



Nigerian Educational System: Problems and Way Forward

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ABSTRACT

The Nigerian educational system is plagued with many problems. This presentation discusses the various problems facing the educational system in Nigeria in view of solving them. The presentation depends on primary, secondary data sourced from print and online publication. Inadequate funding, inadequate professional teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor supervision, corruption, weak administrators, poor quality education, overcrowding, brain-drain and insecurity problem were identified as the problems facing the educational system in Nigeria. To solve these problems, the following were suggested: implementation of the UNESCO 26% of recommendation for education annual budget, employ more professional teachers, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, effective supervision of education, fight and prevent corruption practices in the ministry of education, ensure the appointment of qualified educational administrators and managers as the heads of various educational institutions, ensure motivation for teachers, and the government should provide adequate security in all educational institutions. The safe school initiative should be implement across all the country.

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1. Introduction

The Nigerian educational system is the largest in Africa. The Nigerian educational system comprises the basic education, junior secondary school education, senior secondary school education and the higher education. According to WENR (2017) Nigeria's education system encompasses three different sectors: basic education (nine years), post-basic/senior secondary education (three years), and tertiary education (four to six years, depending on the program of study). According to Nigeria's latest National Policy on Education (2004), basic education covers nine years of formal (compulsory)

schooling comprising of six years of elementary and three years of junior secondary education. Post-basic education includes three years of senior secondary education. At the tertiary level, the system comprises a university sector and a non-university sector. The latter is composed of polytechnics, mono-technics, and colleges of education. The tertiary sector offers opportunities for undergraduate, graduate, and vocational and technical education. The federal, state and local governments administered education. The Federal Ministry of Education is responsible for overall policy formation and ensuring quality control, but is primarily involved with tertiary education. School education is largely the responsibility of state (secondary) and local (elementary) governments.

The Nigerian educational system is facing many problems. This article intends to discuss the problems facing the Nigerian educational system with the view of solving them by suggesting a possible way of addressing the problems. For this paper, the early child education, Post-Basic Education and Career Development (PBECD) and Tertiary Education will be the focus of this article.

1.2. Methodology

2. Concept of Educational System

Educational system is key in the educational development of a country. It dictates the direction on how education will be implemented. Educational system defines the process education will take to achieve its whole objectives. Noun (2011) viewed Educational system to mean not only formal schooling but all those processes, agencies including individuals that play different roles which are mutually inclusive in the provision of opportunities geared towards learning in any society. Thus, educational system implies formal, informal and non-formal processes of learning. It includes formal school education, in-service training, on-the-job education provided by apprenticeship centers, industries and firms, labour union activities, government agencies for farmers and other rural dwellers; forms of learning provided for migrant nomads and fishers, legal institutions, the press and mass media (radio, T.V. etc) orientation courses of whatever type, social rights of passage and even educational efforts provided by churches and political parties. From this definition, what is central and common to all educational systems across space and time is learning.

The Nigerian educational system comprises the Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE), primary school, secondary school, and tertiary education. The COVID-19 pandemic affected the supervision of Nigerian Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE). COVID-19 pandemic, which occurred in 2019, led to closure of all educational institutions in Nigeria (Ogunode, 2020). The Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) is the care, protection, stimulation and learning promoted in children from age 0 - 4 years in a crèche or nursery. The purpose of Early Child Care Development and Education shall be to: Effect of a smooth transition from the home to the school; prepare the child for the primary level of education; provide adequate care, supervision and security for the children while their parents are at work; inculcate social, moral norms and values; inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and the use of toys, etc; develop a sense of co-operation and team-spirit; stimulate in the child good habits, including good health habits; and teach the rudiments of numbers; letters, colours, shapes, forms, etc, through play. To ensure quality education in the Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) the government established some quality assurance agencies to supervise the programme (NPE, 2013).

Primary Education is the education given to children aged 6 — 12 years. The objectives of

primary education are to:

- a. Inculcate permanent literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively;
- b. lay a sound basis for scientific, critical and reflective thinking;
- c. promote patriotism, fairness, understanding and national unity;
- d. instill social, moral norms and values in the child;
- e. develop in the child the ability to adapt to the changing environment;
- f. Provide opportunities for the child to develop life manipulative skills that will enable the child to function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capability (NPE, 2013).

Post-Basic Education and Career Development (PBECD) is the education children receive after a successful completion of ten years of Basic Education and passing the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and Junior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate Examination (JAISCE). It includes: (i) senior secondary education, (ii) higher school; and (iii) continuing education given in Vocational Enterprise Institutions (VEIs) to either Basic Education graduates who are not proceeding to Senior Secondary School, or Senior Secondary graduates that are not proceeding to the tertiary level, to prepare them for the world of work, wealth creation and entrepreneurship (NPE, 2013).

The objectives of Post-Basic Education and Career Development (PBECD) are to: Provide holders of the Basic Education Certificate and Junior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate with opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of gender, social status, religious or ethnic background; offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, disposition, opportunities and future roles; provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades; provide entrepreneurial, and vocational job-specific skills for self-reliance, and for agricultural, industrial, and economic development; develop and promote Nigerian languages, art and culture in world's cultural heritage; inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence; foster patriotism, national unity and security education with emphasis on the common ties despite of our diversity; and raise morally upright and well-adjusted individuals who can think independently and rationally, respect the views and feelings of others and appreciate the dignity of labour (NPE, 2013).

Tertiary Education is the education given after Post Basic Education in institutions such as Universities and Inter-University Centers such as the Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic Language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages, institutions such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), and Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology and the National Teachers' Institutes (NTI) (NPE, 2013).

The goals of Tertiary Education shall be to: Contribute to national development through high-level manpower training; provide accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in formal and informal education in response to the needs and interests of all Nigerians; provide high-quality career counseling and lifelong learning programmes that prepare students with the knowledge and skills for self-reliance and the world of work; reduce skill shortages

through the production of skilled manpower relevant to the needs of the labour market; promote and encourage scholarship, entrepreneurship and community service; forge and cement national unity; and promote national and international understanding and interaction.

Tertiary Educational institutions shall pursue these goals through: Quality student intake; quality teaching and learning; research and development; high standards in the quality of facilities, services and resources; staff welfare and development programmes; provision of a more practical based curriculum relevant to the needs of the labour market; generation and dissemination of knowledge, skills and competencies that contribute to national and local economic goals which enable students to succeed in a knowledge-based economy; a variety of flexible learning modes including full-time, part time, block release, day-release, and sandwich programmes; access to training funds such as those provided by the Industrial Training Fund (ITF), Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund); Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) that is well structured, coordinated and supervised; maintenance of minimum educational standards through appropriate regulatory agencies; an all-inclusive credible admissions policy for national unity; supporting affordable, fair access to tertiary education through scholarships and students' loans; inter-institutional co-operation and linkages; and dedicated services to the community through extra-mural and extension services.

3. Problems Facing Nigerian Educational System

There are many problems facing Nigerian educational system. Some of them include; inadequate funding, inadequate professional teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor supervision, corruption, weak administrators, poor quality education, overcrowding, brain-drain and insecurity problem.

3.1. Inadequate Funding

Funding is very important in the administration of education. Njideka, Esther & Confidence (2015) submitted that the level of success recorded by the educational sector has been closely linked with the availability of resources. Among the resources needed for the effective administration of the educational sector, funding has been identified as an indispensable instrument. The Nigerian educational system is facing the problem of inadequate funding. Ogunode, (2020), the Good Planet Foundation, (2013); Alabi & Ijaiya, (2014) established that the early child education programme in Nigeria is under-funded while Ogunode (2020) observed that inadequate funding is a major challenge facing the administration of primary school education in Nigeria. At the secondary school education, Ogunode (2021), Peter (2016) submitted that inadequate funding is one of the major problem facing the administration of secondary school education in Nigeria. The budgetary allocation for the administration and management of secondary school education in Nigeria is inadequate. In the tertiary education, Okoli, Ogbondah, & Ewor, (2016) opined that one of the major challenges facing the management in Nigeria of this sector of education is inadequate funding. The budgetary allocation devoted to education has been considered grossly inadequate considering the phenomenon of increase in students' enrolment and increasing cost, which has been aggravated by inflation. A serious problem confronting Nigerian public university education today is that of a scarcity of fund. They have therefore subjected government financial policies on education to constant review intending to allocate more resources to university education.

3.2. Inadequate Professional Teachers

Professional teachers are trained and certify teachers. Shortage of professional teachers is the major issue facing the Nigerian educational system. At the early child education, Amadi, 2013; Okewole, Iluezi-Ogbedu, & Osinowo, 2013 concluded that many early child education center facing the problem of inadequate professional care-givers. In the primary school education, Ogunode (2020) concluded that shortage of professional teachers is also a problem facing the administration of basic education in Nigeria. Many primary schools in Nigeria do not have adequate professional teachers. A report by independent Newspapers (2019) reports that there was a deficit of 135,319 teachers at the Early Childhood Care Development Education, 139,772 deficit in primary schools and 2,446 shortage in Junior Secondary School across the nation. We have identified a number of challenges have been identified as clogs in the realization of good access, equity and quality of education in Nigeria. One of these is the critical issue of teacher shortage at all levels of education. There is a shortage of early child education teachers needed to attain the proposed 1:20 teacher-to-pupil ratio. This ratio is far from being met, as the current ratio is 1:47. In the secondary school education, (Ogunode, 2021; Ige (2013) another problem facing the administration of secondary school education in Nigeria is inadequate professional teachers. There are shortage of professional teachers in majorities of the secondary schools across the country and this is affecting the administration of the sector. Ajape, Ogunode, Jegede, (2020) observed that inadequate academic staff is a problem preventing the administration of university education in Nigeria while Ogunode & Abubakar (2021) describes academic staff or lecturers as faculty members in the higher institutions or in the universities. The lecturers implement the teaching programme; they are the line unit in the university setting, and they deliver academic services for teaching and assessing the students. The roles of the academic staff in the university's development cannot be underestimated. Ogunode & Abubakar (2021) further observed that it is unfortunate that as important as the academic staff is to the development of the university system, many universities in the country are understaffed. The Nigerian universities face the problem of shortage of lecturers in many departments and faculties, especially in a programme like the sciences. The shortage of lecturers in many departments and faculties is responsible for high teacher-student ratio in the Nigerian universities. Ogunode & Adamu (2021) identified; inadequate funding, lack of strategic manpower planning, brain-drain, poor motivation, un-conducive working environment and corruption as the reasons for shortage of academic staff in the Nigerian higher institutions. They also identified that low productivity, poor quality of teaching, and poor quality of education as the effects of a shortage of academic staff in the Nigerian public higher institutions.

3.3. Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities

Gometi (2011) school facilities include the school buildings, classrooms, accommodation, libraries, laboratories, furniture, recreational equipment, apparatus and other instructional materials, their availability, adequacy and relevance to academic achievement. Ajayi and Yusuf (2009) maintain that high levels of students' academic performance may not be guaranteed where instructional space such as classrooms, libraries, technical workshops, and laboratories are structurally defective or not available and adequate. Eseyin, Okafor and Uchendu (2014:196) stated that "Infrastructures play a significant role in the provision of quality education in any nation". They aid in the dissemination, assimilation and transmission of knowledge. Amali, Bello, & Okafor, 2012; Okewole, et al, (2013) observed that many early child education centers do not have adequate infrastructural facilities available. Ogunode (2020) observed that the primary school education in Nigeria, Another problem facing the administration of primary school education in Nigeria is the challenge of inadequate infrastructural facilities. Many primary schools in Nigeria do not have adequate infrastructural

facilities. It is also observed in the senior secondary school education that there is shortage of infrastructural facilities by (Ogunode, 2021, Mercy & Anselm 2018) Peter (2016) lamented that many schools and colleges have buildings that the call libraries, but most of these are not equipped with essential books and current journals and magazines. Also, many schools and colleges do not have science laboratories while a good number of those that have, do not possess the basic tools or equipments as microscopes, dissecting instruments and specimens. Also, many schools have “special rooms for teaching such basic subjects as history, geography and French. In such a situation as this, the teachers cannot put in their best; and the students, too, cannot teaching-learning process is stalled and the overall development of the children within the school system is retarded. In the higher education, Okoli, Ogbondah, & Ewor, (2016) observed that University infrastructure and equipment are fast decaying in terms of maintenance. All the required resources for education production process are in short supply that pose hindrance to learning and research work. A good number of Nigerian universities are offering technological education programmes. The question is how many of these universities have basic infrastructure to run the programmes. For example, in universities offering computer course, you have students graduate without touching computer. The dearth of infrastructure in the universities is sickening and runs short of ideal academic environment. Today, students are learning in dilapidated buildings.

3.4. Poor Supervision

Supervision is key to the realization of quality education. Supervision ensures the professional skills of teachers are upgraded and improved upon. In Nigerian, supervision of education has been described as ineffective by Moja (2000). The poor supervision is experienced in all the other forms of educational system in Nigeria. In the early child education programme, Nakpodia, (2011) and Sooter, (2013) lamented lack of effective supervision of early child education programme in Nigeria. At the primary school education, Ogunode (2020) submitted that the problem of poor school supervision by the respective school administrators has also contributed to the challenge facing the administration of basic schools. Many school administrators do not effectively supervise the basic schools under their watch. Umar, Hauwa & Nura (2017) stressed that supervised instruction has been duly neglected amid modern complications of the Secondary School. Inspection reports are hardly made available and there are no follow-up that would ensure that the weaknesses identified have been corrected. In the tertiary institutions, Ajape, et al (2020) submitted that poor supervision is another challenge facing university education in Nigeria. Supervision of university education in Nigeria is poor and ineffective. The poor supervision is responsible for the poor quality of education in the system. The National Universities Commission established to supervise the universities in Nigeria is weak. Adesina (1981) was of the opinion that schools have not been regularly visited by inspectors of the Ministry of Education and when inspection is done, it is far from being thorough.

3.5. Corruption

Corruption is another problem facing the educational system in Nigeria. Corruption has penetrated into all the forms of educational system in Nigeria (Ogunode, 2020, Godwin, 2018). Osunyanmi, (2018) observed that Nigeria has been experiencing underwhelming development amidst overwhelming corruption. Education is not insulated from this malaise. Corruption allows a high percentage of the funds allocated to the sector to get diverted into the private accounts of public officials. The primary school education funds released for national feeding programme is mismanaged and misappropriated (The whistler 2020). Meanwhile, in case of the secondary school education, Ogunode (2020) observed that Institutional corruption is another problem facing the administration of secondary schools in the

country. Funds released by the government for the administration of the schools some time ended up in the private hands. These funds are meant for the capital and recurrent services in the secondary schools are been diverted by the officials of the ministries. Funds budgeted for different programmes in the ministries are been diverted into private banks. Many public funds meant for the development of education in Nigeria are diverted and mismanaged. In the tertiary institutions, Ajape, et al (2020) submitted that corruption is a very enormous problem facing the university education in Nigeria. Some officials have misused and misappropriated the funds allocated for the development of the universities within the university system.

3.6. Weak Administrators

The realization of the educational objectives depends on the quality of leaders appointed to oversee the affairs of different agencies and para-state of the education in the Country. Educational leadership matters to effectively administer the affairs of educational institutions. Failure in the Nigeria educational system can be traced to the various leaders appointed to head the various educational institutions who are less qualified or do not have experiences in educational management and administration. The government appoints whosoever they think to handle the ministry of education on like the health sector that the minister must be a medical practitioner. Therefore, failure of the government to recognize the education as a profession that must always be handled by an educational expert or administrators is contributing to the problems facing the educational institutions. Ogunode, Ahmed, Gregory & Abubakar (2020) opined that another problem facing the administration of public schools in Nigeria is the weak administrators appointed by the various tiers of government to head the educational institutions. Many school administrators appointed to oversee the administration and management of some educational institutions are very weak in term of administration and management. Some of them do not have the qualifications, experiences and the knowledge required to successfully manage such institutions to a place of glory. At the tertiary institutions, Ajape, et al (2020) opined that many Nigerian University leaders emerged without due process. They are appointed by politicians and many of them are less qualified to handle the academic institutions like the universities. They lack competence, leadership skills, and managerial skills to transform the Universities for sustainability.

3.7. Poor quality of education

The quality of Nigerian educational system is falling. In the primary school education, Ogunode (2020) lamented that learning outcome of most primary school students is poor. The falling quality of education disturbs school administrators in Nigeria especially at the level of the basic schools. This problem is reaffirm by World Bank (2017) who concludes that the quality of basic education, measured in terms of student learning outcomes, is low in Nigeria. According to international standards, we expected children who have completed grade 3 to be fully literate. Yet in Nigeria only 66 percent of public school students can read at least one of three words and 78 percent can add single digits after completing grade 4 (NEDS, 2015). According to the US Embassy in Nigeria (2012), the non-enrolment hampered the access to quality education in school of about 10 million out of the 30 million school-age children. The Embassy posits that Nigerian education system suffers from deteriorating quality and insufficient investment to keep pace with the country's burgeoning school-age population. In the secondary school education, Ogunode (2021) observed that the academic performance of the Nigerian secondary schools in recent times has not been encouraging. The quality of education at this level is falling. At the higher institutions, Saint, Hartmet and Strassner (2003) pointed out that the Nigerian university system is performing poorly in teaching and learning in terms

of labour market absorption and employers' assessment of graduates. Mohammed and Gbenu (2007) and Obayan (1999) observed that the quality of education offered by higher education institutions in the recent times has deteriorated substantially. Osunyikanmi, (2018) submitted that in its 2016 report on perception of wellbeing, the United Nations Development Program stated that only 55 per cent of Nigerians were satisfied with the country's education quality, 48 percent were satisfied with its healthcare quality, and 36 percent were satisfied with the standard of living. The perception of wellbeing is much better in countries that have a much higher quality education. For instance, 83 percent were satisfied with the education quality in Singapore, 88 percent were satisfied with her healthcare quality and 84 per cent were satisfied with the standard of living. This report shows that quality education can influence other indicators of development, a lesson for Nigeria and other countries in similar circumstances.

3.8. Overcrowding

UN Special Envoy for Global Education, it was specifically reported that classrooms in early childhood development (ECD) centers in Nigeria are crowded, with an average of over 130 children per classroom in the North (The Good Planet Foundation, 2013). Ogunode (2020) opined that administrators of basic schools across the country are worried by the high enrolment of pupils into the basic schools causing inadequate infrastructural facilities and teaching of large classes because of inadequate space. The National policy on education reported from their major finding that 100% of the teachers agreed that there is high enrolment with inadequate infrastructure. Secondary schools enrollment rate in the last four decades have increased above the level of resources provided for this level of education. Population explosion as a result of various religious, social and cultural beliefs has therefore made it difficult for proper funding of secondary education.

3.9. Brain-drain

Brain-drain or teacher retention is another problem facing the Nigerian educational institutions. Many professional teachers are leaving the sector to other sector in the economy because of poor motivation. Peter (2016) observed that as for teaching staff in Nigeria primary and secondary school today, the problem is no longer that of unavailability, but that of instability. This does not help the development of the education system. Because of the comparatively poorer conditions of service of teachers in the Nigeria society, the tendency for many teaching in the nation's school today, as with their predecessors in later colonial and independent Nigeria, is to use the teaching profession as a stepping stone to other highly esteemed and more attractive jobs. In the tertiary institutions in Nigeria, Okoli, et al (2016) submitted that Nigerian public universities face rapid faculty exodus or brain drain. Some faculty members abandoned universities for other sectors of the economy where professionals and scientists receive higher salaries and greater social recognition. Peter (2016) argued that teaching is gradually becoming a profession for fresh graduates of universities and colleges of education who are ready to call it quits, without provocation, as soon as they find greener pasture elsewhere. From time to time, therefore, the teaching staff in Nigeria educational institutions is usually unstable. The mass movement out of the educational system is contributing to poor quality of education because the best brains are not retained in the system.

3.10. Insecurity Problem

Insecurity problem is another major problem facing the educational system in Nigeria. The school is a micro element of the society so whatever affects the society affects the schools. Nigeria as a country since 2009 started experience a new dimension of insecurity problems. These problems have

penetrated the educational institutions in the country. Ogunode (2021) submitted that insecurity in educational institution implies the human resources within the educational institutions are in the state of fear or threat and lack peace to carry out their respective function. It is a situation where both school administrators, teachers, non-teaching staff and students are in the state of fear. Ogunode (2020) observed that at the primary school education, insecurity is one of the major problems facing the administration of primary schools in Nigeria. Effective administration of basic education in Nigeria is frustrated by the insecurity challenges facing the country, especially the Northern part of the country. Many Basic schools have been closed down. Educational officers cannot travel to areas where they are supposed to travel to for administrative functions because of insecurity challenges. In the secondary school education, Ogunode (2021) insecurity challenge is another major problem facing the secondary schools in Nigeria, especially in the Northern part of the country. Insecurity have prevent effective administration of secondary school programme in the country. Many school administrators, teachers, non-teaching staff and students have been killed. Some school administrators, teachers, non-teaching staff and students have been kidnapped and many infrastructural facilities destroyed by Boko Haram members. Secondary school programme has been disrupted because of closing down of school in Northeast Nigeria.

4. Way Forward

This paper in view of finding lasting solution to the various problems facing the Nigerian educational system recommended that the government should implementation of the UNESCO 26% of recommendation for education annual budget, employ more professional teachers, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, effective supervision of education, fight and prevent corruption practices in the ministry of education, ensure the appointment of qualified educational administrators and managers as the heads of various educational institutions, ensure motivation for teachers, and the government should provide adequate security in all educational institutions. The safe school initiative should be implement across all the country.

- a. The government should implement the UNESCO 26% recommendation for an annual budget of education in Nigeria. This will aid effective administration of education in the country.
- b. The government should employ more provisional teachers and deploy to all secondary schools across the country to aid effective administration of the sector.
- c. The government should provide adequate infrastructural facilities to all the educational institutions in the country. More classrooms, libraries, laboratories, ICT facilities, toilets, water, desks, chairs, tables etc should be provided to aid effective implementation of teaching and learning programme.
- d. The government should improve on the supervision of educational institutions by improving the quality of all supervision agencies in the country.
- e. The government should fight all institutional corruption in the educational institutions through effective monitoring of funds allocated to the ministries of education in the country.
- f. The government should appoint qualified educational administrators and managers to head various educational institutions in the country.
- g. The government should ensure teachers in the Nigerian educational institutions are well motivated by increasing the salaries and welfare packages of teachers to prevent brain-drain in the system.
- h. The government should provide adequate security to all educational institutions in the country by

deploying more security personnel to secure schools across the country.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Nigerian educational system is plagued with many problems. The problems include: inadequate funding, inadequate professional teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor supervision, corruption, weak administrators, poor quality education, overcrowding, brain-drain and insecurity problem. To address these problems, the following were suggested: implementation of the UNESCO 26% of recommendation for education annual budget, employ more professional teachers, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, effective supervision of education, fight and prevent corruption practices in the ministry of education through effective monitoring and evaluation system, ensure the appointment of qualified educational administrators and managers as the heads of various educational institutions, increase the salaries and welfare packages of teachers to prevent brain-drain in the system and the government should provide adequate security in all educational institutions. The safe school initiative should be implement across all the country.

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