

DUAL MANDATE OF COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: BENEFITS, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

By

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Abstract

The Dual Mandate of Colleges of Education in Nigeria represents an important development in teacher education, particularly through the provision for eligible Colleges of Education to offer both the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) and approved Bachelor's degree programmes in Education. The reform is expected to expand access to higher education, improve the quality of teacher preparation, provide academic progression for NCE holders and strengthen the institutional capacity of Colleges of Education. This paper reviews the major benefits and problems associated with the implementation of the Dual Mandate in Nigeria. The benefits identified include expansion of access to higher education, improvement of teacher quality, clearer academic progression, revitalisation of Colleges of Education, institutional autonomy, promotion of research and innovation, improved utilisation of institutional resources, employment generation, institutional competitiveness and increased supply of qualified teachers. Despite these benefits, implementation is constrained by inadequate funding and infrastructure, shortage of qualified academic staff, regulatory and accreditation challenges, increased workload, resistance to change, weak ICT infrastructure, inadequate research capacity, curriculum implementation difficulties, competition for students and poor stakeholder coordination. The paper concludes that the Dual Mandate has significant potential to transform teacher education in Nigeria, but its success depends on adequate financial investment, qualified personnel, infrastructure, effective regulation, ICT development and continuous institutional supervision. The paper recommends stronger government funding, staff development, improved infrastructure, effective NCCE–NUC collaboration, enhanced research support and systematic monitoring of implementation.

Keywords: Dual Mandate, Colleges of Education, NCE, Bachelor's Degree, Teacher Education, Benefits.

1.0 Introduction

Teacher education is an essential component of national development because the quality of teachers has a direct relationship with the quality of teaching and learning in schools. In Nigeria,

Colleges of Education have historically occupied an important position in the preparation of professional teachers, particularly through the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) programme. The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), established by law in 1989, is responsible for regulating and coordinating teacher education and establishing minimum standards for Colleges of Education and their programmes. Traditionally, Colleges of Education focused mainly on the preparation of teachers through NCE programmes, while Bachelor's degree programmes were primarily the responsibility of universities. Over time, however, the increasing demand for degree-qualified teachers and greater access to higher education encouraged the development of degree programmes in some Colleges through affiliation arrangements with universities.

The emergence of the Dual Mandate represents a significant transformation in this arrangement. The policy provides opportunities for eligible Colleges of Education to operate both NCE and approved Bachelor's degree programmes in Education. The NCCE identifies the Dual Mandate as a means of expanding access to teacher education and strengthening the capacity of Colleges of Education. The Federal Colleges of Education (Establishment) Act, 2023 further strengthened the legal framework for Federal Colleges of Education to offer approved Bachelor's degree programmes alongside NCE programmes. The policy consequently seeks to reposition Colleges of Education as institutions capable of providing both professional teacher preparation and degree-level education.

The implementation of the Dual Mandate also requires collaboration between the NCCE and National Universities Commission (NUC). While the NCCE has statutory responsibilities for teacher education and NCE programmes, the NUC is responsible for standards and quality assurance relating to university-level degree programmes. The two regulatory agencies have therefore been involved in addressing issues such as curriculum, admission, staffing, accreditation, infrastructure and institutional readiness. This paper examined the benefits and likely challenges that may face that Dual Mandate implementation of Colleges of Education in Nigeria.

2.0 Conceptual Terms

Concept of Dual Mandate of College of Education

The Dual Mandate of College of Education may also be defined as a mechanism for expanding access to higher teacher education in Nigeria by allowing eligible Colleges of Education to provide approved degree programmes alongside their NCE programmes. It is intended to make tertiary teacher education more accessible while strengthening the capacity of Colleges to contribute to the production of highly qualified teachers. In this paper, the Dual Mandate is conceptualised as the concurrent implementation of NCE and Bachelor's degree programmes in Education by eligible Colleges of Education under appropriate regulatory standards. The concept therefore combines teacher preparation, academic progression, institutional development and quality assurance within a single College of Education system.

Objectives of the Dual Mandate of Colleges of Education

The NCCE's official Dual Mandate framework confirms that eligible Colleges are to provide degree-level education alongside their NCE responsibilities.

To Expand Access to Degree-Level Teacher Education

One major objective is to increase opportunities for Nigerians to obtain Bachelor's degrees in Education. Allowing eligible Colleges of Education to offer approved degree programmes creates additional pathways for students seeking higher education and professional teacher qualifications.

To Improve the Quality of Teacher Preparation

The Dual Mandate seeks to strengthen teacher preparation by providing opportunities for students to acquire deeper subject knowledge, pedagogical competencies, research skills and professional capabilities through degree-level education.

To Provide Academic Progression for NCE Graduates

Another objective is to provide a clearer pathway for NCE graduates to progress to Bachelor's degree level. This can encourage teachers to pursue higher qualifications and subsequently progress to postgraduate education and other professional opportunities.

To Strengthen and Reposition Colleges of Education

The policy aims to transform Colleges of Education into stronger tertiary institutions with greater capacity for teaching, research, innovation and professional teacher development. The introduction of degree programmes can encourage investment in infrastructure, academic staffing, libraries, laboratories and ICT facilities.

To Increase the Supply of Qualified and Competent Teachers

The Dual Mandate is also intended to increase the number of professionally trained and academically qualified teachers available to the Nigerian education system. Expanded degree-level teacher education can contribute to meeting the demand for qualified teachers in schools.

To Promote Research, Innovation and Institutional Development

The Bachelor's degree component creates stronger expectations for research, project supervision, academic publications and innovation. Consequently, the Dual Mandate aims to strengthen the research culture of Colleges of Education and encourage them to contribute to solving educational problems through research and innovation.

Education in Nigeria

The Dual Mandate enables eligible Colleges of Education to run both the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) and approved Bachelor's degree programmes in Education. The Federal Colleges of Education (Establishment) Act, 2023 provided the legal foundation for Federal Colleges of Education to award approved education degrees while continuing their NCE programmes. The NCCE describes the reform as an opportunity to expand access, improve teacher quality and strengthen Colleges of Education.

Expands Access to Higher Education

One major benefit of the Dual Mandate is that it increases opportunities for students to obtain Bachelor's degrees in Education. Previously, Colleges of Education that wanted to offer degree programmes generally depended on affiliations with universities. Under the new arrangement, eligible Colleges can independently offer approved degree programmes. This provides an additional pathway for students who may not secure admission into conventional universities. The NCCE and NUC have specifically identified the shortage of university places relative to the demand for higher education as one reason the reform can help bridge the access gap. The Dual Mandate can contribute to increasing the proportion of Nigerians with higher educational qualifications while simultaneously producing graduates for the teaching profession.

Improves the Quality and Professional Competence of Teachers

The Dual Mandate provides an opportunity to produce teachers with higher academic qualifications and stronger professional competencies. Bachelor's degree programmes can provide deeper subject knowledge, advanced pedagogical skills, research competencies, digital literacy and leadership skills. This is particularly important in areas where Nigeria requires more highly qualified teachers, including science, technical, vocational and ICT-related subjects. The NCCE states that the reform is intended to produce highly skilled professional educators and strengthen teacher preparation. The result can be a better-prepared teaching workforce capable of responding to contemporary educational challenges.

Provides a Clearer Academic Progression for NCE Holders

The Dual Mandate creates a more convenient pathway for NCE graduates who want to upgrade their qualifications to Bachelor's degree level. Rather than having to completely change institutions, eligible students can progress through an approved NCE-to-degree structure. The NCCE's current implementation information describes a continuous pathway in which students complete the NCE stage and can subsequently proceed to the degree component, subject to the applicable requirements. This progression can reduce educational discontinuity and encourage teachers to pursue higher qualifications. It also creates opportunities for graduates to proceed to postgraduate education after obtaining the required Bachelor's degree.

Revitalises and Strengthens Colleges of Education

The Dual Mandate can help reposition Colleges of Education as stronger and more attractive tertiary institutions. Offering degree programmes alongside NCE programmes can increase student enrolment, improve institutional visibility and encourage greater investment in infrastructure, staffing, libraries, laboratories and ICT facilities. The 2025 NCCE national summit identified increased enrolment, better utilisation of existing staff capacity and the production of more qualified teachers among the practical benefits associated with the reform. The reform can therefore help address declining enrolment and institutional uncertainty while giving Colleges a stronger role in Nigeria's tertiary education system.

Reduces Dependence on University Affiliations and Promotes Institutional Autonomy

Another important benefit is that eligible Colleges can operate approved degree programmes without depending on university affiliations for degree awards. Before the reform, Colleges that offered degrees through affiliation relied on partner universities for the degree-awarding relationship. The Dual Mandate provides greater institutional autonomy for eligible Colleges while retaining regulatory oversight through relevant bodies, particularly the NCCE and NUC. This can allow Colleges to respond more quickly to emerging needs in teacher education, subject to accreditation and quality requirements. Greater autonomy can also encourage Colleges to develop relevant programmes, strengthen academic planning and improve institutional competitiveness.

Promotes Research and Innovation

The Dual Mandate creates greater opportunities for research and innovation within Colleges of Education. The introduction of Bachelor's degree programmes requires lecturers and students to engage more actively in research, project work, academic publications and knowledge creation. This can encourage Colleges to establish research groups, seminars and partnerships with other higher-education institutions. Increased research activity can generate evidence for improving teacher preparation, curriculum implementation and classroom practices in Nigeria.

Improves Utilisation of Institutional Resources

Another benefit is the better utilisation of existing institutional resources. Colleges of Education already possess classrooms, libraries, laboratories, workshops, ICT facilities and academic staff that can support both NCE and degree programmes. With proper planning, these resources can be utilised more effectively throughout the academic year. The Dual Mandate can therefore increase the productivity of institutional facilities and human resources rather than requiring Colleges to maintain entirely separate structures for each programme.

Increases Employment and Professional Opportunities

The expansion of academic programmes can create additional employment opportunities for lecturers, administrative staff, laboratory technologists, ICT personnel, librarians and other support staff. As Colleges expand their degree programmes, they may require more qualified academic personnel and professional services. The policy can therefore contribute to employment generation while also creating opportunities for existing staff to advance their academic and professional careers.

Promotes Competition and Institutional Development

The Dual Mandate can stimulate healthy competition among Colleges of Education and other tertiary institutions. Colleges offering degree programmes are encouraged to improve their teaching quality, research activities, student services, ICT facilities, infrastructure and academic reputation in order to attract students. Such competition can encourage institutional innovation and continuous improvement. Colleges that effectively utilise the opportunity may develop stronger academic profiles and become more competitive within Nigeria's tertiary education system.

Strengthens the Supply of Qualified Teachers

A major national benefit of the Dual Mandate is its potential to increase the supply of well-trained and degree-qualified teachers. Nigeria has a large and growing education system requiring competent teachers at different levels. By expanding opportunities for Bachelor's degree preparation in Education, Colleges can contribute to producing more qualified teachers in areas such as science, mathematics, languages, social sciences, technical education and other disciplines. A stronger supply of professionally prepared teachers can contribute to improved teaching and learning outcomes in schools and support the achievement of national educational goals.

B- Problems of Implementing the Dual Mandate of Colleges of Education in Nigeria

The Dual Mandate allows eligible Colleges of Education in Nigeria to operate Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) programmes alongside approved Bachelor's degree programmes in Education. Although the policy offers opportunities for expanding access to higher education and strengthening teacher preparation, its implementation presents several institutional, financial, regulatory and human-resource challenges.

Inadequate Funding and Infrastructure

One of the major problems confronting the implementation of the Dual Mandate is inadequate funding. Running Bachelor's degree programmes alongside NCE programmes requires additional classrooms, lecture theatres, laboratories, libraries, workshops, ICT facilities, staff offices and student-support facilities. Many Colleges of Education already operate with limited resources.

The introduction of degree programmes may therefore place additional pressure on existing infrastructure. Where student enrolment increases without corresponding expansion of facilities, problems such as overcrowded classrooms, inadequate laboratory equipment, insufficient library resources and poor learning environments may arise. Inadequate funding can also affect the maintenance of existing facilities and the ability of Colleges to recruit qualified academic staff. The success of the Dual Mandate therefore depends substantially on sustained government and institutional investment.

Shortage of Qualified Academic Staff

The implementation of Bachelor's degree programmes requires lecturers with appropriate academic qualifications, teaching experience and research competence. However, some Colleges may not have sufficient numbers of lecturers who meet the requirements for degree-level teaching and supervision. This shortage can increase lecturers' workloads because existing staff may have to teach both NCE and Bachelor's degree students. Excessive workload can affect lesson preparation, student supervision, research activities, assessment and academic mentoring. The problem is particularly serious in specialised disciplines where qualified personnel are difficult to recruit and retain. Colleges therefore need effective staff-recruitment and development programmes to ensure that the Dual Mandate does not compromise academic quality.

Regulatory and Accreditation Challenges

Another problem is the complexity of complying with the requirements of different regulatory frameworks. The NCCE has responsibility for regulating teacher education and NCE programmes, while the NUC has responsibilities concerning university-level degree programmes. The Dual Mandate consequently requires effective coordination between regulatory agencies to ensure clarity regarding programme approval, curriculum, staffing, admission, accreditation, assessment and quality assurance. Where regulatory requirements are unclear, duplicated or inconsistently communicated, Colleges may experience delays in programme approval, accreditation and implementation. The NCCE and NUC have recognised the need for collaboration in implementing the Dual Mandate.

Increased Workload and Resistance to Change

The transition to the Dual Mandate introduces new academic and administrative responsibilities. Lecturers may have to prepare courses for different levels, supervise undergraduate research projects, participate in additional committees and undertake increased assessment responsibilities. Administrative personnel may similarly face additional responsibilities involving admission, registration, examinations, academic records and accreditation requirements. In addition, some staff may resist changes associated with the new mandate because of uncertainty about their roles, workload, promotion requirements, institutional restructuring or new quality standards. Without adequate consultation, training and incentives, resistance to change can slow implementation.

Weak ICT Infrastructure and Digital Skills

Effective Bachelor's degree education increasingly requires reliable ICT infrastructure. Colleges need stable internet connectivity, computers, electronic libraries, digital databases, learning-management systems and electronic academic records. However, inadequate ICT infrastructure, unreliable electricity and limited digital skills among some lecturers and administrative staff can constrain effective implementation of the Dual Mandate. Weak ICT capacity can affect online learning, research, communication, student records, academic administration and quality assurance. It can also limit students' access to current scholarly resources. UNESCO (2023) emphasises that successful use of digital technologies in education requires appropriate infrastructure, human capacity, institutional support and responsible governance.

Inadequate Research Capacity

The implementation of Bachelor's degree programmes requires Colleges of Education to develop stronger research capacity. Degree-level education involves research projects, academic publications, seminars, conferences and other scholarly activities. However, some Colleges may have limited research facilities, inadequate access to scholarly databases, insufficient research funding and lecturers with limited opportunities for research development. These limitations can affect the quality of undergraduate research supervision and lecturers' research output. Without a strong research culture, Colleges may struggle to meet the academic expectations associated with Bachelor's degree education.

Curriculum Harmonisation and Implementation Challenges

Another problem is the difficulty of effectively coordinating the curricula of NCE and Bachelor's degree programmes. Although both programmes are related to teacher education, they have different academic requirements, levels of depth and expected learning outcomes. Colleges must ensure that degree curricula meet approved standards while avoiding unnecessary duplication of courses between the NCE and degree components. Poor curriculum planning can result in gaps, repetition or inappropriate workload for students.

Increased Competition for Students and Institutional Resources

The Dual Mandate may create competition between Colleges of Education and universities for students interested in Bachelor's degree programmes. Universities have traditionally been the major providers of degree-level education and often possess stronger public recognition among prospective students. If Colleges are unable to improve their academic reputation, facilities and student services, they may experience difficulty attracting sufficient students to their degree programmes. At the same time, increased enrolment can place additional pressure on existing classrooms, laboratories, libraries, accommodation and academic staff.

Poor Coordination and Communication Among Stakeholders

Effective implementation requires cooperation among several stakeholders, including the Federal Ministry of Education, NCCE, NUC, JAMB, TETFund, College governing councils, management, academic staff and students. Poor communication among these stakeholders can lead to confusion concerning admission requirements, programme approval, accreditation, staffing, curriculum, funding and quality assurance. Delayed communication can also slow institutional decision-making and implementation of policy directives. The NCCE and NUC have recognised the importance of collaboration in establishing arrangements for the Dual Mandate.

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The Dual Mandate of Colleges of Education represents a significant opportunity to transform teacher education in Nigeria. By allowing eligible Colleges to offer both NCE and approved Bachelor's degree programmes in Education, the reform can expand access to higher education, improve teacher quality, provide academic progression for NCE holders and strengthen the institutional relevance of Colleges of Education.

The potential benefits can only be achieved if the challenges associated with implementation are systematically addressed. Inadequate funding, insufficient infrastructure, shortage of qualified academic staff, regulatory difficulties, increased workload, weak ICT facilities, inadequate research capacity and poor stakeholder coordination can undermine the objectives of the reform.

The success of the Dual Mandate should therefore be measured not simply by the number of Colleges offering degree programmes but by the quality, relevance, accessibility and sustainability of those programmes. Strong regulatory supervision, adequate resources, competent personnel and effective institutional management are essential for ensuring that the Dual Mandate strengthens rather than weakens Nigeria's teacher education system.

Based on the findings, the paper recommends the following:

- 1) Increase government funding: Federal and state governments should provide adequate and sustainable funding to Colleges implementing the Dual Mandate to enable them to develop and maintain necessary academic facilities.
- 2) Improve infrastructure: Colleges should be provided with adequate classrooms, lecture theatres, laboratories, libraries, staff offices, accommodation and other facilities required for both NCE and Bachelor's degree programmes.
- 3) Recruit qualified academic staff: Colleges should recruit sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified lecturers, particularly in specialised disciplines, while providing opportunities for existing staff to upgrade their qualifications.

- 4) Strengthen staff capacity building: Regular training should be provided in teaching methodology, research, curriculum development, ICT, assessment and academic administration.
- 5) Strengthen NCCE–NUC collaboration: The NCCE and NUC should maintain effective coordination on programme approval, accreditation, curriculum, staffing and quality assurance to minimise regulatory confusion.
- 6) Develop ICT infrastructure: Colleges should invest in reliable internet connectivity, computers, electronic libraries, learning-management systems and digital academic-record systems.
- 7) Promote research and innovation: Government and College management should provide research grants, databases, research facilities and professional-development opportunities to strengthen the research capacity of lecturers and students.
- 8) Harmonise curricula: Appropriate mechanisms should be developed to ensure effective coordination between NCE and Bachelor's degree curricula while avoiding unnecessary duplication of courses.
- 9) Strengthen stakeholder communication: The Federal Ministry of Education, NCCE, NUC, JAMB, TETFund, governing councils, College management, lecturers and students should maintain effective communication concerning policy implementation.
- 10) Strengthen monitoring and supervision: Regular supervision should be conducted to assess staffing, infrastructure, curriculum implementation, student enrolment, research activities and overall programme quality.
- 11) Manage institutional workload: Colleges should develop appropriate staffing and workload policies to prevent excessive demands on lecturers and administrative personnel. Promote institutional quality assurance: Every College implementing the Dual Mandate should maintain an effective internal quality-assurance mechanism that identifies problems early and ensures that corrective measures are implemented.

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