# CHAPTER ONE

**BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

## 1.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of this thesis, whose aim is to draw on student teachers’ experiences to explore how the teacher education system mediates effective teacher outcome in Nigeria. It adopted activity theory to understand how the process of teacher education could facilitate or hinder quality teacher production. This chapter first describes the education and literacy situation in Nigeria; this sets the context for understanding the rationale and research questions. The following section introduces the researcher and explains the rationale for the research. It then outlines the research aim and research questions; and outlines the significance of the study. The chapter subsequently highlights the research design, research methodology as well as research methods and introduces the research participants. This is followed by an explanation of the scope of the study and an outline of areas of knowledge to which this thesis hopes to contribute. Lastly, the overall structure of this thesis is presented for an understanding of the thesis layout.

## 1.2. Education and Literacy in Nigeria

Education represents the hopes, dreams and aspirations of children, families, communities and nations around the world (UNESCO, 2015, p.3). This is reflected in the Nigeria’s philosophy of education which presents ‘education as an instrument for national development and as a means of fostering the worth and development of the individual’ (FRN, 2004, p.7). As a result, education is geared towards the wholesome ‘development and empowerment of individuals…[through] the provision of equal access to educational opportunities’ (FRN, 2004, p.7). Despite this, the national literacy survey conducted in 2010 by the National Bureau of Statistics in Nigeria estimated the youth and adult literacy rate at 56.9 percent of the youth and adult population. The National Bureau of statistics indicated that in 2010, ‘close to three million children aged six to 14 years had never attended any school in Nigeria’; this represents 8.1% of the population of children within the age group (NBS, 2015, p.4). In 2012, UNESCO noted the number of out-f-school children Nigeria has increased to about seven million (p.1). Table 1 below gives further details about education and literacy in Nigeria.

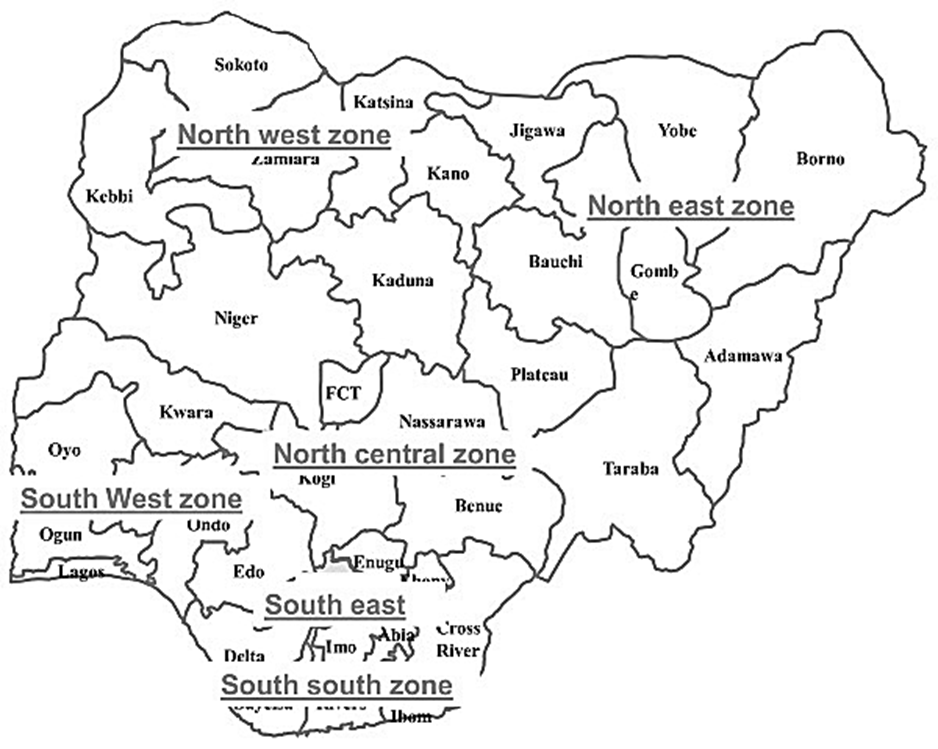
Table 1: Some basic education and literacy information about Nigeria

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| --- | --- |
| **Education and literacy information** | **Approximate rate** |
| Percentage net primary school attendance as at 2014 | 68 |
| Percentage net Secondary school attendance as at 2014 | 57.40 |
| Percentage primary school completion rate as at 2014 | 74 |
| Percentage literacy rate of 15 -24 years old women as at 2014 | 66.70 |
| Student enrolment as at 2012 | 37,911,596 |
| Female to male student enrolment ratio | 4.5:1 |
| Average percentage increase in male student enrolment between 2010 and 2012 | 26.42 |
| Increase in percentage female student enrolment between 2010 and 2012 | 4.13 |
| Percentage population of school attendance in urban areas in 2010 | 91.4 |
| Percentage population of school attendance in urban areas in 2010 | 80.7 |
| Percentage of females’ school attendance rate[[1]](#footnote-1) | 81.2 |
| Percentage of males’ school attendance rate | 88.1 |

**Source: National Bureau of Statistics 2015**

It is important to note that Nigeria is a federated nation. It comprises of 36 states including Abuja, which is the federal capital of Nigeria (Figure 1) and a total of seven hundred and seventy four local government area (Adeyemi, 2012; Unesco-ibe, 2010). The thirty-six states are grouped into six Geographical zones (Figure 1) namely: south-west, south-east, north-west, north-east, north-central and south-south, which were created in the 1990s by the then president, General Ibrahim Babaginda. The geographical zones ‘are an explicit crosscutting of ethnic and religious lines so that the ethnoreligious conflicts that may arise [within the communities] can be handled at the local and state levels before they become national crises’ (Paden, 2004, p.25). The Nigerian population is estimated currently at over 150 million with about thirty nine percent being children below fifteen years of age.

Figure 1: Map showing the six geographical zones in Nigeria and their associated states



## 1.3. The researcher: Personal and professional experience

My personal experience as both a primary teacher and a student teacher defines my rationale for undertaking this research. I worked as a primary school teacher at a low cost private primary school in Anambra State Nigeria from 2001-2003. Low cost private schools are those individually owned schools that are neither registered nor recognized by the government (Umar, 2008). They cater for children from poor homes and do not charge exorbitant fees compared to the registered private schools (Tooley, 2005). Umar (2008) stated that the low cost private schools are gaining attention as parents lose trust and interest in public schools due to the ‘neglect and collapse of public primary schools in Nigeria (p.92). As a primary school teacher, I was neither trained nor qualified. I got the teaching job immediately after my secondary education, as I was not able to secure immediate admission to study medial laboratory science. This was due to my inability to obtain a credit score in chemistry and physics. While on the job, I got admission to study a degree in religion education at Abia State University, Uturu. After my graduation, I returned to primary school teaching but could not continue as I felt that my teaching skills had not improved.

On reflecting on my teacher training experience, I felt something was missing. The training was not robust enough to prepare me for the real classroom teaching experience. During my training days at the university, teaching practice was organized in block of six weeks in the second semester of my second and third year. The courses were known as teaching practice I in second year and teaching practice II in third year and were offered simultaneously with other courses (see figure 2). During Teaching Practice I, I only visited my cooperative school just twice throughout the six weeks of the teaching practicum.

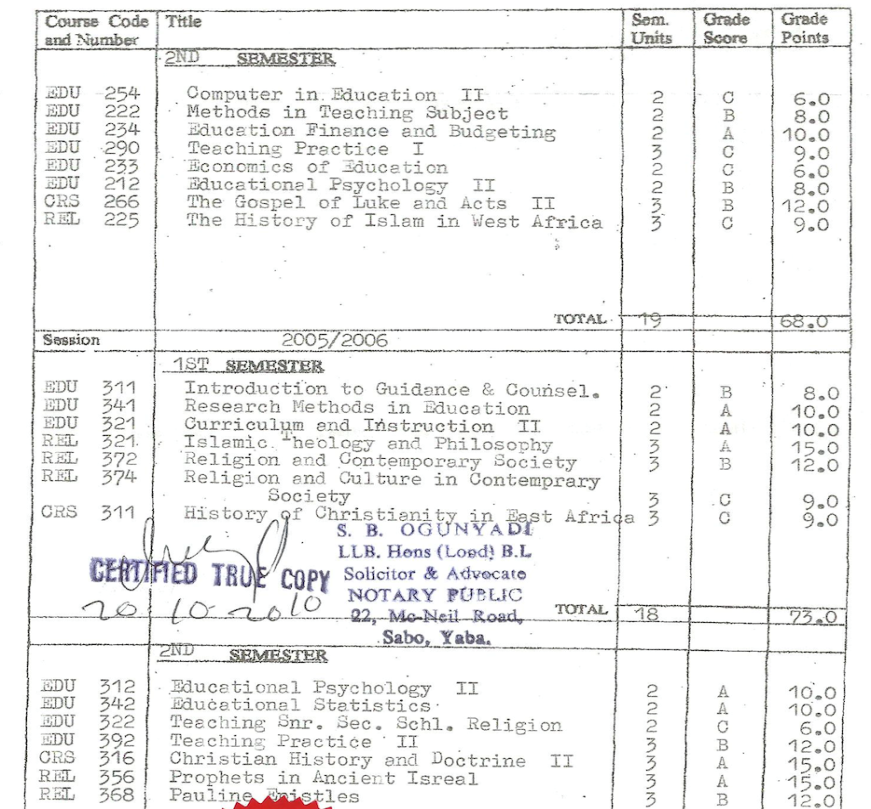
The first visit was when we registered with the cooperative school as student teachers and the second visit was when I signed off. I remember contributing three thousand naira towards supervisory ‘honorarium’ as requested by the supervisor through our team leader. Although, this was meant to cover his feeding and logistics; in reality, it secured my passing of the teaching practice course which was a three unit course. I passed the teaching practice course without being supervised; I also did not prepare any lesson note nor did any classroom teaching during this exercise. During Teaching Practice II, I was posted to a secondary school in Isuikwuato town. This high school is about 17.1 km away from the university. This would have cost us lots of time and money. Couple with the demand on us to attend normal lectures while on teaching practice, we had a mutual agreement with the supervisor and the head teacher at the cooperating school through our cohort leader. We only turned up when he informed us of his plan to visit us at the school.

For the college-based experience, the method classes were always overcrowded; hence, the lectures took place in big auditoriums where the lecturer can use the microphones. The problem with this is that only students that sat close to the front and close to the speakers could hear what the lecturer is saying. Those at the back could hardly hear or understand anything. In summary, I did not have the opportunity to experience what can be perceived as ‘effective teaching’. The course, Methods in Teaching was meant to teach us the techniques of teaching ‘religion’ in secondary school; however, the lecturer did not attend any of the lecture periods until two weeks to the exanimation. This was because at that time, he was completing his doctorate degree and did not want to give up the course for someone else to teach. He was also the Head of Department of Education/Religion at that time. When he turned up, he pointed us towards the questions he is likely to ask during the examination and asked us to read them up. It is noteworthy that I did not see anything wrong with my training while I was in the University. This is because; I believe that I am doing the course as a starting point and will gradually progress to my desired field. Unfortunately, this never happened; I rather found myself in the classroom, as I could not get any regular job with my degree certificate. I earned less salary compared to the salary of the teachers that studied abroad. These teachers were also involved in the day-to-day administration of the school as the school management believed that they have had international exposure, which can be valuable in maintaining the overall quality and value of the school.

At this point, I started thinking about studying abroad. The two main reasons for taking this decision were first, I wanted to gain international exposure, which can enhance my knowledge and earn me larger salary. Secondly, I wanted to contribute towards the improvement of the school system and probably establish my own school. This motivated me to seek admission to study a Master of Art in Educational Leadership and School Improvement at the University of Manchester. Although, I struggled at first to fit into the system, it dawned on me that teaching and learning activities at the University of Manchester (may be in the UK) is different from what I had experienced in Nigeria. I came to understand why those teachers who studied abroad were paid more salary than those of us that were locally trained.

As part of my MA study, I did a small scale study towards my MA dissertation which aimed to identify school impacts on student achievement, I noticed a remarkable disparity in success (measured by SSCE results in English and Mathematics) between private and public secondary students. This was further linked to the differences between school intake of public and private schools and to the difference between the availability and efficiency of administration and resources (human, financial and physical) in each school type. My interaction with most public school students also pointed towards the lack of quality primary education. And as an ex primary teacher, my interest geared towards doing a PhD study that can contribute towards the improvement of primary education in Nigeria This is because, I believe that if the quality of primary education is improved in Nigeria, the entire education system is likely to improve.

Figure 2: My transcript showing the courses offered simultaneously with teaching practice course



## 1.4. Rationale for the Study

This study was borne out of my ambition and curiosity to understand how primary education could be improved in Nigeria as discussed in section 1.3. I located my study in the teacher education system because of my experience as a primary teacher as well as my professional believe that the improvement of the education system should start from its workforce. This is also acknowledged in the fourth edition (2004) of the Nigeria Policy of Education thus: ‘since no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers, teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development’ (p. 39). Studies have also argued that the quality and effectiveness of primary school teachers in Nigeria are poor (Akinbote, 2007).

Over the years, the main drive for primary school improvement in Nigeria stemmed from the United Nation’s Education for All (EFA) initiative (Aluede, 2006). The EFA initiative mandated all leaders to invest in providing and improving the quality of primary education in their countries, by ensuring that basic education are available and accessible to all children (UNESCO, 2007). However, achieving this mandate in Nigeria is greatly constrained by a number of factors including shortage of quality teachers (section 2.3). At different points, state governors in Nigeria employed varied strategies to ensure that only qualified teachers are seen in every Nigerian primary classroom. Example of such activity was the one carried out by the governor of Kaduna state in October 2017. The governor explained: ‘we tested our 33,000 primary school teachers; we gave them primary four examinations and required they must get at least 75 percent but I am sad to announce that 66 percent of them failed to get the requirements’ (Punch Newspaper online, 10 October 2017). The governor highlighted that he intends to bring in ‘qualified primary school teachers [in order] to restore the dignity of education in the state’ (Punch Newspaper, 10 October 2017).

The above discussion suggests that the problem of teacher quality is well known in the Nigeria context; however, literature that focused on understanding why the quality of teachers appears to have declined over time is limited. Additionally, most of this literature is theoretically based (section 3.2) and those that are research based are mostly quantitative and do not offer opportunity for stakeholders’ – especially students’ – voice to be heard. Korthagen et al. (2006) noted that ‘all over the world, candidates’ voices are rarely used to ascertain whether their teacher education program achieves its goals; [and] If sustained inquiry and reflection are to be valued and embedded in a teacher education program; then candidates’ perspectives must be credited’ (p.1035).

Therefore, there is need to explore how primary school teachers are trained from the stakeholders’ (especially from student teachers) perspective. This includes, how student teachers perceive their pre-service training and how the teacher training activities shapes what and how student teachers learn. There is also need to understand how the teacher education community facilitates effective learning outcomes. Hence, this study is focused on understanding how the system of teacher education facilitates effective primary teacher production. This is important for teacher educators, school leaders and policy makers because in order to understand how student teachers’ learn, it is important to move beyond the classroom activities to examine how the social context and the individuals involved in the activity also affects how learning takes place.

## 1.5. Research Aims and questions

The aim of this study is to explore how the initial teacher education system in Nigeria mediates primary student teachers’ experience of learning to teach. This aim was explored mainly from the perspective of student teachers. Student teachers and some other stakeholders’ experience of learning to teach was drawn upon to identify the practices, policies and processes that mediates teacher outcome in Nigeria. The main research question that informed this research is

*How does the initial teacher education system in Nigeria mediate the primary student teachers’ experiences of learning to teach?*

To address this research question, three further sub questions were answered. These three sub questions informed the analysis of data.

* How do student teachers articulate their experiences of learning to teach?
* What dilemmas, dissonances and synergies emerged in their narratives about learning to teach?
* How do the policies, processes and practices of the colleges of education and primary school settings mediate student teachers experiences of learning to teach?

## 1.6. Research Design and methodology

The design of this study is broadly influenced by the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky. Sociocultural theory describes learning as a social process that occurs as ‘learners participate in a broad range of joint activities…from which they acquire new strategies and knowledge’ (Scott and Palincsar, 2006, p.351). From sociocultural perspective, the focus is on understanding how the social and cultural activities of a particular system mediates interaction within the system. Within this broad perspective, I adopted the activity theory as the lens through which learning to teach activity in Nigeria was examined. An activity theory framework was considered because it informed the understanding of the norms, rules, practices and processes of the initial teacher education system (Douglas, 2012). There are three variations of activity theory by Vygotsky, Leontiev and Engestrom respectively (section 4.3); but this study was taken from Engestrom’s modification of leontiev’s variation of activity theory. This version incorporated the mediating elements – the division of labour, community and rules – to Leontiev’s concept of an activity theory. It also presented an activity system in a triangular form (see figure 3).

Figure 3: Engestrom’s activity theory triangle

Outcome

Tool

Object

Subject

Rules

Community

Division of labour

In this study, the Primary Education Studies (PES) was conceptualised as an activity system where the training of primary teachers take place. This training activity takes place in two settings namely; the college of education and the co-operating schools (i.e. the primary schools). In this study, the subjects were the student teachers; the tools include the learning resources, the teaching and learning activities and assessment; and the object of the activity is to train student teachers to become teachers. The members of the community includes the lecturers, peers, pupils, co-operating teachers, head teachers and external supervisors. Division of labour indicated the responsibility of each member of the community; Rules of the activity related to the norms and rules (formal or informal) that regulates the teacher training activity. These activities are expected to produce quality primary teachers (i.e. outcome of the activity).

This study employed qualitative methods because of the researcher’s philosophical stance that ‘meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world (Merriam, et al., 2002, p.3). Qualitative methods ‘capture participants’ views and perspectives’ (Yin, 2011, p. 8). Since, I am particularly interested in representing the student teachers’ perspective, this research adopted a mainly phenomenological approach in order to portray the ‘lived’ learning experiences of student teachers. The phenomenological approach seeks to describe lived experiences of individuals; it aims for ‘fresh, complex, rich descriptions of a phenomenon, as it is concretely lived (Finlay, 20 09, p. 6). I considered a phenomenological approach appropriate to this study because I am of the view that users of a programme have a particularly insightful perspective on suggestions for improvement of a programme.

In Nigeria, primary school teachers are trained in colleges of education (section 2.4) and this study was located in two colleges of education referred to as college A and B respectively. These two colleges are located in the same state in the southwest of Nigeria for safety, convenience and easy access to the research sites. Although these two colleges are in two distinct locations (about 76 miles apart), both are government owned. They use the same national curriculum and are regulated by the same body known as National Commission for Colleges of Education. The two colleges of education met the inclusion criteria for the study (Appendix 1); their details are outlined in Table 3. Fourteen student teachers, three lecturers, two head teachers and one co-operating teacher were recruited for this study. These participants were recruited purposively using snowballing techniques. The method of data collection was semi-structured interviews, and documentary analysis was undertaken on relevant Nigerian education policy and curriculum documents. and; the NCCE[[2]](#footnote-2) minimum requirement document. Additional to the main data set were my field notes and informal observations. These informed my understanding and interpretation of data sets.

Data analysis was done at two levels: the individual and system level. The idea is to draw from the individual experiences to understand how the system of training teachers works in Nigeria. At the individual level, student teachers’ interviews were edited and presented as narrative accounts. This was guided by the sub research question: *How do student teachers articulate their experiences of learning to teach?* This was followed by a thematic analysis of the narrative accounts. This allows for a focus on the issues emerging from the students’ experience and was guided by the sub research question: *what dilemmas, dissonances and synergies emerged in their narratives?* At the system level, I used the activity theory to understand the different activities of the teacher education system. The emerged issues from student teachers’ narrative accounts were instrumental exploring how the processes and practices of the initial teacher education system affects student teachers experiences. This analysis was facilitated by the sub question: how do the policies, processes and practices of the colleges of education and primary school settings mediate student teachers experiences of learning teach? As ‘learning’ was conceptualized as a social process in this study, data from lectures, head teachers and co-operative teacher as well as the documents were also analysed and discussed at this level.

## 1.7. Contribution to knowledge

This study hopes to make empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions to the current debate on learning to teach. Empirically, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature that focuses on understanding the features of effective teacher education systems. Although, several systematic studies have been conducted on teacher education around the world, just few of these studies have focused on the Nigerian context. This lack of rigorous research has limited what is known and can be claimed about teacher education in Nigeria as evidenced in the currently limited literature on teacher education in Nigeria.

Methodologically, this study hopes to offer a new perspective on how teacher education can be examined in Nigeria. As mentioned earlier, the previous studies on teacher education in Nigeria were mainly quantitative based and mere counting of frequencies may not provide a holistic and detailed description of teacher training experiences. Hence, this study employed a qualitative based methodology in examining the primary teacher education in Nigeria.

Theoretically, by designing this study from a sociocultural perspective, I hope to identify and understand how the social interactions within the teacher education system and how the cultural context in which the interactions are embedded influence learning to teach activities in Nigeria. I also hope to use the activity theory framework to explore how the processes, policies and practices of the initial primary teacher education mediate student teachers’ learning of how to teach.

## 1.8. Scope of the Research

As this was a PhD study, time and resources are very crucial in deciding the scope of the research (Mason, 2005). Ideally, I would have followed a set of student teachers on a longitudinal study through their training and early years in teaching for robust understanding of the system. But, as I was constrained by time, I chose to select student participants across the three years in the college of education. By selecting students across the three years of study, I hoped to gain insight into the learning development of students as they progress through their studies.

Furthermore, as this study was situated in a natural setting, one would expect the data collection methods to include other non-obstructive methods such as [[3]](#footnote-3)participant observation (Cohen et al., 2011; Kawulich, 2005; Robson, 2011). DeWalt and DeWalt (2005) noted that participant observation involves the researcher observing and taking part in the ‘activities of the people being studied’ (p.2). Participant observation ‘presents clear opportunities to gain additional research insights’ (Sharps, 2005, p. 84) and provides access to information that participants would not generally talk about using interview or questionnaires (Mason, 2011). Sharp (2009) explained that observation ‘is an ideal research tool for investigating classroom-based practices and organizational cultures in all of their many and varied forms’ (p.84). I did not plan for observation because I am more interested in the student teachers’ viewpoint than on my experience or ‘knowing’ of the settings (Mason, 2005). Notwithstanding, I did observe some lectures and orientation exercise. I also participated in a seminar, staff briefings and one general meeting of the department in each of the participated colleges. These however, happened by ‘accident than by design’ as argued by Mason (2006, p.11) when I unexpectedly have access to such potential data source. It is noteworthy that although this ‘opportunistic data’ was not analysed, it gave me a shared experience that facilitated my discussions with the research participants.

In addition, this study did not make any output claim. Although, it has been argued that the effectiveness of a system is measured by its outcome, this study did not explore the outcome of the initial primary teacher education system in Nigeria for two reasons. First, I could not locate any graduate of primary education course and the colleges did not have such information, hence, what I claim about the outcome of the system is limited. Secondly, previous literature have argued that the graduates of teacher education are ineffective. As this is already known, this study rather focused on identifying the process and practices that might have contributed to this claim.

Lastly, my interpretations and discussions in this study might have been influenced by my close familiarity with both the research context and the phenomenon of learning to teach in Nigeria. I could resonate with the student teachers’ experience and could not totally detach myself from the data; however, the discussions with my supervisory team and other colleagues shaped my thought and enhanced the discussion of the findings.

## 1.9. Organisation of the thesis

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the thesis. I narrated my own experience with learning to teach in Nigeria as a way of setting the scene for the reader to understand my position in this study. I also highlighted how my experience informed the focus of this study. The rationale for the study as well as the research aims and questions were also articulated in this chapter. This chapter also describes the design of the research; the scope of the research and outlines the significance of the research.

Chapter Two describes the concept of primary education in Nigeria and highlights the policy changes that had occurred in the primary education in Nigeria. It also highlights the impact of the policy changes to the success of primary education in Nigeria. The second part of this chapter provides an overview of primary teacher education in Nigeria. It highlights the entry requirement and curriculum of National Certificate of Education in Nigeria.

Chapter Three reviews the debates on effective teacher education systems. This review is facilitated by the question: what makes a good teacher education system? It aims to explore what constitutes effective teacher education systems by reviewing both the Nigerian and international literatures.

Chapter Four presents the theoretical framework that underpinned this study. This framework is used to understand how the initial teacher education system facilitates effective teacher outcome in Nigeria. Chapter Five discusses the research methodology by describing the research context; research participants; research designs; data collection methods and data collection procedure. It also discusses the philosophical assumptions and theoretical framework that guided the study and explains the data analysis methods; points out the research methods and methodology limitations and explains the ethical issues considered throughout the research process.

Chapter Six presents the student interviews as narrative accounts. Each student interview was presented individually using student teachers’ own words. Chapter Seven identifies the issues, dilemmas and dissonances emerging from the students’ narrative accounts. The narrative accounts were analyzed using thematic analysis method and the findings were presented as themes.

Chapter Eight adopted activity theory in exploring the practices and processes of colleges of education as well as the primary school settings. This discussion synthesizes data from student teachers, the lecturers, cooperative teachers, head teachers and documents and referred to the literature in identifying how the processes and practices of the both the college of education and the cooperative school mediate how student teachers learn to teach.

Chapter Nine summarized the key research findings; discusses the contribution of this study to the wider field of knowledge; and reflects on the entire research process. It subsequently provides suggestions for policy makers and leaders on possible ways of improving the learning to teach experience of primary teachers and make recommendations for further research.

# CHAPTER TWO

**PRIMARY TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

## 2.1. An overview of primary education in Nigeria

Primary education in Nigeria is compulsory for all children aged between 6 and 11 and last for six years (NPE, 2004). It is ‘preceded by pre-school or nursery education and followed by secondary education (Opoh et al., 2014, p.2). In the Nigeria education policy document, primary education is described as the ‘key to the success or failure of the whole education system’ (NPE, 2004, p4). Labo-Popoola et al. (2009) argue that primary education ‘constitutes the bedrock upon which the entire education system is built’ (p.614); if primary education is ineffective, it is likely to affect the educational goal of an entire education system (Opoh et al., 2014). The objectives of primary education in Nigeria are

* To inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy, and ability to communicate effectively
* To lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking; give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society;
* To mould the character and develop the sound attitude and morals in the child, develop in the child the ability to adapt to the child’s changing environment;
* To give the child the ability to adapt to the child’s changing environment; and also give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child’s capacity (NPE, 2004, p.14).

Pupils are required to sit for ‘common entrance[[4]](#footnote-4)’ exam in their sixth year in order to transit to secondary school. Pupils’ performance in the common entrance examination determines their secondary school placement. The entrance examination subjects are English language, Mathematics, Verbal reasoning and Quantitative aptitude. Although, ‘common entrance’ examination is a standardized test, the questions are not centralized. Each state has the autonomy of producing their test questions and the result of the common entrance examination is used to allocate students to their choice of secondary school. At the end of primary education, students are expected to obtain a Primary School Leaving Certificate. This certificate is ‘based only on continuous assessment and is issued locally by the head teacher of the school’ (NPE, 2004, p.16).

The administration and management of primary education in Nigeria is the ‘responsibility of Local Government Education Authorities under the supervision of State Universal Basic Education Board’ (EFA report, 2015, p.44). This is because of the decentralization of education in Nigeria, which has delegated the management of primary schools to Local Government Areas (NPE, 2004). The Nigeria education system has witnessed a catalogue of changes in policies and programmes since its inception (Aluede, 2006, p. 97). Primary education in particular has witnessed two major schemes: the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme. The Federal government in 1976 launched the UPE scheme to provide free, universal and compulsory education to all children between six and eleven years of age (Tsafe, 2013; Aluede, 2006). It started as a project in the western Nigeria in 1955 (Popoola et al., 2009) but was launched nationally in 1976 after which it was integrated into the national policy of education in 1978 (Oni, 2008). Aluede (2006) reckoned that this policy was unsuccessful as it was ‘abandoned halfway’ (p.97). This was so because there was a surge in primary school enrolment but there were insufficient resources including teachers to cater for the increased enrollment (Aluede, 1992).

In 1999 however, the federal government under the leadership of President Olusegun Obasanjo launched a new scheme called Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme. The UBE scheme is described as ‘an offshoot of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme’ (Tsafe,2013, p.3), but with a broader focus on equity and quality (Alaba, 2010). It focuses on providing free basic learning needs to not only primary school pupils; but also ‘girls and women and a number of under privilege groups including the street children, rural and remote populations, nomads, migrant workers, minorities, refugees (Tsafe, 2013, p.3). In as much as it is claimed that UBE is an offshoot of the earlier policy (i.e. UPE scheme), Aluede (2006) argues that the 1999 launch of the Universal Basic Education was necessitate by the need to meet the 2015 international mandate of World declaration on Education For All. The mandate among all others demands that equal provision of basic education to all children irrespective (UNESCO, 1990).

In order to operationalise the Universal Basic Education in Nigeria, the federal government, in 2004, established a regulatory agency known as Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC). Universal Basic Education Commission is responsible for the ‘promotion of uniform, quality and functional basic education in Nigeria’ (ubeconline.com). Some of the key features of the scheme include:

* Free formal basic education
* Compulsory, uninterrupted Nine years of Primary and Junior Secondary School education.
* Emphasis on Curriculum diversification and relevance to effectively and adequately cover individual and community needs and aspirations.
* Disarticulation of Junior Secondary Schools from Senior Secondary Schools.
* Introduction of rudiments of computer literacy.
* Appropriate continuous teacher professional development.
* Community ownership of schools including participation in decision-making process in schools (ubeconline.com).

However, there has been increased debate on whether the universal basic education scheme is successful. Aluede (2006) argues that although the ‘Universal Basic Education scheme is laudable in Nigeria; it is leaving many issues unresolved’ (p. 99). In as much as the increased enrolment is perceived as a progressive step in achieving the Education for all mandate in Nigeria, ‘the quality of education given at primary education level is still adjudged below standard’ (UNESCO, 2015, p.vii). One of the major recurring challenges in implementing universal basic education scheme is the lack of quality teaching workforce. This chapter continues by providing a contextual analysis of the primary teacher education in Nigeria. It discusses the selection and recruitment process, the curriculum and the organization of learning activities. This is to enable the reader have a basic understanding of the primary teacher training in Nigeria.

## 2.2. Primary teacher education in Nigeria

In the bid to meet up with the demand for primary teachers as primary school enrolment increases, the federal government launched some crash training programmes such as the Pivotal Teacher Training Programme (PTTP) and the Special Teacher Upgrading Programme in 2003 (Samuel and Okodoko, 2011). The aim of these programmes is to upgrade the teaching knowledge of and to ‘equip the unqualified teachers, who are already teaching in primary school, with the basic teaching skills necessary to assist in the achievement of the objectives of the Universal Basic Education’ (NTI, 2015). This training was necessary, as many primary teachers did not have the minimum qualification for primary teaching (Samuel and Okodoko, 2011). Nonetheless, these training exercises were criticised by both educationalist and researchers (e.g. Oni, 2008 and Obiunu, 2011) as ineffective and unfit for purpose as they only lasts for twelve months.

In view of this, the National Certificate on Education became the minimum teaching qualification in Nigeria. The purpose was to ‘produce quality teachers for the basic education schools (NCCE, 2013a, p. 6); hence, graduates of the National Certificate in Education programmes are expected to teach at the basic school level. The basic education level includes early childhood and care education; primary education; junior secondary education; adult and non-formal education and special needs education. The National Certificate in Education is obtained from colleges of education in Nigeria. There are currently a total of about 85 colleges of education in Nigeria – 16 privates, 47 states and 22 federal colleges of education ([www.ncceonline.edu](http://www.ncceonline.edu)). Within a college of education, there are six schools namely: Science; Arts and social sciences; Languages; Vocational and technical education; Early childhood education (ECCE) and primary education studies; and Adult, non-formal and special education. Nevertheless, it is important to note that primary teachers are trained only in the department of Primary Education Studies located in the school of Early childhood education (ECCE) and primary education.

## 2.3. Structure of primary education studies

Prior to 2011, the primary education was not a stand-alone course. It was offered as two-subject course that allowed students to combine primary education with another course of their choice. But in an effort to improve the quality of basic education in Nigeria, each aspect of basic education including primary education was established as a stand-alone course. Ruqayyatu (2013) argues that this was needed to be able to ‘prepare specialised teachers for different aspects of [basic education]’ (p.5). There are three different access routes to study primary education or any other National Certificated in Education (NCE) course in Nigeria. The first route is for fresh secondary school leavers. They are required to have ‘a senior secondary school certificate…with four credits at a maximum of two sittings including English Language and Mathematics (NCCE, 2011, p. 10). The second route is for Grade II teacher certificate holders who want upgrade to NCE qualification. They are required to have four merits in their subjects including English and Mathematics (NCCE, 2011). The third route is for students with Senior Secondary Certificate who are already doing a NCE diploma known as Pre-NCE. Such Students can also advance to full NCE programme if they succeed in their Pre-NCE[[5]](#footnote-5). However, they must sit and pass the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (NCCE, 2011); this is required nationally for higher education entry.

The National Certificate in Education programme runs over three years; each year has two semesters of 15 weeks (NCCE, 2012). The NCE curriculum can be found in the NCE Minimum Standards document which details the course contents for all NCE courses, mode of delivery and expected outcome of each course (appendix 2.1); and is readily available and accessible online at <http://www.ncceonline.edu.ng/NCCE-Digitization/Welcome.html>. For the purpose of this study, this document is referred to as the programme handbook through this thesis. Student teachers are required to do courses in general education, general studies and in their respective departmental courses (appendices 2.2 – 2.4). General education (coded as EDUC) courses relates to general knowledge of educational issues. General Studies in Education (coded as GSE) comprises covering general skills for example, English, mathematics, library studies and so on. The primary education courses comprise primary school subjects (appendix 2.4). Students’ workloads are represented as credits units. Credit units ‘represent work in the following manner: one credit course equals one lecture hour per week for 15 weeks; two-credit course equals one lecture hour and two practical hours per week for 15 weeks’ (Kuiper, et al., 2008, p.7). Students are required to earn a minimum total of 130 credits in general education courses; 14 credits in general studies in education; six credits in teaching practice and 74 in departmental courses over the three years of their study.

## 2.4. Organisation of teaching and learning

The initial training of primary school teachers is both college based and practice based. In the college based courses, all student teachers are required to do modules on the two general courses and on their departmental course. All the students in the same cohort (irrespective of their department) attend the same general courses; hence the number of students in these lectures commonly reaches into thousands. However, students have their own departmental lectures in their various departments. In the teaching practice course, student teachers are introduced to classroom teachings. This offers them the opportunity to get hands-on teaching experience. The teaching practice course is preceded with school observation and micro teaching courses.

*School observation course* is a two unit first year course that allows primary student teachers observe school teaching. It aims for ‘students to gain a firsthand experience of what goes on in the primary school and to make links between what they are learning in theory and the reality of the Classroom (NCCE, 2012, p.78). School observation is done for two hours a week over a period of fifteen weeks. However, the weeks are alternated so that ‘the weeks that they [students] are not observing they will attend lectures so that they are able to combine the theory and practical aspects of school observations’ (NCCE, 2012, p.79). As this is an academic course, it is expected that at the end of course, student should be able to: ‘i) state the responses of learners to the various methods of teaching used by the teachers; ii) explain effective methods used by the teacher in managing his/her class; and iii) write down a summary of what they have observed’ (NCE, 2012, p.79). The assessment for the course is to keep a journal of observation made. Students who the school observation course cannot take the micro teaching courses.

*Micro teaching course* aims to ‘give students the opportunity to observe another classroom, take an active role in supporting the teacher and to prepare specific lessons previously agreed with the class teacher so that they practice their skills in methodology’ (NCCE, 2012, p.81). It is divided into two different modules across the two semesters in second year namely: microteaching theory and microteaching practical. This organisation is expected to help the student with making links between theory and practice. Micro teaching theory module is offered in the first semester of second year. It teaches student teachers about various method and strategies for teaching. In order words, it prepares student teachers for the practical part. The microteaching practical course is offered in the second semester of second year. Its organization and structure is the responsibility of the department of curriculum and instruction (NCCE, 2012). Students who failed micro teaching course will not be allowed to proceed to teaching practice.

The *teaching practice* *course* aimed at providing student teacher an opportunity to put into practice their theoretical knowledge in a real school-life situation’ (NCCE, 2012, p.42). It is a compulsory six-unit course for all students registered for the NCE programme in Nigeria and usually last for twenty weeks. Student teachers are required to start their teaching practice in the beginning of the first semester of third year. This is the only time student teachers do practical teaching throughout the NCE programme. During teaching practice, student teachers are expected to teach for a minimum of 10 periods and maximum of 18 periods per week (NCCE, 2012). With the support of co-operative teachers, student teachers are expected to integrate into their practice school; they are expected to obey the codes and conducts of their teaching practice school. Teaching practice supervisors are expected to ‘base their assessment on the valid and reliable evaluation instrument (appendix 2.5) known as teaching practice toolkit (section 2.5.4). The whole lesson and not just part of it should be assessed. The scoring is expected to be done at the time of observation of the student in order to reduce subjectivity’ (NCCE, 2012, p.45). It is important to note that the college is responsible for 80 percent of teaching practice supervision and assessment while the cooperating school does the remaining 20 percent (NCCE, 2012, p.45).

Moreover, for a successful teaching practice, the college is expected to ‘provide instructional planning and studies in teaching methods. They are required to provide instructional technology and microteaching mentoring (model teaching, assessment, feedback reports etc.). It is the responsibility of the college to provide a minimum of ten supervisors per student before final computation of each students’ teaching practice score. Colleges of education are also responsible for posting students to schools where they can practice their major courses of study’ (NCCE, 2012, p.27).

## 2.5. Teaching practice supervisor’s Toolkit

The teaching practice supervisor’s toolkit was introduced to the National Certificate in Education programme in 2012 in an effort to upgrade the quality of NCE teaching practice supervision. The toolkit was developed during a workshop in Kaduna and Abuja in 2011-12 by ‘a group of educators from the National Teachers Institute, National Commission for Colleges of Education and the Open University UK’ (Junaid, 2013). The goal for developing the toolkit is to ‘introduce the student teacher, teaching practice supervisors and cooperating school to the active pedagogy exemplified in the TESSA[[6]](#footnote-6) material and to support effective teaching practice preparation, supervision and execution using this active pedagogy’ (NCCE, 2012, p.1); hence, objectives of the toolkits are

* To serve as a guide from the teaching practice supervisor for effective supervision and mentoring of the student teacher
* To make the teaching practice an interesting, collaborative and successful experience for the student teacher, Teaching Practice Supervisor and cooperating school.
* To move the teaching practice supervisory role from mere assessment to mentoring, supporting and assisting the student teacher. (i.e. a more learner-centred approach).
* To support standardized high-quality supervision.
* To provide a set of instruments (published under an open license) to support the above,  which can be adapted and used in different environments and contexts.

The toolkit is a blueprint for supervisors to follow while carrying out their supervisory role. It has instructions and suggestions that are assumed to be ideal for successful teaching practice supervision. Appendix 2.5 is an excerpt from the toolkit showing the expected responsibilities of the college before the commencement of teaching practice.

## 2.6. Assessment

The assessment activities in the colleges of education include tests, seminars, workshops, examinations, assignments, and presentations (NCCE, 2012). Apart from Teaching practice courses, whose assessment is 100% based on students’ performance during teaching practice, each courses is assessed with 40% continuous assessment and 60% end of semester examination. To ensure the quality of assessment procedures in the colleges of education, external moderators are invited at the end of each semester to review lecturers’ assessment instruments and student teachers results (NCCE, 2012).

## 2.7. Management and administration of NCE programme

The management and administration of teacher education programmes in Nigeria is the responsibility of the federal ministry of education. However, the federal ministry of education through its commissions oversees the activities of teacher education institutions in Nigeria and ensures quality administration of teacher education programme in Nigeria. The administration of National Certificate in Education programme is the responsibility of Nigeria Commission for Colleges of Education (Section 2.6.1). The National Commission for Colleges of Education was established by Act 13 of 17th January 1989 to oversee the activities of all Colleges of Education in Nigeria (Junaid, 2012). Hence the functions of National Commission for Colleges of Education are to:

* Make recommendations on the national policy necessary for the full development of teacher education and the training of teachers.
* Lay down minimum standards for all programmes of teacher education and accredit their certificates and other academic awards after obtaining thereof prior approval of the Honourable Minister of Education.
* Approve guidelines; setting out criteria for accreditation of all Colleges of Education in Nigeria.
* Determine the qualified teachers needs of Nigeria for the purpose of planning facilities and in particular prepare periodic master plans for the balanced and coordinated development of Colleges of Education.
* Inquire into and advise the Federal Government on the financial needs of the Colleges to enable them meet the objectives of producing the trained qualified teachers of the country.
* Receive block grants from the Federal Government and allocate them to the Colleges of Education.
* Act as the agency for channelling all external aids to Colleges of Education in Nigeria.
* Harmonise entry requirements and duration of courses at the Colleges of Education.
* Collate, analyse and publish relevant information relating to teacher education in Nigeria.
* Advise on and take measures to improve immediate and long-term prospects of technical and business education teachers with respect to status and remuneration.
* Provide encouragement for women to enter a wide range of pre-vocational courses in technical education (NCCE Website – http://www.ncceonline.edu.ng/functions.php).

## 2.8. Summary of the chapter

This chapter started with an overview of primary education in Nigeria. It described the structure of primary education and highlighted the two major education schemes that have taken place in primary education in Nigeria. These two schemes were the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme. The UPE scheme was not successful but the UBE scheme is ongoing. However, this chapter argued that the UBE scheme is currently facing similar issues that mitigated the success of the UPE Scheme. One of the major challenges is the demand and supply of quality primary teachers in Nigeria. Following the increase in primary education enrolment in Nigeria, the government created some teacher training clash programmes, which some educationalists and researchers considered unfit for purpose as they took place over a short period. Still in the effort to improve primary teaching, the Nigerian government has increased the minimum teaching qualification to National Certificate in Education (NCE); this was to regulate the qualifications for primary teaching. Nonetheless, previous research has argued that the quality of primary teachers is low in Nigeria and most literature points towards the ineffectiveness of teacher education. How the Nigeria teacher education system contributes to the lack of quality in primary teaching is however not very clear from the literature; this is what this thesis set to explore. In the next chapter, I will review the African and international literature in order to examine what are considered the key practices of effective teacher education systems. This is important for this study because as I already mentioned above, the ongoing debate on teacher education in Nigeria suggests that the current system of training primary teachers in Nigeria is inefficient.

1. Refers to daily school attendance [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. National Commission for Colleges of Education [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Joining in with those you are observing and immersing yourself in the activities and events taking place (Sharp, 2009, p.84). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. It is equivalent to Standard Assessment Test (SAT) in England [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Diploma course meant for people that did not meet the senior secondary school certificate requirement. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa is a network of teachers and teacher educators working alongside the open University, UK, to improve the quality of classroom practice and access to teacher education resources across Sub-Saharan Africa. It does this through offering a range of Open Educational Resources (OER) in four languages to support school-based teacher education: English, French, Swahili (Tanzania), and Arabic (Sudan) (TESSA, 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)