

Postgraduate nursing education in Nigeria: understanding registered and graduated students' experiences in their journeys to programme completion or withdrawal.



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Background:

Nigerian nursing education grew from initially limited numbers of missionary establishments to a more substantial expansion of urban hospital-based schools from 1945. Postcolonial emancipation sparked the University of Ibadan into opening the first Department of Nursing in Nigeria in 1965.

The first postgraduate nursing programme commenced in 1988 at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Osun State. The University of Ibadan in Oyo State and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in Enugu State started their own postgraduate courses in 1996 and 2003 respectively.

These three universities remain the main postgraduate nursing education providers in Nigeria for a population of approximately 180 million people; they are therefore significant players in developing nursing practice and research in Anglophone Western Africa. Nonetheless, Government and professional stakeholders, including the Nigerian Nursing and Midwifery Council, are concerned by the low graduation rate of these students (10%), and their relatively high rate of attrition (20%).

NIGERIA GEO-POLITICAL ZONES

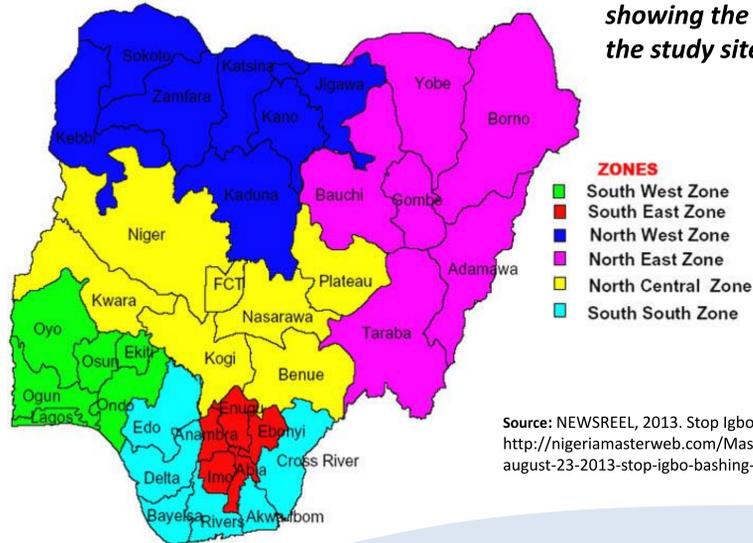


Figure 1: Map of Nigeria showing the location of the study sites

Source: NEWSREEL, 2013. Stop Igbo Bashing in Lagos: <http://nigeriamasterweb.com/Masterweb/newsreel-august-23-2013-stop-igbo-bashing-lagos-rejoinder>.

Aims:

The study has three aims which include to investigate the experiences of postgraduate nursing students enrolled with a postgraduate nursing education programme in Nigeria; explore the factors influencing the postgraduate nursing students' experiences with the postgraduate nursing programmes; and examine the participant's assessment of the overall performance of the postgraduate nursing education programmes in Nigeria to date in relation to students' experiences.

Method:

The research method used was qualitative inquiry utilising face-to-face interviews, the methodology being guided by a critical realist perspective with regard to agency and structure. The participants include those postgraduate nursing students and lecturers of the three universities mentioned above. Other participants included the staff members of nursing education coordinating bodies in Nigeria. 35 participants were recruited for the study. They were recruited to this study purposively and by snowballing. The data collected were analysed thematically.

Results:

The key findings reveal that students' experiences were challenging and rewarding.

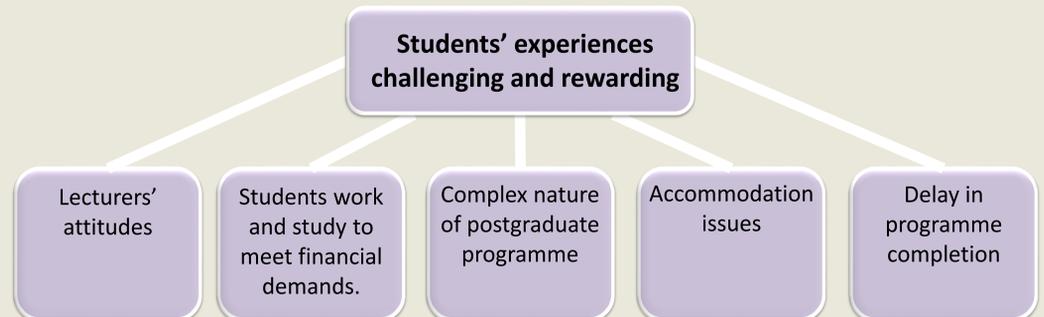


Figure 2: Students' experiences



Figure 3: Factors influencing students' experiences with programmes completion

It was not easy to do an umbrella assessment of the overall performance of the postgraduate nursing programmes. However, from the numerical values of the participants' rating, the overall performance of the programmes was slightly above average with a mean value of 5.21 and standard deviation of 2.21. Areas of improvement as suggested by the participants include nursing education policy review, review of the postgraduate nursing programmes structure, workforce and infrastructural development, and international collaboration.

Conclusion:

Postgraduate nursing education started in Nigeria in 1988. There is a delay in programmes completion period as a result of multiple factors, and the attrition rate is moderately high. Although the overall performance of the programmes is not encouraging, there is a high prospect for improvement.

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