

Original Research Article

Policy, Governance, and Funding Challenges of Implementing the Mandate in Colleges of Education in Nigeria

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Abstract: This paper critically examines the policy, governance, and funding challenges confronting the implementation of mandates in Colleges of Education (COEs) in Nigeria. Drawing on secondary data from policy documents, scholarly literature, and reports from governmental and international agencies, the study adopts a qualitative analytical approach to investigate the systemic barriers that hinder the effective execution of statutory mandates assigned to these institutions. The findings reveal that inadequate funding, weak institutional governance, bureaucratic inefficiencies, political interference, and poor policy coordination constitute the primary obstacles to mandate implementation. The paper argues that while successive governments have formulated laudable educational policies, the persistent gap between policy formulation and practical implementation remains a critical challenge. Recommendations include increased budgetary allocation, strengthened institutional autonomy, enhanced inter-agency coordination, and the establishment of robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to ensure accountability in mandate execution.

Keywords: Colleges of Education, Policy Implementation, Governance, Funding, Nigeria, Teacher Education, Mandate Execution

Introduction

Colleges of Education (COEs) in Nigeria represent a critical component of the nation's tertiary education system, primarily responsible for training teachers for the basic education sub-sector. Established under various legislative frameworks, these institutions are mandated to produce qualified teachers equipped with the pedagogical skills and content knowledge necessary for effective classroom delivery. The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), established by Act No. 13 of 1989 (as amended), serves as the regulatory body responsible for setting minimum standards, accrediting programs, and ensuring quality assurance across all COEs in Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1989).

Despite the strategic importance of COEs in national development, the implementation of their statutory mandates has been fraught with significant challenges. These challenges span across policy formulation and execution, institutional governance structures, and financial resource mobilization and management. The Nigerian education sector has consistently grappled with underfunding, with budgetary allocations falling significantly below the UNESCO-recommended benchmark of 26% of the national budget (UNESCO, 2021). This chronic underfunding has particularly affected teacher education institutions, limiting their capacity to deliver quality programs and fulfill their mandates effectively.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the policy, governance, and funding challenges that impede the implementation of mandates in Colleges of Education in Nigeria. By examining these interrelated challenges, the paper seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on educational reform and provide evidence-based recommendations for improving the effectiveness of teacher education institutions in Nigeria.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Conceptual Clarifications

Policy Implementation: refers to the process by which policies, programs, and mandates articulated by government or regulatory bodies are translated into practical actions and outcomes. In the context of education, policy implementation encompasses all activities undertaken by institutions to give effect to statutory provisions, regulatory standards, and government directives (Ogunode & Adah, 2020).

Governance in educational institutions refers to the structures, processes, and mechanisms through which institutions are directed, controlled, and held accountable. Effective governance encompasses decision-making frameworks, administrative leadership, stakeholder participation, and accountability mechanisms (Balogun, 1988).

Funding refers to the financial resources available to educational institutions for the execution of their mandates. This includes government appropriations, internally generated revenues, grants, and other forms of financial support necessary for institutional operations.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the **Implementation Theory** propounded by Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), which posits that the gap between policy intent and policy outcome is often caused by a series of decision points where implementation can break down. The theory emphasizes that policy implementation is not a linear process but involves complex interactions among multiple actors, institutions, and contextual factors. This framework is particularly relevant for analyzing the challenges of mandate implementation in Nigerian COEs, where multiple stakeholders, bureaucratic procedures, and resource constraints intersect to create implementation gaps.

Additionally, the **Resource Dependence Theory** (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) provides a useful lens for understanding how funding challenges affect institutional capacity to implement mandates. The theory suggests that organizations depend on external resources for survival and effectiveness, and their autonomy and performance are shaped by their ability to secure and manage these resources.

Policy Framework for Colleges of Education in Nigeria

Legislative and Regulatory Framework

The governance of Colleges of Education in Nigeria is anchored on several legislative instruments and policy documents. The **Colleges of Education Act** provides the foundational legal framework for the establishment, management, and operation of these institutions. The Act delineates the powers and functions of the Governing Councils, the roles of academic and administrative staff, and the relationship between the institutions and the Federal Ministry of Education.

The National Policy on Education (NPE), first promulgated in 1977 and subsequently revised in 1981, 1998, 2004, and 2013, provides the overarching policy direction for all levels of education in Nigeria, including teacher education. The NPE emphasizes the importance of teacher quality and mandates that all teachers in the basic education sub-sector must possess a Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) as the minimum qualification (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

The **NCCE Act** empowers the Commission to:

- Set minimum standards for all academic programs and qualifications to be awarded in Colleges of Education
- Approve all courses and programs leading to the award of certificates in Colleges of Education
- Accredite all Colleges of Education and their courses
- Ensure quality assurance in Colleges of Education
- Advise the Federal and State Governments on teacher education policies

Mandates of Colleges of Education

The statutory mandates of Colleges of Education in Nigeria include:

Teacher Preparation: Training and producing qualified teachers with the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) for primary schools and junior secondary schools.

Curriculum Implementation: Delivering curricula approved by the NCCE that integrate both content knowledge and pedagogical skills.

Research and Development: Conducting research in education and related fields to contribute to knowledge and improve teaching practice.

Community Service: Engaging in community development activities and providing extension services to schools and communities.

Professional Development: Offering in-service training and continuous professional development programs for practicing teachers.

Quality Assurance: Maintaining standards in teacher education and ensuring that graduates meet the minimum competencies required for effective teaching.

Policy Challenges in Mandate Implementation

Policy Instability and Inconsistency

One of the most significant challenges facing the implementation of mandates in Nigerian COEs is the instability and inconsistency of educational policies. Successive governments have introduced policy changes without adequate consideration for continuity and sustainability. Akinbi (2022) notes that the major challenge in Nigerian education lies not in policy formulation but in execution and implementation. Policies are often well-articulated on paper but fail to translate into concrete actions due to frequent changes in government and shifting political priorities.

The 2007 tertiary education reform, which proposed the merger of Colleges of Education and Polytechnics with universities, exemplifies this policy instability. The reform was introduced without adequate consultation with stakeholders, including academic boards and senates of the affected institutions (CICE, 2014). This top-down approach to policymaking created uncertainty, disrupted institutional planning, and undermined the capacity of COEs to fulfill their mandates.

Weak Policy Coordination

The implementation of mandates in COEs is further complicated by weak coordination among the multiple agencies responsible for teacher education. The Federal Ministry of Education, the National Commission for Colleges of Education, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), and State Ministries of Education all have overlapping responsibilities in teacher education policy and implementation. This multiplicity of agencies often leads to conflicting directives, duplication of efforts, and accountability gaps.

Ogunode and Adah (2020) identified challenges in the relationship between policy designers and implementers as a critical issue in educational policy implementation in Nigeria. The disconnect between federal policy directives and state-level implementation creates implementation gaps that undermine the effectiveness of teacher education programs.

Inadequate Policy Monitoring and Evaluation

The absence of robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks constitutes another major policy challenge. While policies mandate certain outcomes, there are often insufficient mechanisms for tracking progress, assessing impact, and holding institutions accountable for performance. The lack of systematic post-legislative scrutiny means that policy gaps persist unaddressed, reducing the effectiveness of educational mandates (Akinbi, 2026).

Governance Challenges in Mandate Implementation

Weak Institutional Autonomy

Colleges of Education in Nigeria operate under significant government control, which limits their institutional autonomy and capacity for self-governance. Governing Councils, which are statutorily responsible for policy direction and oversight, are often appointed by the Federal Government and may lack the independence to make decisions in the best interest of the institutions. Political interference in the appointment of principal officers, including Provosts and Registrars, further undermines institutional autonomy and professional governance.

Bureaucratic Inefficiency

The bureaucratic structures within COEs and their supervising ministries are characterized by inefficiency, red tape, and slow decision-making processes. Administrative bottlenecks delay the approval of programs, the procurement of essential resources, and the implementation of strategic initiatives. This bureaucratic inertia is compounded by weak institutional capacity, with many administrative staff lacking the requisite skills and training for effective educational management.

Leadership and Management Deficiencies

Effective governance requires competent leadership and management. However, many COEs suffer from leadership deficiencies arising from the appointment of unqualified or politically motivated administrators. Research indicates that policies regarding the hiring and training of administrators are often poorly implemented, resulting in unqualified individuals holding leadership positions (Ayoko, 2024). This, in turn, affects institutional management and the overall learning environment.

Corruption and Accountability Deficits

Corruption remains a pervasive challenge in the governance of educational institutions in Nigeria. The lack of transparency in financial management, procurement processes, and admissions undermines institutional integrity and diverts resources from core mandate activities. The absence of robust accountability mechanisms means that instances of mismanagement often go unpunished, creating a culture of impunity that erodes public trust in these institutions (Omeire & Omerie, cited in Dode, 2022).

Stakeholder Engagement Deficits

Effective governance requires meaningful engagement with stakeholders, including academic staff, students, alumni, and community members. However, stakeholder consultations in Nigerian COEs are often tokenistic, with limited follow-through on incorporating feedback into institutional policies and programs. The top-down nature of decision-making excludes critical voices and reduces the legitimacy and effectiveness of governance processes.

Funding Challenges in Mandate Implementation

Inadequate Government Funding

The most critical challenge facing Colleges of Education in Nigeria is inadequate funding. Government budgetary allocations to the education sector have consistently fallen below the UNESCO recommendation of 26% of the national budget. In 2019, education spending accounted for only about 7% of the national budget (Okwuokei, 2023). This chronic underfunding has severe implications for COEs, limiting their ability to maintain infrastructure, procure instructional materials, and recruit qualified staff.

The Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), established under the Education Tax Act, provides supplementary funding for infrastructure and research in tertiary institutions. However, the distribution of TETFund resources among universities, polytechnics, and Colleges of Education often disadvantages the latter, which receive smaller allocations relative to their needs.

Poor Resource Management

Beyond the issue of inadequate funding, many COEs struggle with poor resource management and utilization. Weak financial management systems, lack of transparency in budgeting, and inefficient procurement processes result in the suboptimal use of available resources. The absence of performance-based budgeting means that funds are not always allocated to priority areas that directly support mandate implementation.

Limited Internally Generated Revenues

Colleges of Education have limited capacity to generate internal revenues to supplement government funding. Low tuition fees, constrained by government policy to ensure accessibility, combined with limited commercial activities, mean that institutions remain heavily dependent on government subventions. This dependency creates vulnerability to government funding fluctuations and policy changes.

Infrastructure Decay

Years of underfunding have resulted in significant infrastructure decay across COEs. Many institutions lack adequate classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and ICT facilities necessary for effective teacher education. The poor state of infrastructure not only undermines the quality of teaching and learning but also affects the capacity of institutions to admit more students and expand program offerings.

Staff Welfare and Motivation

Inadequate funding directly affects staff welfare and motivation. Low salaries, irregular payment of emoluments, and poor working conditions contribute to low morale among academic and non-academic staff. This, in turn, affects productivity, staff retention, and the overall quality of teacher education programs. The brain drain of qualified lecturers to better-funded institutions, both within and outside Nigeria, further depletes the human resource base of COEs.

Interplay of Policy, Governance, and Funding Challenges

The challenges facing mandate implementation in Nigerian COEs are not isolated but are deeply interconnected. Policy instability creates governance uncertainty, which in turn affects resource planning and management. Weak governance structures facilitate corruption and mismanagement of limited resources, while inadequate funding undermines the capacity of institutions to implement policies and maintain effective governance systems.

This vicious cycle is perpetuated by systemic governance challenges at the national level, including political instability, bureaucratic inefficiency, and weak accountability mechanisms (Akinbi, 2026). The cumulative effect is a persistent implementation gap that undermines the capacity of COEs to fulfill their statutory mandates and contribute to national development.

Implications for Teacher Education Quality

The policy, governance, and funding challenges discussed above have profound implications for the quality of teacher education in Nigeria. The production of underqualified teachers, outdated curricula, poor instructional delivery, and inadequate practical training all contribute to the declining quality of basic education. Since no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers, the challenges facing COEs have ripple effects across the entire education sector, affecting learning outcomes and national development.

Research has shown that there are huge gaps in teachers' content knowledge across all subjects and in the general quality of teachers produced by Nigerian teacher education institutions (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023). This quality deficit undermines the attainment of educational goals and the realization of human capital development objectives.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis presented in this paper, the following recommendations are proposed to address the policy, governance, and funding challenges facing Colleges of Education in Nigeria:

Policy Recommendations

Ensure Policy Stability and Continuity: Educational policies should be insulated from political changes through legislative entrenchment and multi-stakeholder

consensus-building. This will reduce policy instability and create a stable environment for long-term planning and implementation.

Strengthen Policy Coordination: The Federal Ministry of Education should establish a clear coordination framework that delineates the roles and responsibilities of the NCCE, UBEC, and other agencies involved in teacher education. This will reduce duplication, eliminate conflicting directives, and improve policy coherence.

Develop Robust Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks: A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system should be established to track the implementation of mandates in COEs. This should include clear performance indicators, regular reporting requirements, and independent verification mechanisms.

Enhance Stakeholder Consultation: Policymaking processes should incorporate meaningful consultation with academic staff, students, and other stakeholders. This will improve policy relevance, enhance buy-in, and facilitate smoother implementation.

Governance Recommendations

Strengthen Institutional Autonomy: Governing Councils should be granted greater autonomy in institutional management, including the appointment of principal officers and the determination of academic programs, subject to NCCE standards.

Build Administrative Capacity: Investments should be made in training and capacity building for administrative staff in areas such as financial management, procurement, strategic planning, and educational leadership.

Strengthen Accountability Mechanisms: Transparent financial management systems, independent audits, and anti-corruption measures should be institutionalized to promote accountability and reduce mismanagement.

Promote Participatory Governance: Mechanisms for meaningful stakeholder participation in institutional governance should be established, including staff and student representation on key decision-making bodies.

Funding Recommendations

Increase Budgetary Allocation: The Federal and State Governments should increase budgetary allocations to education, with specific provisions for teacher education institutions. Efforts should be made to meet the UNESCO benchmark of 26% of the national budget for education.

Improve Resource Utilization: COEs should be supported to develop efficient financial management systems and performance-based budgeting practices that prioritize mandate-critical activities.

Diversify Funding Sources: Institutions should be encouraged and supported to develop alternative revenue streams, including public-private partnerships, consultancy services, and endowment funds.

Enhance TETFund Support: The TETFund allocation formula should be reviewed to ensure equitable distribution of resources among universities, polytechnics, and Colleges of Education, with special consideration for the infrastructure and equipment needs of teacher education institutions.

Invest in Staff Welfare: Competitive remuneration packages, regular payment of salaries, and improved working conditions should be prioritized to attract and retain qualified academic staff.

Conclusion

The implementation of mandates in Colleges of Education in Nigeria is confronted by a complex web of policy, governance, and funding challenges that are deeply rooted in systemic governance deficits at both institutional and national levels. While successive governments have articulated visionary policies for teacher education, the persistent gap between policy intent and implementation outcomes remains a critical obstacle to the effectiveness of these institutions.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach that combines increased and sustained funding, strengthened institutional governance, policy stability, and enhanced accountability mechanisms. The future of teacher education in Nigeria—and by extension, the quality of basic education—depends on the political will to prioritize educational investment and the institutional capacity to translate policy commitments into tangible outcomes.

As Nigeria strives to achieve its educational and development goals, the reform of Colleges of Education must be treated as a national priority. Only through concerted efforts to address the policy, governance, and funding challenges can these institutions fulfill their mandates and contribute to the production of the quality teachers needed for national development.

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