue of favoured choices. All students, moreover, favour the General Education courses least amongst the courses being offered as they perceive General Education to be least valuable for future employment which they anticipate to be outside the education sector.

### 3.4 Summary of findings on the existing curriculum at Oro College

The analysis of the Teacher Education programme reveals the following important issues:

1. The (implementation of the) NCE curriculum requires reviewing with the aim to:
  - Update the General Education course towards an integrated and issues-based understanding of education, specifically in the context of Nigeria;
  - Raise the profile of Methods Courses as well as their link to Content Courses to ensure that a strong pedagogical content-knowledge is developed;
  - Rethink Teacher Practice in terms of total time spent, student supervision, purpose and its contribution to the overall aim of creating professional praxis;
  - Raise the profile of Primary Education Studies so as to become an essential part of the study programme of all students who will become primary school teachers.
  - Establish a list of professional competencies which all students need to acquire to become effective teachers and which form the basis for all courses as well as the integrative focus of all assessment, and particularly of Teaching Practice.
2. Assessment needs to be designed with a clearer purpose of requiring and providing an opportunity to students to show evidence of achieving professional skills, knowledge and attitudes grounded in the praxis of education.
3. Learning Materials are not consistently available (students depend on their own notes copied from the blackboard) and thus written materials do not play a coherent and pervasive role in the provision of a strong cognitive and structure-giving basis for the development of the required professional knowledge, skills and attitudes of an effective teacher.
4. A stronger link needs to be developed between primary school, and junior secondary school curricula on the one hand and the teacher programme at the college at the other hand.
5. Many students are willing to incur high costs to enter a field of study that they do not consider of high status or professional interest. Such students hope to gain entrance into the world of work – outside education - with the eventual qualification obtained. There is an over-production of new teachers that have little inclination to enter the field of education. All this severely compromises the quality of the teachers to be employed in schools. Stringent management of the number of students overall as well as in the various specific courses needs to be adopted.
6. The General Education Studies programme might be seen more useful as part of a preliminary year. This would perhaps best be achieved by considering such a preliminary year as compulsory for all students, as it is generally acknowledged that students come in with a serious lack of basic knowledge and skills.
7. Infrastructure is outdated in some aspects, especially teaching equipment needs some attention. Once a realistic level of student numbers for the next 10 years has been established a review of infrastructural demands should be done.

## **4. Vision for Quality Teacher Education**

### **4.1 International Best Practice in Teacher Education**

The 1990's saw a strong global move away from content-based curricula towards competency-based curricula. This has happened for formal schooling and also to some extent in tertiary education in general, but most notably this has happened in Teacher Education.

This change was largely driven by the realisation that preparation for the workplace was no longer a one-off transfer of basic knowledge that would ensure a person to be effective in a long-term job (i.e. 20-40 years). The job market has changed fundamentally and people are expected to update themselves continuously by having developed skills of independent learning as they will likely have a number of job-changes throughout their career. Moreover, continuing rapid developments in the global knowledge society demand a different understanding of the purpose of education. With much knowledge readily available through the internet, flexible skills, critical appraisal of information as well as professional attitudes have come in to focus strongly as the new purpose of education.

The resultant change in school curricula has naturally been followed by a re-thinking of what appropriate teacher education should look like in order to produce teachers that are able effectively to design and deliver such flexible context-based learning and acquisition of relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes.

These days, most Teacher Education Programmes start off with a definition of the professional competencies that student teachers eventually will have to demonstrate to be awarded with a professional teacher qualification.

Superficially, such competencies might look quite similar to the 'general objectives' that used to preface the classic teacher curricula. However there are a number of crucial differences in the focus of the competencies and in how they have a pervasive influence on everything that happens in a teacher education programme, whether it is the use of teaching materials, academic content, method, assessment, fieldwork, lab-work or teaching practice.

Table 3 provides an overview of the shift from content to competency-based learning.

**Table 3: Shift from content to competency-based learning**

	<b>Classic Programme</b> <b>INPUT DRIVEN</b>	<b>Competency-based Programme</b> <b>OUTPUT DRIVEN</b>
<b>Education Course</b>	<b>Separation</b> into sub-courses in sociology, history, philosophy, psychology of education, etc. <b>to transmit theoretical knowledge structure</b> of academic framework.	<b>Integration</b> , around education context-based issues, of different academic education sub-fields <b>to create an applied understanding</b> of education theory, relevant to Nigerian schools.
<b>Learning Materials</b>	Where used, <b>one type of written format</b> that <b>reflects sequenced theoretical content structure to be assimilated by learners.</b>	<b>Varied formats</b> (written, internet, digital, video, etc.) organising varied learning tasks and experiences <b>designed to assist student teachers in developing an effective classroom practice and modelling learning materials they themselves might use/develop in their own teaching.</b>
<b>Teaching Method</b>	<b>Lecturing</b> based on a sequencing of content into appropriate fragments based on <b>behaviourist view of knowledge transmission.</b>	Creation of <b>purposefully designed and varied learning experiences</b> through lecturing, group work, self-learning, self- and peer-assessment, etc. aimed at <b>constructing conceptual knowledge, skills and attitudes directly related to professional competencies and demonstrated concretely and practically.</b>
<b>Teaching Practice</b>	Student-teachers apply their <b>learning of how to transmit clearly defined school-based theoretical knowledge</b> to school-students.	Student-teachers further develop their <b>learning of how to design their own learning programmes</b> that aim to create applicable and context-relevant conceptual understanding, skills and attitudes in their own school-students.
<b>Method Course</b>	Student-teachers <b>learn how to sequence knowledge and how to drill students in standard</b> forms of solving problems, pieces of writing, structured analysis.	Student-teachers <b>learn how to provide open-ended learning experiences, to their own school students</b> , that effectively promote conceptual understanding and the development of practical skills and positive attitudes, rather than rote-learnt theoretical facts
<b>Assessment</b>	Structured and closed questions (in written form, and as standard laboratory or fieldwork exercises) <b>require students to re-state curriculum content knowledge they possess.</b>	Various practical as well as written forms <b>provide students with the opportunity to showcase their conceptual understanding, skills and attitudes, as described in the list of professional competencies</b> , in context-rich and open-ended problem situations.

## 4.2 Competencies for Teachers: Nigerian Teacher Standards

The Federal Ministry of Education of Nigeria has published a document that provides such Teacher Standards and in the document it suggests that (p32):

*‘The curriculum and practicum of initial teacher training programs at certificate (NCE), degree (B.A. & B.Sc., B.Ed.) or postgraduate diploma level (PGDE) should be based on these standards. Therefore existing curricula for these programs need to be revised.’*

Moreover, in the development process for a Teacher Strategy for Kwara State, the initial scoping report also advocates the use of these Teacher Standards to determine present teacher quality and develop professional development programmes. Indeed one must agree with the FME document that (p5):

*'The document addresses the need to provide a supportive system for improving the quality of teaching and learning in both the public and the private schools, particularly at the basic and secondary education levels. It provides a basis on which to consider what kinds of initial teacher education programmes best suit the preparation of primary and secondary school teachers. It will guide the development of education programmes that will optimize teacher opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills designated as important for them to engage with the demands of a highly competitive, rapidly changing and technologically oriented society.'*

It is therefore clear that any review of the curriculum at College of Education Oro, would do well in taking the FME Teaching Standards as a point of departure.

The Teacher Standards are organized around three themes that lead to eight professional standards:

**A. Professional Knowledge**

- Teachers know how students learn and how to teach effectively
- Teachers know the content they teach
- Teachers know their students

**B. Professional Practice**

- Teachers plan and assess for effective learning
- Teachers create and maintain safe and challenging learning environments
- Teachers use a range of teaching practices and resources to engage students in effective learning

**C. Professional Engagement**

- Teachers reflect on, evaluate and improve their professional knowledge and practice
- Teachers are active members of their profession

An essential aspect of having these kinds of Standards is that they provide a descriptive image of what the profession of teaching aspires to. Rather than merely listing content that is to be learnt through a description of theoretical principles - in, say, science, literature or social studies – Standards set out to establish a context-rich professional practice. The Standards, therefore, must be seen as the end-goal of all teacher education, whether this happens to be a course in mathematics, educational psychology or religious studies. This also means that any and every course in Oro College must explicitly link to the standards; i.e. assessment in each and every course must help provide concrete evidence that students are (starting to) attain the standards in a meaningful and context-rich manner.

## **5. The Transformation Processes and Products**

In order to start transforming the curriculum practice at Oro, a number of activities have taken place.

- 1) A series of workshops with all academic staff (about 160 staff) on Teacher Standards, Learning Programmes, Learning Materials, Assessment and Teaching Practice
- 2) A series of meetings with senior management on a new College Structure: new Schools and new Programmes

- 3) A series of meetings with the Federal Teacher Education body, the NCCE in Abuja, to ensure that transformation at Oro College would be still in line with the vision for change as held by the NCCE.

The following will describe these processes and their results.

### **5.1 Institutional Curriculum Policy**

Workshops with all staff were held to provide the staff development in important curriculum areas that would be required to formulate a comprehensive curriculum policy based on best-practice in curriculum design, implementation and monitoring.

The workshops dealt first of all with foundational issues such as up-to-date learning theories and curriculum theories and then focused in on six aspects that would form the core of an Institutional Curriculum Policy:

- 1) Teacher Standards as the base for all curriculum design, implementation and monitoring
- 2) Learning Programmes as the required step between a formal curriculum document from the NCCE (that mainly lists content for all academic courses) and a design of a learning path that leads to Teacher Standards;
- 3) Learning Materials to ensure that learning is supported on an appropriate way by a wide variety of materials;
- 4) Assessment that is varied, makes use of rubrics and is able to report student progress in terms of achieving Teacher Standards;
- 5) Teaching Practice that is related to all courses, provides opportunities to ‘practice’ Teaching Standards and is of sufficient duration;
- 6) Quality Assurance that ensures that all staff and all curriculum processes and products meet the required standards as laid out in the Institutional Curriculum Policy.

The resulting Curriculum Policy provides a clear guideline to all staff in the college for their own daily curriculum practice as well as providing the integrative view and mechanism to ensure that the overall curricula at the college are of quality and based on best-practice in Teacher Education.

### **5.2 New Programmes and new College Structure**

The federal Teacher Education body, the NCCE, is making a move towards Teacher Education Programmes that are focused on the professional placement and role that a beginning teacher will have within the overall education system. This means that there is no longer a –one-size-fits-all programme for all teachers, irrespective of whether they will be junior primary, ABET or Senior Secondary School teachers. The aim is to have programmes that provide student-teachers with a focused set of courses, preparing them for their focused professional jobs as junior primary, senior primary, junior secondary, senior secondary or special education and/or ABET teachers. To be a good Junior Primary Teacher requires different knowledge, skills and attributes from those that are relevant to being a good Senior Secondary school teacher. Moreover Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is being promoted strongly in Nigeria, and teachers need to be produced for this as well.

Through a series of meetings with the NCCE as well as with the senior management of the College a set of new programmes was decided upon. Previously, all students would simply get

an NCE qualification, without clear specification of the special area they might be qualified in. (Moreover, an additional problem is that teachers tend to be recruited and deployed to schools irrespective of whether they are primary, secondary, maths or English teachers. This is an issue that is also being addressed through ESSPIN through the design of a comprehensive Career Path for Teachers including recruitment, promotion and evaluation of teachers, principals and inspectors).

The new programmes to be offered at Oro College are the following:

- 1) NCE in *ECCE*
- 2) NCE in *Junior Primary Education*
- 3) NCE in *Senior Primary Education*
- 4) NCE in *Junior Secondary Education*

Colleges of Education were originally established to produce teachers for secondary schools, and they were given a structure - in terms of Schools and their Departments - that was relevant to the teaching subjects in secondary school. Now, the College of Education Oro is tasked with producing teachers for Basic Education. There is a need, therefore, to re-structure the Schools and Departments to reflect the teaching subjects at Basic Education.

At Oro College, historically, there were five schools and relatively many (26) departments. This created a rather fragmented structure that would not easily be related to the more integrated and focused curriculum at primary schools. Table 4a provides the details. The old College structure clearly shows the historical role of the college in providing teacher education for secondary school teachers. The many subjects that would be taught at secondary school are reflected in the various schools and their various departments.

*Table 4a: Old Structure of Oro College*

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION	SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES	SCHOOL OF SCIENCE	SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES	SCHOOL OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION
5 Departments	7 Departments	7 Departments	5 Departments	2 Departments

The new role of the college is to provide teacher education for the Basic Education Band (years 1-9), and this required a drastic change in the college structure. The new structure is provided in Table 4b. The new structure for the college has been agreed upon through a series of meetings with the NCCE as well as with the senior management of the College. The new structure seeks to reflect the new role of the college and seeks also to clarify how the structure relates directly to the programmes that the college will provide.

**Table 4b: New Structure of Oro College**

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION	SCHOOL OF ECCE AND PRIMARY EDUCATION	SCHOOL OF JUNIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION
Departments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educ. Psychology</li> <li>• Educ. Foundations</li> <li>• Curriculum and Instruction (coordinates TP)</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>The School has two sub-sections to each Department:</i></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>[ECCE/Jnr. Primary][ Senior Primary ]</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ECCE and Primary School Learning</li> <li>• Numeracy and Mathematics</li> <li>• Literacy and Languages</li> <li>• Science, Technology and Agriculture</li> <li>• Social Studies</li> <li>• Physical and Health Education</li> <li>• Religion, Culture, Arts, Music, and Civic Education</li> </ul>	Departments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Languages</li> <li>• Mathematics</li> <li>• Computer Science</li> <li>• Integrated Science</li> <li>• Social Studies (including history, geography, politics)</li> <li>• Religious Studies and Civic Education</li> <li>• PHE</li> <li>• Vocational, Business and Home Economics</li> <li>• Creative Arts and Culture</li> </ul>

## 6. NCCE involvement and the Way Forward

Throughout the transformation process there has been a keen awareness that whatever is being done at Kwara State College of Education Oro, must be acceptable and in line with thinking at the federal Teacher Education body, the NCCE.

The NCCE has made an official visit to Oro College to familiarise itself with the transformation process that is taking place. The NCCE was of the opinion that the curriculum transformation can be seen as an exemplar of change that is required in colleges of education in Nigeria in general.

Furthermore, meetings with the NCCE in Abuja have also enabled all stakeholders to engage in an ongoing discussion about the new role and new structure and programmes for colleges of education in Nigeria. Moreover, a new curriculum is envisaged for implementation around 2012, and the experiences at Oro College will likely play an important role in determining this new curriculum to some extent.

Transformation processes in some other colleges have already been planned and in some cases have already begun with the assistance and under the umbrella of the ESSPIN programme.

The new programmes and the new structure at Oro College are at this stage formally agreed upon, but will still require a lot of effort to put into place. It is envisaged that another two years of transformation will take place. This would focus on the development of appropriate learning programmes, robust and replicable learning materials, good assessment practices, a comprehensive Teaching Practice Model that creates long-term links with selected schools for mutual benefit and development, a Quality Assurance system within the college.

As regards the collaboration with the NCCE, it is envisaged that new policy documents will be written that deal with the issues of an appropriate set of College Programmes, a College Structure as well as a set of processes and tools that will enable the NCCE to enhance its practice in quality assurance and accreditation visits to college of education in Nigeria.

Lastly, it is important to see the efforts described above as an integral part of a much wider education sector transformation programme. Better teachers will only be effective in an education system that is managed effectively and that succeeds in employing teachers according to their specialisation and with appropriate levels of pay. Moreover, schools need to have an appropriate curriculum, and supervision of schools and of colleges needs to be professional, objective and effective. Indeed throughout the transformation at Oro College it has been clear that this transformation cannot occur in isolation. Efforts are underway, therefore, to enhance capacity in State ministries as well as Federal bodies and other state, local government, community and school structures to ensure that there is a synchronised enhancement of educational practice that supports its various individual efforts into a comprehensive and integrated whole that is more than the sum of its parts.

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