
RESTRUCTURING THE NCE BUSINESS EDUCATION CURRICULUM FOR NATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

Restructuring the NCE Business Education curriculum for National Transformation is a survey study, aimed at exposing the shortcomings of the current NCE business education minimum standards. The study used four (4) research questions and one null hypothesis as guide. The population for the study was lecturers and NCE III students of business education of Federal College of Education, Obudu, Cross River State. The results of the study revealed among other things that, the students find it difficult to cope with the large number of courses especially in NCE III second semester. The results also show that there is need to restructure the curriculum. Conclusions were drawn based on the results and recommendations made.

INTRODUCTION

The current National Certificate in Education (NCE) minimum standards came into operation in 2008. This new curriculum places a very heavy burden on learners in the field of Business Education. With the large number of courses to be taken, especially, in second semester of final year, students' performance is likely to be poor, which is inimical to the contribution of business education to the current National transformation agenda. The tendency for students to lose focus is high as NCE III are expected to register and pass a minimum of eighteen (18) courses, a weight of not less than 33 credit hours for accounting option, and sixteen courses for secretarial option within one semester! While maximum includes all carried over courses, (for those affected), besides writing of final year project symbolically, the student becomes a jack of all trades and master of none. Under these circumstances, effective learning cannot be facilitated, when the learner is choked with too much that is to be learnt within a short period. The need to plan on spanning the learning programme cannot be overemphasized now as its relevance to learning has been underscored. Imagine a situation where by a student/learner has twenty three (23) courses (including carried over courses) to be taken per semester. Does this create room for effective learning even if teaching is effectively carried out? Now, let us ask another simple question, how can a learner plan a personal reading time table, which is necessary for revision? More over, some of the courses included in the curriculum are becoming outdated and out modelled, especially with new developments in technology. A course like shorthand appears to have lost relevance in current business and office settings. The heavy reliance on typewriting as the major means of processing official documents has greatly reduced with new inventions in office and business machines, including computers. Yet business education students are made to mandatorily take these courses from NCE I to NCE III. There is an urgent need for a restructure of the NCE Business education curriculum to fit in with the current realities.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Curriculum is defined as a group of courses or planned experiences in proper sequence of topics designed to prepare an individual for efficient service in a specific vocation, it is the offering of a socially valued knowledge, skills and attitudes that is made available to students through a variety of arrangements in schools, colleges or the universities or other arrangements (Njoku, 1997, in Adebayo & Lawal, 2011). And according to Cooky-Gam (1989, in Ogwo 1996), curriculum is generally considered as a group of prescribed courses or sequence of subjects required for certification. In sum curriculum could be referred to as all the consciously planned programmes of and for the school, for the education of the child (Ogwo, 1996). If curriculum is a consciously planned programme, and not just a haphazardly arrangement, it means that it must be designed to accomplish the desired objectives both in the short and long run. The curriculum must take into cognisance the learner's previous background, the learning environment, both internal and external. The curriculum designed in our country does not seem to take these factors into consideration. This assertion is supported by Fafunwa (1992, in Adebayo and Lawal, 2011) who said, curriculum in the third world countries suffers some set backs, it is not dynamic, it is static and a static curriculum is a dying curriculum. This is underscored by the fact that even when attempts are made to enhance the dynamism of the curriculum, certain bureaucratic bottlenecks are introduced to eliminate the good intentions.

For instance, the present NCE minimum standard was reviewed in 2006. Yet, participants at the review on Business Education, which was held at FCE (T) Asaba, Delta State, were made to assent to a stereo typed manuscript presented by NCCE, (National Commission for Colleges of Education) without a single opportunity to alter, add, debate on or correct anything in the document, which is the current NCCE minimum standards in use today. Ultimately, curriculum in Nigeria does not respond to changes, most especially in the areas of technological advancement. This often brings negative results of not equipping the graduates in tertiary institutions with the skills needed to be able to stand on their own. Ayeni (2000, in Chukwugbo, 2011) argued that three sources of feedback concerning any curriculum should be from current students, graduates/products of the curriculum and employers of such graduates for systematic, rational and acceptable restructure. This calls for a restructuring of the business education curriculum, especially at NCE level.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Learning is a tasking and tedious activity, especially the formalized school system of learning. Though the current NCE programme is new and has not graduated students yet, its potential failure to achieve desirable results can be predicated with a high degree of certainty! In the new programme, students are to take in second semester of NCE III, ten (10) business courses whose weight is 2-3 credit hours and five (5) education and three (3) GSE courses (for accounting option); or eight (8) business courses, whose weight is between 2-6 credit hours, five (5) education and, three (3) GSE courses. This includes research project which the students undertake also in the second semester. For students with carried over courses, when added to the regular NCE III courses they have to register, the number goes to as high as 22 or 23 courses, as the case may be.

Table 1: Number of courses taken by Business Education Students per Semester

Year of study	Semester	Bus.Edu courses	Education Courses	GSE Courses	Total/ Semester	Credit hrs/Semester
I	First	8	4	3	15	23
I	Second	8	4	4	16	25
II	First	8	5	3	16	26
II	Second	7	5	4	16	26
III	First	-	1(TP)	-	1	6
III	Second	10(8)	5	3	18(16)	36

Source: NCE Minimum standards (2008)

Table 1 above shows that the students take eighteen (18) courses (weighing 34 credit hours) in NCE III second semester for accounting option, or sixteen (16) courses (weighing 36 credit hours) for secretarial option. It is also interesting to note that some of the secretarial courses like shorthand and word processing carry a credit load of 5 and 6 hours respectively. This obviously amounts to over loading the students excessively, which portends very high danger of poor performance both at school, in exams and at home or in the place of work. There is every need for restructuring. This problem can be attributable to the fact that, teaching practice which used to be three months has been expanded by the minimum standards, to six months, thus eliminating first semester of course work for NCE III students. More over, some of the courses being offered are out dated, out modelled and not in tandem with current realities. These courses include shorthand, for instance, has little usefulness in offices and other life endeavours given the advances in office technology. Similarly, typing with manual typewriters has lost relevance with the availability of new business and office machines, like computers etc.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study was aimed at;

1. Finding out if students are able to cope with the large number of courses in NCE III second semester;
2. Find out if lecturers easily cope with implementation of the new NCE business education programme;
3. Find out if short hand and typewriting courses have relevance in business education curriculum today;
4. Establish if the NCE business education curriculum need to be restructured.

Research Questions

1. How do students/learners of Business education cope with the large number of courses to be taken in NCE III second semester?
2. Do lecturers easily cope with implementation of the new NCE programme?
3. Do short hand and typewriting courses have relevance in business education curriculum today?
4. Is there need to restructure the NCE business education curriculum?

Research Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was formulated for testing at 0.05 level of significance;

1. There is no significant difference between Lecturer’s views and students’ views on the need to restructure the NCE business education curriculum.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study covers all lecturers and NCE III students of Business education department of Federal College of Education Obudu, Cross River State.

METHODS

The study is a survey design aimed at establishing the need for restructuring the NCE business education curriculum. All the 23 lecturers and the total student population of NCE III business education, which is 450 were used for the study. Simple random sampling was used to obtain a sample of 10 lecturers and 132 students who formed the respondents. Two instruments were used for data collection; a 19 item questionnaire for Lecturers, and a 24 item questionnaire for students structured by the researcher , based on the five point Likert rating scale. They were validated by two lecturers of business education department of FCE Obudu. Cronbach alpha reliability test was used to determine the internal consistency of the instruments. Reliability coefficients of 0.85 and 0.83 were obtained respectively, which were high enough to confirm the reliability of the instruments. Four research questions guided the study. One null hypothesis was formulated by the researcher and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The results were presented in tables according to the research questions, using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. Any item with a mean score of 3.50 and above was accepted, while a mean score of 3.49 and below was rejected. One tailed T-test inferential statistic was used in analysing the hypotheses.

Analysis/Results

The responses from both Lecturers and students are presented in tables under the various research questions.

Table 1

How do students/learners of business education cope with the large number of courses to be taken in NCE III second semester?

S/N	ITEMS (LECTURERS’ QUESTIONNAIRE)	X	X	SD	D
1	NCE Business Education programme is over loaded with too many courses	4.4		0.5	A
2	NCE III students finding it difficult to cope with the large number of courses in second semester	4.48		0.71	A
3	Students submitting assessments and take home assignments on schedule	3.25		1.57	R
4	Students not always having time to participate in sports and other extra curricular activities	4.34		0.98	A
	(STUDENTS’ QUESTIONNAIRE)				
1.	Business education offers the highest number of courses per semester	3.92		0.57	A
2	The courses students offer are too many	4.36		0.63	A
3.	Too many NCE III second semester courses	4.83		0.39	A
4.	Too many lectures held every day because of large number of courses	4.0		0.71	A

5	Many courses offered create confusion for students	4.17	0.59	A
6	Because of too many courses private revision is difficult	4.02	0.48	A
7	Students not having time to participate in sports and other extra curricular activities	4.00	0.71	A
8.	Students not understanding what is been taught	3.06	1.67	R

From table 1, all items were accepted, except item 3 of Teachers' questionnaire and item 8 of Students questionnaire, which were rejected. This means that students/learners of business education find it difficult to cope with the large number of courses in NCE III second semester.

Table 2

Do lecturers easily cope with implementation of the new NCE programme.

S/N	ITEMS (LECTURERS' QUESTIONNAIRE)	X	SD	D
5	Students finding it difficult to cope with the large number of courses	4.28	0.78	A
6	The current NCE programme is bound to fail to achieve the desired results	3.2	1.56	R
7	The lecture time table providing enough time for lecturers in each course	3.1	1.70	R
8	Lecturers not always having time to rest due to excess workload	3.9	0.67	A
	STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE			
9	Because of too many courses, practical classes are not held regularly	4.30	1.13	A
10	Teachers giving assignments and tests in all courses	4.30	1.14	A
11	Teachers marking and returning to the students the assessment scripts promptly.	2.45	1.72	R

From table 2, one item of teachers' questionnaire was accepted, while 2 items were rejected. All items of students' questionnaire were accepted, while one item was rejected. This means that teachers find implementation of the new NCE programme difficult.

TABLE 3

Do shorthand and typewriting courses have relevance in business education curriculum today?

S/N	ITEMS (LECTURERS' QUESTIONNAIRE)	X	SD	D
9	Shorthand courses are still relevant to business education programme	2.6	1.78	R
10	Shorthand adds value to business education	3.0	1.55	R
11.	Shorthand is still useful in offices and other life endeavours	2.5	1.85	R
12	Typewriting courses are still relevant to business education programme	3.9	0.52	A
13	Typewriting adds value to business education	3.8	0.65	A
14	Typewriting enhances understanding of other business courses	3.5	0.93	A
15	Typewriting enhances students' understanding of computer education	4.3	0.68	A
	STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE			
12	Shorthand course are simple to understand	1.77	2.28	R
13	Shorthand courses enhance students' understanding of business education	2.7	1.88	R
14	Shorthand skills will be very useful in one's working life	3.82	0.72	A
15	Typewriting courses are easy to understand	3.96	1.12	A
16	Typewriting courses enhance the understanding of business education	4.52	0.69	A
17	Typewriting courses enhance the study of computer skills	4.41	0.76	A
18	Typewriting skills being useful in the working life of the individual	4.08	0.95	A

From table 3, four items of teachers' questionnaire were accepted, while three were rejected. And five items of students' questionnaire were accepted while two were rejected. The result shows that shorthand is not relevant to business education curriculum today, but typewriting skills are still relevant.

TABLE 4

Is there need to restructure the NCE business education curriculum?

S/N	ITEMS (LECTURERS' QUESTIONNAIRE)	X	SD	D
16	The NCE business education programme to be restructured	4.10	0.94	A
17	Students' teaching practice exercise for six months is too long	3.5	0.75	A
18	Students should take only 3 months for Teaching Practice exercise	2.9	1.63	R
19	Students gain enough teaching experience after 3 months	2.6	1.77	R
	STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE			
19	Shorthand courses should be removed from NCE Business education programme	2.91	1.88	R
20	Typewriting courses should be removed from business education programme	1.77	2.32	R
21	Six months for Teaching Practice is too long	3.04	1.55	R
22	Teaching Practice should last for 3 months only	2.61	1.71	R
23	The number of courses taken by business students should be reduced.	4.38	0.65	A
24	The NCE Business Education Programme should be restructured.	4.42	0.76	A

From table 4, only three items were accepted while six items were rejected. The results show that the NCE business education curriculum needs restructuring.

Hypothesis Testing

The null hypothesis was accepted at 0.05 level of significance.

TABLE 5

Result of t-test analysis of lecturers and students' views on the need to restructure the NCE business education curriculum.

Respondents	N	X	S ²	DF	t-cai	t-crit	Decision
Lectures	10	4.16	0.97				
				140	0.55	1.96	Accept
Students	132	4.42	0.87				

Table 5 shows that the t-calculated value is 0.35 while t-critical value is 1.96 at 0.05 level of significant. As the t-calculated value is less than t-critical value, the null hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of lecturers and students on the need to restructure the NCE Business Education curriculum.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of the study show that students find it difficult to cope with the NCE business education curriculum, and that teachers are also not comfortable with implementing it. The results also indicate that shorthand courses are no longer relevant today, thus bringing to the fore Adebayo and Lawal's (2011) arguments that educational sub-sector should be conscious of changing technology so that they can adapt these changes to the training of the graduates in-training so that they will not be living in the past. Finally,

results show that the NCE business education curriculum needs to be restructured. This agrees with Chukwugbo (2011) that “restructuring an educational programme should be called for when an existing educational programme is lacking in some aspects”.

CONCLUSION

The need for periodic and timely review of education curriculum can no longer be overemphasized. Such reviews should be done taking into cognisance the learners previous knowledge and abilities, and above all, the prevailing technological, sociological and economic situation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The study could be carried out in other Colleges of Education within the country.
- The curriculum should be should be restructured bearing in mind the current needs of the society vis-à-vis the level of advances in office and business technology.
- Important stakeholders should be involved in the review/restructuring process.

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