

Ascertaining Measures for Curbing the Dwindling Enrolment into NCE Programmes in Contemporary South-Eastern Nigeria

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Abstract

The increasing fall in enrolment into the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) programmes in contemporary Nigeria is worrisome. Against the backdrop, this study seeks to ascertain the causes of the dwindling in South-Eastern Nigeria and find some lasting scholarly solutions to the problem. Primary data are drawn from enrolment records of colleges of education in Anambra, Enugu and Ebonyi states, and ten administrative staff in each of the colleges, who are engaged in a focus group discussion. Library and internet print materials constitute the secondary data sources. Survey design, qualitative and quantitative methods, and content analysis are employed. The study reveals enrolment into NCE programmes in the three colleges to be: 420–above but less than 500 in 2010–2011; 320–380 in 2012 and 2018; 600–668 in 2013 and 2014; 200–227 in 2019, and below 100 (83–below). The study concludes that the fall in enrolment into NCE in South-Eastern Nigeria has been at its peak or alarming rate since 2018 to 2023. It recommends several measures to curb the dwindling enrolment. Students and graduates of secondary schools with their parents and guardians should be reoriented for changed attitude towards colleges of education. Governments should disburse finance for sustained public awareness campaigns, education fairs, exhibitions, seminars and media programmes that encourage enrolment into colleges of education. Attractive salary for teachers and the availability of sufficient digital and analogue learning materials would attract more candidates for admission. Reduced admission cut-off point and regular hybrid publicity are the other solutions.

Keywords: Measures, Curbing, Dwindling, Enrolment, NCE Programmes, South-East.

Introduction

Education is the bedrock of all meaningful human activities (Dzamghura & Ladags, 2016; Ejikeme, 2014; Ochoyi & Danladi, 2008). Education is very important in human life, because it equips individuals with the required attitudes, knowledge and skills that allow for significant contribution to socio-economic, cultural and political development (Ejikeme, 2014; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014; Nwajinka & Odogo, 2008; Odoemenam, 2008). Education is power because it empowers the individual with knowledge, skills and ideas that shape life, attitude, emotions, conditions, actions, decisions, cultures, power (politics), etc. in ways that are reformative and innovative. Educational reforms and admission policies have led to the introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme (Abdulraheem, 2013). The scheme is aimed at providing free and compulsory basic education for every Nigerian child of primary and junior secondary school age (Abdulraheem, 2013).

Colleges of education (COE henceforth) are the number one source of education at tertiary level. They offer expertise foundational training to students who are to become professionals in education and other allied endeavours. These are tertiary institutions statutorily charged with the role of pursuing the realisation of the goals of teacher education. The goals are producing highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers; building prospective teachers intellectually and professionally; encouraging the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers; arming teachers with the nitty-gritty of social life and enhancing their commitment to national goals and the teaching profession (National Policy on Education, 2014). In the past, these tertiary institutions used to record high rate of enrolment. Regrettably, the enrolment is dwindling these days. This situation greatly affects the population of students in colleges of education in South-East in particular and Nigeria as a whole. It also has several other implications. These include a drastic reduction in the number of competent teachers with core educational background training; low income base of the colleges; teachers' loss of interest in teaching students of insignificant class numbers; and poor knowledge of diversity, cohesion and experiential learning among the very few students per class; to mention but a few.

In view of the foregoing backdrop, this study rises to rouse deserving attention to the ugly situation, with a view to causing a significant change to that end. It intends to investigate and ascertain the causes of the dwindling enrolment of students into NCE programmes in South-Eastern colleges of education and the lasting solutions to the problem. As a field-based research involving three Eastern states, the findings shall be empirical and reliable, and trigger decisive and proactive measures that can reliably and sustainably curb the trend of dwindling enrolment into NCE in the South-East as well as across Nigeria as a whole. It shall significantly contribute to addressing some salient issues in the education sector. Apart from serving as a research material for further studies of its kind and as a blueprint for educational policies, it shall also impact positively on the quality of education in the study region in particular and other regions in Nigeria in general.

Problem/Justification

The increasing reduction in the rate of enrolment into NCE programmes is worrisome, because of its grave implications. Some of the implications are already mentioned above. As such, carrying out a study to ascertain the causes and find lasting solutions to the problem is a dire necessity. Although colleges of education have been making concerted efforts to increase enrolment rate, it seems that the current measures employed are ineffectual. The root causes of the backdrop have to be investigated and ascertained in order for cogent and sustainable solutions to be offered based on the empirical findings on the causes of the dwindling enrolment into NCE programmes in contemporary South-East, as probably applicable to other regions of Nigeria.

More so, currently, there are a few studies on dwindling enrolment into colleges of education. Among the few are those by Abang (2019) and Ethe and Odjegba (2019), which

examined causes and determinants of and remedies to the dwindling enrolment. This study is necessary to increase the volume of research work on this rising problem confronting COE in particular and the Nigerian education sector at large. It is also necessary in order to bridge the lacuna of extant studies on this subject matter of utmost concern. For example, no study has taken comprehensive and combined approaches and methods, involving three states, to empirically ascertain the causes of and the solutions to the dwindling enrolment into colleges of education in South-Eastern Nigeria. This emerging study intends to empirically do so.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to ascertain and describe measures for curbing the dwindling enrolment into NCE programmes in present-day South-Eastern, Nigeria. Its specific objectives are to:

- i. Examine the current rate of enrolment into NCE programmes in South-Eastern Nigeria;
- ii. Compare the current rate of enrolment with what obtained in the past;
- iii. Ascertain and describe the causes of the dwindling enrolment;
- iv. Describe the grave implications of the dwindling enrolment;
- v. Proffer widely agreed upon solutions to the dwindling enrolment into NCE programmes in South-Eastern Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions are designed to guide the study:

- i. What is the current rate of enrolment into NCE programmes in South-Eastern Nigeria?
- ii. Is the current rate of enrolment comparable to what obtained in the past?
- iii. What are the causes of the dwindling enrolment?
- iv. What are the grave implications of the dwindling enrolment?
- v. What are the lasting solutions to the dwindling enrolment into NCE programmes in South-Eastern Nigeria?

Significance of the Study

In view of the concerns of this study, its significance cannot be over-emphasised. In the first place, it shall address the issue of dwindling enrolment into NCE programmes and several other salient educational issues in present-day South-East. Enrolment into NCE programmes would get increased, following the empirically established causes and solutions. Next, while contributing to knowledge, it shall bridge certain laid-bare knowledge gaps, including the lacuna created by extant studies on the subject matter of discourse in the region. It shall draw significant attention to the problem at stake and by

extension several other salient educational issues in the region, which apply to other regions too.

This emerging study shall engender further studies on its subject matter and other related subject matters. In addition, the findings shall be of immense benefit to stakeholders and policy-makers in education to put up better measures for curbing the rising dwindling enrolment into NCE programmes in Eastern Nigeria as well as other regions. Such measures and those this study shall proffer would bring about significantly improved or high quality education, expertise teaching, effective educational services, research and development, and educational ethics, among others.

Conceptual Clarifications

Here, the key concepts running through the work shall be conceptualised concisely hereafter. The review of the concepts (measures, curbing, dwindling enrolment and NCE programmes) is done in prose or epistolary form. That is, each of the concepts is explained in several sentences. Accordingly, measures are strategies or mechanisms for addressing or tackling problems of all kinds, including the problem of dwindling enrolment into NCE programmes in South-East. In other words, 'measures', the plural of measure, is used here to refer to tactical and efficacious plans or courses of action that ought to be taken to achieve a particular goal. That is to say, it is used here to mean steps, plans, actions or strategies meant for the purpose of tackling the dwindling enrolment into NCE programmes. The concept 'curbing' is used herein to mean making concerted efforts to decrease the spate of dwindling enrolment into NCE programmes. Instead of allowing the dwindling enrolment to increase, it has to be kept in check or brought under control in order to halt the continuity of the worrisome situation.

Dwindling refers to a state of decrease or diminishment in things, phenomena or persons. Enrolment simply means to get oneself or someone registered or admitted into an institution or a group. This our definition tallies with that given by Abang (2019), which states that 'enrolment involves joining students into the school system through official arrangements and laid-down admission processes' (p. 66). Thus, used with enrolment herein, it refers to the state of decrease or diminishment in the number of enrolment or intake of students into NCE programmes. In other words, this study uses the phrasal concept 'dwindling enrolment' to describe the situation of continuous falling or decreasing number of prospective, expected or supposed students seeking admission into colleges of education, as in those in South-Eastern Nigeria.

NCE is an abbreviation for National Certificate in Education. NCE programmes are the courses undertaken for three years in order to be awarded this qualification— NCE. The three years apply to those who get enrolled into the basic three years programmes, without the one-year Pre-NCE programme. Such students of COE are into the regular rather than part-time programmes. The ones enrolled into the part-time programmes usually spend

four and above years. Those running degree programmes of affiliated universities also spend at least four years, depending on the courses of study.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on two theories. These are agenda setting theory (AST hereafter) of the media and Freirian Pedagogy (FP) of critical literacy. Accordingly, AST was developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972. The theorists postulate that the influence of the media on the public is very strong, such that the media instil in the audience what they should think and not what they would ordinarily think without being influenced by the media to think so (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This implies that the rate at which the media make jingles or publicise anything, a person or a group determines the height of the attention and relevance accorded to them by the audience of the media. By implication, the extent to which the media publicise or make jingles about COE as well as its programmes would undoubtedly determine the extent to which members of the public would be(come) interested in NCE programmes. Leaning on AST, this study argues that the media, traditional and new media alike, are capable of influencing young people and their parents and guardians to become interested in NCE programmes, following what and the extent to which the media represent COE and NCE programmes to the public.

Basically, AST describes the ability of the media to influence the audience to give deserving attention to, have interest in, and accord significance or importance to whatever or whoever the media make jingles about as being significant or important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Chiakaan & Ahmed, 2011; Robert & Besong, 2016; Ojie, 2020). Ojie (2020) notes that 'agenda-setting revolves around creating public awareness and the concern of salient issues by news media' (p. 443). This study advocates that COE should begin the agenda-setting process by creating awareness about their programmes and all that concerns COE and NCE programmes using traditional and new media, literature, language, and agents of socialisation. COE have to get the media involved in canvassing for more entrants into NCE programmes. It is upon constructing or drafting agenda for the task of canvassing for more admission candidates (entrants) that COE would get the media involved in the exercise. Then, the media would eruditely take it up from there.

The media have to be armed with the nitty-gritty of NCE programmes and all therein in order for them to be able to design suitable media content and programmes that promote COE and NCE programmes to the public. Therefore, since the basic assumptions of AST aptly apply to this study, it is indeed suitable for the study. It is also a viable model for theorising, explaining and addressing dwindling enrolment, which requires media intervention, active involvement and setting of agenda to rebrand COE and NCE programmes and rouse deserving interest in admission-seeking members of the public by the media.

The theoretical postulations of Freire (1970) and Freire and Macedo (1987) on critical literacy (CL) gave rise to what has become known as Freirian Pedagogy (FP). Herein, it shall be

regarded simply as FP Theory of FPT. These theorists describe CL in relation to critical pedagogy (CP) and points out that CL and CP are characterised by socio-political constructions of indoctrination and the development of critical consciousness. He also describes political indoctrination and the development of a critical consciousness as 'conscientisation' (Freire, 1970). Consciousness is needed to do meaningful reading and writing, critical thinking, critical teaching and literacy learning, and to pursue and realise change or a new world order, among others. Freirian Pedagogy is the theoretical framework of this study. The central argument of FP Theory is that critically literate persons do not only understand how meanings are socially constructed in texts, but also understand the political and economic contexts of the created texts, and the contexts that ground the meanings of the social constructions created in texts (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Freire, 1970). CL is noted to exhibit the complexity of a socio-political framework that grounds 'the relationships of language and power with practical knowledge of how to use language for advocacy, social critique, and cultural transformation' (Knoblauch & Brannon, 1993, p. 152). Clearly, language is affirmed to be a means through which CL can be used to make advocacy for interest in and enrolment into NCE programmes. CL is proven to be a means of handling and changing the harsh social critique faced by COE, for which enrolment into NCE programmes is dwindling overtime. COE and NCE programmes can be transformed using CL, as a result of its impactful influence on the members of the public, who are exposed to CL. As Lankshear and McLaren (1993) have noted, literacy is more complex than the traditionally defined skills of reading and writing. This means that CL entails much more than reading and writing. According to them, literate skills and forms are socially practised, and the traditional definition of literacy ideologically aligns with particular postures of normative and inherently exploitative socio-political consciousness (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993).

It follows that CL rouses consciousness to different matters, including the consciousness towards enrolling into NCE programmes. Also, Shor (1999) has held that CL is a kind of literacy involving the use of words to 'rethink worlds' and 'self dissent in society' (p. 2). Thus, CL is a viable mechanism for rethinking COE and NCE programmes in ways that are factual and captivating to members of the public. In the words of Shor (1999), 'critical literacy connects the political and the personal, the public and the private, the global and the local, the economic and the pedagogical, for rethinking our lives and for promoting justice in place of inequity' (p. 2). Of interest among the aforementioned to this study is the pedagogical place of CL, which relates to personal or private and public lives. Norton (2007) has noted that concerns the 'connections between literacy, power and educational change' (p. 6). Norton (2007) demonstrates elaborately that CL is a mechanism for international development.

Street (2001) and Canagarajah (1999) also show elaborately that CL is a mechanism for development at both national and international levels. It is to that end that Canagarajah (1999) has emphasised that understanding the politics of location is paramount to

understanding how a community practises CL. Scholars also affirm that CL plays essential role in education, linguistics, development and health, among others (Makoni & Meinhof, 2003; Openjuru, 2003; Parry, 2003; Kwesiga, 1994). The study by Singer (2006) shows that CL is a viable means of changing the world. Making references to different stories, it illustratively shows how reading and writing change the world. The implication of the finding to this present study is that CL can change anything it is deployed to change. Thus, the attitude towards COE and NCE programmes, which is the number one factor behind the dwindling enrolment into NCE programmes, can be changed using CL. As such, FP is indeed an apt theory for pedagogic and otherwise change of all and sundry in COE and about NCE programmes as well as the attitude towards both COE and NCE programmes.

Review of Empirical Studies

Ezegwu et al. (2023) examine the impacts of political breaks on education policies, access and quality in Nigeria between 1970 and 2003. In other words, the study shows how political breaks on education policies on altered policies, institutional norms, governance structures, and attitudes in the primary and junior secondary education sector between 1970 and 2003. The study concludes that the breaks have sustained impact on Nigerian democracy and economy overtime. It recommends that educational policies should be stabilised and be freed from political propaganda. The place of the study in this present one is that it emphasises the need to address educational issues, dwindling enrolment inclusive, with objective problem-solving policies and normative or conventionalised norms that trigger or allow for reforms, betterment and attitudinal change. It does not capture enrolment issues. Besides, it is limited to primary and junior secondary education alone. One of the research gaps it leaves on unfilled is taken up by the present study.

Igberaharha and Onyesom (2021) identify and discuss strategies for increasing enrolment into business education NCE programme in Nigeria. The study was informed by the attempt to find solutions to the dwindling enrolment into the business education programme of COE in Delta State. Descriptive survey is employed and the primary data sourced from 118 business education lecturers in the COE, using questionnaire. The analysis shows that the 118 respondents confirmed the identified strategies to be indeed capable of increasing the enrolment of students into business education programme. The strategies include publicity by the media, inter-agency collaboration, simplifying admission processes and requirements, and addressing the challenges confronting teachers and students of COE. The study concludes that devising and imbibing effective strategies for enrolment into NCE programmes would undoubtedly increase the number of enrolment into NCE programmes. The study relates to the present one in that it decries the problem of dwindling enrolment and proposes strategies for tackling the problem. However, its case study area is Delta State, not the Eastern states covered by the present study.

Kola and Opeyemi (2021) look at the employability of graduates of science programmes of Nigerian colleges of education. In other words, it looks at the challenges facing these

graduates of COE. The lead problems identified by the study are inadequate curriculum and unfavourable government policies. The study proposes the concepts of application, creativity and employability (ACE) as a framework for tackling issues of employability of the students. It argues that this framework, if imbibed, has huge benefits to COE, as their students would be groomed to be employable after schooling. It recommends the three concepts to COE as what should be institutionalised and applied to the teaching of science programmes as well as others, as NCE programmes. Although the study concerns COE as well as NCE, it does not look at the dwindling enrolment into COE. The research gap it creates or leaves out, just like many others, becomes the departure point for this present study. By so doing, it fills a laid-bare research gap and rouses scholarly attention to it.

Chen (2018) assesses 'quality management in higher education admission system' in colleges of education and other tertiary institutions. The study notes that admission into these institutions is competitive and so quality assurance ought to be in place. The analysis reveals that the attendance of higher institutions is increasingly decreasing. It submits that tertiary institutions can increase enrolment into their varied programmes by using techniques of statistical analysis, such as lead scoring, time series control, continuous improvement, and quality management tracking. Marketing, advertisement and quality assurance management are recommended to be viable means of increasing enrolment. The study grounds the current one empirically, as it dissects practical issues of concern to the present study and points out feasible measures for tackling the dwindling enrolment into programmes of higher institutions of learning, including those of COE.

Adolphus (2016) explores the factors affecting the enrolment and the attainment of senior secondary school physics students in Rivers State. Purposive sampling was used to draw participants from eight secondary schools in Rivers State, South-Southern Nigeria. In these schools, 14 physics teachers, 248 physics students and 116 non-physics students. Mixed methods were employed. The analysis proves that students' physics enrolment and attainment are significantly influenced by teachers' qualifications, resource availability and utilisation, and teaching strategies adopted by teachers. The study concludes that the prime factor is ineffective teaching and learning. The study suggests that to boost students' interest in physics, teachers need to present content in ways that connect physics ideas to students' daily life experiences. Besides, qualified science teachers and teaching aids should be provided. Although the study looks at enrolment issue, it is the case of secondary school, which is rather dependent on interest and capability in science or any other major subject category, such as arts and commerce.

Mohammed (2015) examines the dwindling enrolment into French Language NCE programme of two COE in Niger State, Northern Nigeria. Covering a ten-year period (2003-2012) and employing descriptive survey design, the study weighs admission and graduation ratios of students in the French Department of State College of Education, Minna and the Federal College of Education, Kontagora. Extant admission and graduation records were collected and examined. In the course of the exploration, the study identifies causes of the

dwindling rates of enrolment and graduation in the two colleges. It offers some remedies in its recommendations. Given the concerns of the study, it is quite clear that it is an empirical study that lends credence to this present study. It only differs from this one in terms of its inclusion of graduation rate to its scope and the case study coverage.

In their case study of the influence of the founder of Afe Babalola University on admission into the university, Ademola et al. (2014) examine students' enrolment into tertiary institutions in Nigeria, focusing on behavioural patterns, and the influential effect of the reputation of proprietors of private tertiary institutions. It identifies orientation at cognitive, evaluative and affective levels as factors of influence, affiliation and affinity. It also identifies the factors behind the increasing population of admission seekers and the falling standard of education in contemporary Nigeria. These include the kind and volume of teaching facilities in place, space and issues of quality of tutors and teaching. The study concludes that socio-economic and educational factors exert effects on enrolment patterns of prospective candidates, behavioural patterns, and reputation of proprietors of tertiary institutions. It recommends that owners' reputation alone should not be the ultimate factor to consider, but others that have to be harnessed with it.

In comparing behavioural pattern of any category, qualitative and field-based studies could be carried out reliably with qualitative and field-based research rather than the otherwise. On one hand, the continuous decrease in enrolment into COE colleges of education is decried by scholars and authorities in-charge of COE. On the other, the consistent increase in enrolment into Nigerian universities is lamented. As Ajadi (2010) agrees, the growing numbers of enrolment, or the inability of most candidates to secure admission, into universities and the inability of public universities to live up to expectations are why the enrolment into universities remains very high and contested.

Methodology

The descriptive survey design is employed. The survey design involves eliciting information from a sample drawn from a target population through self-administered questionnaire or interviews and the subjecting of collated data to statistical analysis, with the aim of answering the research questions (Ubah, Ochienta & Nwonu, 2012; Nwodu, 2006; Nworgu, 2006). According to Nworgu (2006), the descriptive survey design tries to explain major elements and characteristics of any phenomenon or attitude. Nwobi (2014) notes that 'descriptive survey design focuses on people and their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, motivation and behaviour' (p. 106). Survey research is affirmed to be the commonest and most popular type of research in management, educational, behavioural and social sciences (Ubah, Ochienta & Nwonu, 2012). This design is chosen for several reasons. First, it allows for the use of purposive population, precision and the reduction of a large population into a small or concise one that represents the large one. The method also allows for qualitative data and in-depth analysis of data through its interrogatory tools. Besides, the findings of a research that involves the survey method usually validate or disprove the research

questions and the research hypotheses or assumptions. The reliable findings allow for a valid conclusion that is followed by recommendations.

Some selected enrolment records of the three colleges of education in Anambra, Enugu and Ebonyi States are obtained and examined. Thus, Anambra, Enugu and Ebonyi States constitute the study area. Two sets of enrolment records are accessed and examined. The first set comprises the enrolment records for 2010–2014 academic sessions and those for 2018–2020 enrolments. The essence is to compare the two sets of enrolments in order to (dis)prove the stance of this study, which states that enrolment into NCE programmes in South-East as well as other regions of Nigeria has been dwindling for some years now. The records constitute one of the primary data sources. Other sources are observation and un/structured, and closed and open-ended questionnaire.

The questionnaire copies are administered to one thousand and eight hundred (1,800) respondents, selected randomly from the three states. Six hundred (600) each are administered to each of the three states. In each of these states, four hundred (400) respondents are students, while two hundred (200) are drawn from among teachers and administrative staff of the colleges of education under study. That is, while one thousand and two hundred (1,200) of the 1,800 are student respondents, six hundred (600) across the three states are teachers and administrative staff of the colleges of education. The analysis of the primary data from questionnaire and the enrolment records of the schools involve the use of simple percentage to determine the results. Its formula is: $\frac{N}{EN} \times \frac{1}{100}$. Other statistical tools, including the four-point Likert scale, are employed along with the simple percentage.

Textual materials from library and the internet make up the secondary data sources. These include journals, textbooks, government and special publications, conference and seminar papers, monographs, lecture notes, magazines and newspapers, among others. The secondary data are subjected to objective critical analysis involving content analysis. The work takes cognisance of, and avoids violation of research ethics. It is objective, avoiding subjectivity. The researchers consult the staff in-charge of the admission records. Applying wisdom, diplomacy, experience, effective communication skills and erudite professional and research skills, the researchers handle likely rising socio-cultural, economic and human issues accordingly.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Here, the statistical data is presented descriptively. Herein, the questionnaire data are not included. Only the admission (enrolment) records obtained from the three COE are presented and analysed herein. Following the inability of each of the colleges to figure out all the enrolment records between 2010 and 2020 in the 10-year series, a unitary gap in the record is made by dropping the records from 2010-2020 to 2010-2014 and 2018-2020. Within the ten-year enrolment records, it is discovered that the three colleges had (420-above) less than 500 enrolled students in 2010 and 2011; 380-below number of enrolled

students in 2012, being less than 500; 620-668 increased enrolment in 2013 and 2014; and dwindled enrolment ratios of 367, 227 and 83-above in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

The three COE record a drastic fall in enrolment from 2018 to 2022. In 2010, none of them had up to the 500 enrolment ratio expected by this study. The admission ratios realised in 2010 were between 400 and 428. In 2011, the ratios were between 470 and 498, showing an addition of 70 figures to the 2010 figures. In 2012, 360, 380 and 390 were recorded, showing 140, 120 and 110 fall from the 500 expected by this study. 650-670 enrolment ratios were recorded in 2013, proving that the enrolment rose above the expected 500 intakes that this study considers to be the ideal minimum enrolment ratio.

Although there was a decrease, which put the enrolment between 600 and 628 in 2014, it is quite interesting that the enrolment was still above the 500 minimum target of the study. Recall that the records for 2015-2017 were left out, as noted above. In 2018, the recorded ratio falls within 367 total number of admitted students. This means that 133 (26.6%) decrease was recorded. The enrolment dwindled further to between 227 (45.4%) and 230 (46%), showing a decrease ratio of 273 (54.6%) or 270 (54%). Finally, in 2020, a drastic dwindling enrolment was recorded, as the ratio was within 83 of 16.6%. This is how bad the enrolment into NCE programmes has been dwindling in recent times, particularly since 2015 to date.

Discussion of Findings

The findings are generalised to apply to all COE across South-Eastern states. Accordingly, the findings tally with those of some extant studies (Igberaharha & Onyesom, 2021; Chen, 2018; Adolphus, 2016; Mohammed, 2015; Ejikeme, 2014). Here, a specific reflection is made on the finding of Ejikeme's (2014) study, leaving out those of others. See the 'Review of Empirical Studies' section above. Ejikeme (2014) decries the dwindling quality of education in Nigeria, as standard continues to disappear from the system. He regrets that the falling standard has brought to place the tendency of sending below average graduates of secondary schools to colleges of education (Ejikeme, 2014). This presents a dilemma to colleges of education, because while battling with the issue of dwindling enrolment and making efforts to increase it, colleges of education are also faced with the challenges of dealing with quality admission management that prevents the colleges from being dumping grounds for dull (below average) students from secondary schools.

The mentality of conceiving the teacher as a nonentity in Nigeria is undoubtedly what grounds the rising situation of conceiving and/or attempting to have colleges of education as dumping grounds for dull students from secondary schools. Okebukola (2010) laments the sorry state of the teaching profession in Nigeria. The Nigerian teacher is the most committed and diligent professional, who is still the most neglected. Drained by the addressable but unaddressed professional challenges, the Nigerian teacher becomes inefficient and less productive. Some of the other challenges faced by the Nigerian teacher include decaying infrastructure, government's poor funding and budgeting for educational

logistics and needs, classroom constraints, lack of instructional materials and teaching aids, lack of motivation or reward, delayed salary and poor staff training and development, parental interference with academic affairs of the child, and irresponsible parenting and unfavourable parenting styles that pose threats effecting teaching-learning, among others. The Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) rose to tackle issues of admission into tertiary institutions in Nigeria, but access to universities remains difficult for candidates from poor families (JAMB, 2007). JAMB seeks to make admission easy for all and sundry, unify and standardise the processes and regulate enrolment to attain a balance and equitability (JAMB, 2007). Given the current situations, such as that of the dwindling enrolment into NCE programmes at COE, the credibility is questionable. Its objectives are not met. Like most other institutions of the state, JAMB shows low level of functionality and service delivery. The bond between learning and living is one determinant of student's behaviour in choosing a tertiary institution of learning. Besong and Robert (2019) maintain that young people should be well sensitised and guided by parents and teachers on career and school choices early enough. They emphasise that teachers should use different means to rouse the interest of parents, and graduates and students of secondary schools to courses and tertiary institutions that often misconceived and neglected by aforementioned sets of persons (Besong & Robert, 2019).

Conclusion

The study has ascertained the measures for curbing the dwindling enrolment into NCE programmes in contemporary South-Eastern, Nigeria. It has confirmed that enrolment into NCE programmes has been dwindling overtime and there is the dire need to curb with efficacious measures. The measures include effective use of language, traditional and new media, one-on-one sensitisation, critical literacy, theoretical and empirical measures, tackling institutional challenges, making CEO and NCE programmes attractive, lucrative and more practically oriented, easing admission processes and criteria, putting in place effective teaching and learning aids, timely evaluation of enrolment records to determine success and failure rates, researching into enrolment increase and decrease, and consulting authorities of tertiary institutions having high enrolment ratios to learn from them and imbibe their deployed measures for attaining high or increasing enrolment. In all, the study concludes that the dwindling enrolment into NCE programmes in South-Eastern Nigeria has been at an alarming rate since 2018 to 2023.

Recommendations

The study makes the following recommendations:

- i. Regular hybrid publicity involving traditional and new media and face-to-face awareness campaign and canvassing for admission would do a whole lot of good and change the current worrisome state of enrolment into NCE programmes.

- ii. Students and graduates of secondary schools with their parents and guardians should be reoriented in order to attain changed attitude towards colleges of education.
- iii. Governments should disburse finance for sustained public awareness campaigns, education fairs, exhibitions, seminars and media programmes that encourage enrolment into colleges of education.
- iv. Attractive salary for teachers and the availability of sufficient digital and analogue learning materials would attract more candidates for admission. The various commonly attested institutional challenges facing teachers and students should be got rid of by government, authorities of COE and development partners.
- v. COE and the allied authorities should reduce admission cut-off point and ease admission processes and criteria into NCE programmes.

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