

MANAGING SECONDARY EDUCATION IN A PERIOD OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STRESS IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper takes a critical assessment into the management of secondary education in a period of socio-economic and political stress in Nigeria and its implications for sustainable national development. It draws attention on the various management challenges of secondary education such as poor parenting, examination malpractice, truancy, cultism and others which pave way for poor secondary school students' academic performance, inability to defend certificates and high rate of dropouts. Based on the submission of this paper, it is recommended, among others, that education should not be politicized and should be adequately funded as recommended by UNESCO, and that secondary school curriculum should be designed with focus on the norms of the society. Besides, effective training should be given to secondary school students so that they would not be involved in cultism and other social vices. Also, modern facilities and instructional materials should be adequately provided in secondary schools for effective teaching and learning and quality service delivery.

Introduction

Education is a social service that its benefits cannot be quantified in terms of overall output to all the stakeholders. It is the act of systematic development or training of mind, capabilities or character through instructions or study. It is seen as the major weapon for the overall development of any nation. Denga and Denga (2009) viewed education as a fulcrum on which all other development facets are hinged. It can be said of education and development that no sound education, no national development. Education is basically for socio-economic development of a nation. To have qualitative and sound education, that will serve its purpose, it should be handled by competent personnel, effectively managed, adequately funded, and given under conducive environment. Sufficient supply of

infrastructures and equipment for effective teaching and learning should also be given due attention to in other to have best products and qualified manpower resources into the industries, parastatals, ministries, hospitals and other sector of the economy that would turn the society around with prosperous future in all facets of life.

Secondary education is the second tier of the nation's educational system. It is the system of education between primary school and tertiary education, a form of education intermediate between elementary education and college and usually offering general, technical, vocational, or college-preparatory courses. The purposes of secondary education are to provide an increasing number of primary school pupils with the opportunity of a higher quality, irrespective of sex or social, religious and

ethnic background and cater for the differences in talent, opportunities and roles possessed by or open to students after their secondary school course through its diverse curriculum.

The specific objectives of secondary education in Nigeria, according to National Policy on Education (2013), are:

- a. To equip students to live effectively in our modern age of science and technology;
- b. To raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour and appreciate those values specified under the broad national aims and lives as good citizen;
- c. To foster Nigeria unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity and
- d. To inspire its students with a desire for achievement and self-improvement.

Secondary school education as indicated in the National Policy on Education (2013), consists of two sections- The junior section, designed as Junior Secondary School classes one-three (JSS 1-3) and the senior section designed as Senior Secondary School one to three (SSS 1-3). After the completion of senior secondary school examination, senior secondary school Certificates are issued through West African Examination Council to the deserving students that qualify them for admission into the tertiary institutions, such as Universities, Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, and Schools of Nursing and so on.

It is noted in the National Policy on Education (2013) that secondary level of education is the key to success or failure of the whole system. This implies that

secondary level can make or mar the system. The outcome will determine the products of the tertiary institutions and the development of the society. The quality of education received by the students at these two levels (secondary and tertiary) will determine their contribution to the growth and development of the society. Hence, secondary education is expected to be effectively managed, adequately funded and be completely depoliticized.

Concept of Management

Management is the ability to harness both human and material resources to achieve set goals or to accomplish selected aims. Ogunsaju (2000) defined management as that function of an organization and co-operation necessary for goal attainment. Ogunsaju (2004) explained further that management implies direction, planning, financing personnel, equipment management output and time control. The functions of management therefore are planning, supervision, finance, staffing, coordinating, motivation, controlling, reporting, directing and so on. All these functioning are very crucial to the managing of secondary education for the purpose of achieving its set lofty goals and objectives in Nigeria

For the productivity level of the teachers to be high, effective management of secondary is required in terms of planning and financing whereby the staff both teaching and non-teaching are well paid, and instructional materials are readily available. Thorough and regular supervision is essential to gear up the staff in the system to put in their best. To have grandaunts that would feed the tertiary institutions and cope excellently well, competent, adequate and well trained teachers that would teach the students are necessary. Hence effective

management is necessary; whereby train and re-training of the staff would be organized, controlling and motivation of the staff should be carried out for tangible result at the end.

Socio-Economic Stress and its Implications on Education in Nigeria

Nigeria, like any other developing nations, has witnessed prolong military rules and aborted civilian administrations, which necessitated the promulgation of decrees, edicts and laws concerning educational practices at federal, state and local government levels. The inconsistent continuation of government de-emphasized the continuity in the implementation of educational laws and policies since 1970's till the present time. This gradually laid the foundation of recession in Nigeria and fallen standard of education at the primary school level (Shittu, 2004).

As economic recession worsens in Nigeria, Johnson (1996) lamented that some parents are not left out as they could no longer provide adequately for their families especially their children education due to dwindling family income. This has negatively and drastically affected the quality of education their children are being offered. In line with Danesty (2004), poverty of parents has elastic effects on their children academic performances, good housing facilities, medical care and social welfare services. Also, they can no longer provide shelter, clothing and special need of their children in school (such as provision of text books, school uniforms and good medical care. Mba (2001) lamented that poverty of the parents has made education and learning impossible for many children in the rural areas. He lamented that poverty has further caused other problems, such as diseases, frustration, poor performance and

psychological problems. Good parenting support by strong economic home background could enhance strong academic performance of the pupil.

Education not only provides knowledge and skills, but also inculcates values, training of instincts, fostering right attitude and habits. The responsibility of training a child always lies in the hand of the parents and parents differ in occupational classes (Rothstein, 2004). Parent's socioeconomic status and educational background are based on family income, parental education level, parental occupation, and social status in the community (such as contacts within the community, group associations, and the community's perception of the family) (Ahmad *et al*, 2013). Increasingly, research has suggested that, rather than having a direct association with children's academic achievement, socioeconomic status and parents' level of education is part of a larger constellation of psychological and sociological variables influencing children's school outcomes (Joan, 2009).

Socio-economic status affects education because the parties involved in a child education are subjected to the influence of socio-economic status such influence is termed socio-economic stress. The key major party involved in child's education is the teacher and the parent. With current social and economic instabilities in the country, both parties are being affected by socio-economic stress. The teachers are forced to work and adapt to the constant changes in the social norms like societal vices, government policies, political changes to mention but a few, the economic pressures faced by teachers include non-payment of salaries and allowances coupled with ever growing inflation rate, which has denounced them access to quality life. These

further resulted in decrease in the motivation of teachers and consequently derogatory attitude towards teaching profession.

According to Grissmer (2003), parents' level of education affects the academic performance of students. Onocha (1985) also concluded that a child from a well- educated family with high socio-economic status is more likely to perform better than a child from an illiterate family. This is because the child from an educated family has a lot of support such as a decent and good environment for academic work, parental support and guidance, enough textual and academic materials and decent feeding. He or she is likely to be sent to good schools where well-seasoned teachers will handle his or her subjects. Home environment and family processes provide a network of physical, social and intellectual forces and factors which affect the students' learning (Campbell, 1994). The family's level of encouragement, expectations, and education activities in the home are related to socio-economic status. Low socio-economic status results in increasing socio-economic stress and under such conditions parents are unable to provide adequately for the child's education and this will affect the educational quality of the child.

Social Factors Impinging on Effective Management of Secondary Education in a Period of Economic Recession in Nigeria

Secondary education is very important as consumer of primary school products and supplier of tertiary education in-takes. This level of education in Nigeria is beset with many social problems which constitute serious challenges to effective management of secondary education in Nigeria. These are discussed aptly as social challenges which include the following:

Cultism: - This is rampant in the secondary schools these days. It has become a monster that has swallowed up the societal values and ethics. Cultism according to Nigeria Constitution, Section 329(1) of 1999, is an association that uses secret signs, oaths or symbols, which is formed to promote a cause, purpose or part of the purpose which is to foster the interest of its members and to aid one another under any circumstance without any regard to merit, fair or justices to the demerit of those who are not member. Okemakinde (2016) opines that members are under oath and their activities are dangerous to the campus community. Cultism has become a giant monster that has wreaked havoc on the society, terminated innocent lives and destroyed glorious destinies. In spite of the efforts of the school managements and government's decrees and policies against cultism and related activities, the students still embrace the menace without mindful the negative effects, such as blood shedding and destruction of lives of the students and staff members.

Poor home training: - This is another problem that these students are facing. Charity begins from home but some homes are not doing their legitimate/natural duties. Parenting is lacking in the life of most students especially those from broken homes, single parents, parents that release or trust their children into the hand of the house helpers because of their circular jobs, chasing the mundane things to the detriment of their children. No time to supervise or do a follow up to their schools. Scolding when necessary, should not be "sparing the rod to spoil the child" instead, parents should be firm, fair and friendly when necessary. In some homes where quarrelling or fighting is the order of the day, this often leads to disaffection and make children from such

homes develop negative attitudes to life and seek for the escape route when they could no longer cope academically due to the unpleasant home background and disaffection.

Examination malpractice: - Another variable that can cause socio-economic stress on education is examination malpractice. Examination malpractice is a great threat to the educational system, not only in Nigeria but also in the developed countries. According to Fasakin (2016) and Okemakinde (2016), it entails students bringing in text books, prepared papers, unauthorized materials into examination hall. Hawking and sale of live question papers before the commencement of the examination impersonation, exchange of notes and so on. Examination malpractice, according to Anwuluorah (2008), Eze (2008) and Fasakin (2016), are caused due to inadequate preparation of students for examination, poor facilities and equipment, parental supports, poor teaching method, financial benefits recognition among others. On the long-run, this menace has a drastic effect on the educational system for instance it leads to half-baked grandaunts, students' inability to defend their certificates and so on. Sequel to this, the student should be made to prepare well, qualified and competent teachers to be engaged.

Peer group influence: - Peer group are those students of the same age bracket, same class or same school, doing same course and at times same sex. They normally understand their languages have or almost same style and practice same thing and move together. This implies that academically hardworking students in the midst of lazy ones can be influenced and become lazy. It may be other way too, but in

most cases peer-group influences themselves negatively. For instance such peer groups becomes poor academically and develop strange negative attitudes in dressing, disobedient to teachers, breaking school rules and regulations, not regular in classes or in school and so on. If this act is not curbed in earnest, it can lure such students to cultism, drug addiction and finally drop out of the school. Hence, the school needs to be firm, hold regular meetings with parents, spell out in clear terms rules and regulations of the school to the students, allow students representative council to hold or be strong in the school and empowered the school prefects among other things.

Truancy: - Truancy is another social problem in the secondary school education. Truancy is the act of absenteeism in the school or in the class without permission. That is students not regular in the school or jumping classes. Truancy is any intentional unauthorized or illegal absence from compulsory education. It is also absences caused by students of their own free will and usually does not refer to legitimate "excused". It entails absence of a child from school without permission. It can also be described as a person who shirks or neglects his or her duty. Students do not just absent themselves from the school without cause or causes. Afolabi (1998) enumerated some of the causes among which are influences of peer group, fear of failure, lack of school materials, examination phobia, laziness, ill health and so on. Truancy definitely would have adverse effects on the performance of such students.

Economic Factors Impinging on Effective Management of Secondary Education in a Period of Economic Recession in Nigeria

Paucity of fund: - Finance is another great problem in secondary school education. Money is the backbone of any establishment. No money no development. For secondary education to flourish well, it needs substantial or colossal amount. Financing education could be described as the provision of money to supply or provide all necessary equipment, facilities, payment of personnel etc. to achieve the set goals or objectives of educational system. According to Adeyemo (2012), educational financing is the provision of money necessary to fund all resource inputs required in an educational system to achieve its objectives; Okemakinde (2016) reiterated that adequate financial input is crucial to the success of any educational system for provision of facilities and equipment. He said further that this will make the payment of staff, maintenance of educational infrastructure easy. Hence the 26% bench mark approved or advocated for education by UNESCO should be maintained, the government should pay attention to this, so as to have enough money to run the schools. The government is the major financier of the secondary schools, especially the public schools. Other sources include: school fees, grants, donation and endowment funds, revenue yielding projects, loans, and other sources are: private sector, community, participation, and fees pay by the student.

Astronomical increase in the price of educational materials: - The prices of school materials have drastically increased especially in this time of recession in the country. For a student to excel and have

good result, needs adequate provision of school materials such as modern and relevant textbooks, neat school uniform not rag, school sandal and other materials that can enhance teaching-learning process. All these are lacking because of recession, non-payment of salaries to their parents, take home could no long take them house. Hence no adequate or sufficient provision of school materials and definitely would result into poor performance.

Staff agitation for increase in salaries and allowance: - This is another problem that could impede the achievement of the system. The regular and prompt payment of salaries and allowances of the teachers is the hub of their Job satisfaction. Therefore to have credible performance by the students both in internal and external examinations, for the teachers to put in their best, for the administrators to perform their duties with little or no stress salaries and allowances should be paid as when due and possibly increase their wages before agitation or going on strike that can disrupt the system. When this is done, the system will move on steadily without any obstacle and greatness will be achieved.

Political Factors Impinging on Effective Management of Secondary Education in a Period of Economic Recession in Nigeria

Politics, according to Bush (2010), is an activity that involves getting and using power in public life and being able to influence decisions that affect the country. Politics especially party politics has significant impacts on the management of secondary education in Nigeria as evidenced in the areas of appointment of institution heads, personal matters, and allocation of resources to secondary

education and so on. Politics is a device intended for finding solutions to social, economic, political and educational problems by political means. It also plays an important role in decision making, control and governance of secondary schools. Furthermore, politics in education can be looked at as a process of control, decision making, implementation, management, governance and a method by which resources are allocated to different ethnic groups to achieve their aims. (Okeke, 2007). The role of politics is heightened in view of the fact that an educational system has political goals and these goals are essential to justify the existence of the system and the political order of society. In other words, the political order institutes good education.

It has been observed that politics is capable of having some influences in the management and policies that guide education. Also, frequent changes of ministers and commissioners for education by successive government coupled with the politicization of education by political parties that emerged in the country's political scene since 1979 have also brought about disparity in educational practices, which caused differential academic performance and class room functioning of both teachers and Students, from state to state (Danesi, 2004). Politics may influence policies on funding, staff-personnel administration, and provision of basic infrastructure /equipment and school-community relation (Ogbonnaya, 2009).

Politics and Secondary Education: - The concept of politics has been well articulated by educationists and social scientists on the subject. Both agreed that politics is not restricted to political parties but it is also there in the Nigeria markets, banks, the ministries, educational institutions, military

establishments, churches, sports, business, commercial and industrial factors of our economy (Ogbonnaya, 2009). This is because educational planning in the final analysis is a political process of give and take hence it is a central policy issue. The objective of education; the control, production process variables, financial and accreditation systems are tied inescapably to politics. Any government in power should place high premium on education, promising support and control. It is used as a vote catching weapon with unrealistic promise because education is a public good, government of all ages in Nigeria see it as a gift to the people rather than an outgrowth from their needs and values. Education sector depends on some authorities for its supply, and maintenance by way of fiscal support, it "cannot" generate enough funds for itself. Because of politics, school management, educational policies and practices are different in many states of Nigeria. The management is highly interfered by the government without genuine commitment. These affect school management. The technocracy of school management only operates within the political ideology framework of the government in power without any regard to the socio-economic realities of the day.

Politics and Secondary Schools

Location:- School location refers to the community in which the school is located, such as a village, hamlet or rural area (with population less than 3,000 people), a small town (about 3,000 to 15,000 people), a town (15,000 to about 100,000 people), a city (100,000 to about 1,000,000 people) (OECD, 2002). However, choice of school site is greatly susceptible to political maneuvering in Nigeria. Schools are established in an area where there is a real

and urgent need, and such area must be a conducive and convenient area, especially for the learners. Based on the community where a school is located, a school can be said to be a rural school or an urban school. The urban schools are schools having social amenities like hospitals, good road network, etc. surrounding the school location, while the rural schools are school embattled with lack of social amenities. The availability of social amenities helps to improve learning process as learning become less abstract for learners.

The first schools in Nigeria were established by the colonial masters, and their location were determined by the settlement of the colonial masters. The ultimate objective of the colonial masters in establishing schools are for the learners to be able to read and write, but nowadays, the objective of schools have gone beyond that. Schools are training ground for diverse professions, thus the need for proper location of the school, in order for the school to be able to serve its purpose. For decade's different government, religious bodies and the communities have been responsible for the establishment of schools. The location is decided by these authorities is such that will benefit them. Nigeria being a democratic republic has all its systems controlled by politicians or individuals with political mindset. At most times the politician in government chooses school location that favour their political career, without considering the need of the community. An example is the establishment of Mega schools, when most of the old ones are dilapidated and in need of renovation.

Religious bodies also play politics while citing their privately owned schools, such as in the case where representatives from different branches come together to vote on the geographical location in which

the new school will be established. The community that is in need of such school but is not properly represented will lose such bid to another community. Also the focus of religious bodies may also be on the financial gain, they will get from the establishment of these schools thus they become bias by focusing on the financial gain of such schools in urban areas.

Political Influences on Choice of School Heads:

Management is just the implementations of the educational politics. The link between school head and overall success of a school has been recognized for some time. The head teacher's leadership can be critical in influencing improvement in the school's organization and the teaching and learning environment (Ikegbusi, 2016). The politics and educational leadership may also shape the leader's approach to a keyed area, which can be characterized as transformational leadership (Plato, 2010). This is concerned with the construction of a strong connection between the government and the school leadership, which they believe that it will raise motivation and ability of students to achieve more than expected. There are some tentative evidences that government (lead by politicians) context may influence some school head to take a different approach to the distribution of leadership across their organization (Grant, 2012). Several issues and challenges are being faced by leaders of public schools based on the influence and powers of government of that state (Maclaren, 2013). Appointment of school heads are done by the ministry or commission in charge of education in various states.

Politics, Community Behaviour and Education: - Day (2009) warned that

educational policies should not be implemented without due consideration of culture and contextual appropriateness of societal values. Politics due influence students' admission as political influence from politicians could give unqualified students admission, displacing the chances of qualified students. The issue of quota system also affects the educational sector as well as admission of students. It was made as a policy in the country that a percentage of every state is reserved either for admission or employment in every institution as one Nigeria. On this note, it is evident that politics and educational leadership goes hand in hand and stand to be inseparable in the country (Ikegbesi, *et al.*, 2016). There is a general agreement between educationist and educators that education involves a desirable change in human behaviour, through the process of teaching and learning. This means that a human being who exhibits undesirable character from the point of view of the acceptable societal norms and values cannot be said to be educated (Carr *et al.*, 2015). Education is a social service, provided worldwide with multiple objectives in mind (Igbanugo, 2013).

Implications of Socio-Economic and Political Stress on Secondary Education Management for Sustainable National Development

Ezewu (1983) highlighted the following as some of the implications of socio-economic stress on education are:

Prevention of early attendance to school:

- Finding by Ololube, (2011) has shown that families of higher socio-economic status send their children to school earlier than those of lower socio-economic status. They have the means, resources and opportunities

to send their children and wards to early childhood education centers and schools. But due to socio-economic stress, such families may delay the registration of their wards in schools as at when expected.

Provision of books and other materials:-

Income is a major determinant in the Nigerian education environment. Parents of higher socio-economic status usually earn higher incomes and value school education more than those of lower socio-economic status (Ololube, Onyekwere & Agbor, 2015). Affluent parents possess the monetary and economic means and willingness to make books and other necessary school materials available to their children and wards. But poor parents experience difficulty in the provision of such materials. Thus their socio-economic stress will deny them the ability to provide schooling materials for their children as at when due, or even at times the children will have to cope with the lack.

Development of interest in school activities:-

As children attend school, it is expected that they show considerable interest in school activities. According to Ezewu (1983), children from lower socio-economic status homes show less interest in sporting activities than children from higher socio-economic status homes. Children of higher socio-economic status parents show interest in both academic and extracurricular activities in school. This is due to the psychological effect that socio-economic stress has on the children, they tend to focus their thinking more on survival than any other thing else, this will affect the psychomotor development of the children.

For education in Nigeria to serve its lofty goals and bring about the expected change, it should not be politicized. It should

be well financed. The schools should maintain discipline to avoid examination malpractices, retain or keep students in school by avoiding what can encourage the students to be absent from the school and avoid community interference in the school administration and be fair to all. But where the above are not in place, there will be chaos and this will affect the society at last. For instance, it will affect the labour market, that is qualified, competent and serious minded personnel will be scared half-baked staff will be in large number and this will affect the general development of the society. Experts that can build good structure, good road and other infrastructure will be scarce and results to collapse buildings, power failure, fake drugs, fake personnel and so on.

It could also lead to eroding of social values if people are not gainfully employed. It could result to all sorts of social vices as being experienced in the society such as kidnapping, drug trafficking, internet fraud, robbery and political touts. All these are threats to the peace of the society. Also it will affect the intakes of tertiary institutions; the number of students that will be admitted will be drastically reduced. Politically, the drop out or half-baked will not allow the competent to rule because these set of group will sell their consciences to vote-in wrong people that can give them money.

Conclusion

Nigeria secondary education would continue to experience various management challenges particularly in a period of socio-

economic and political stress. If the lofty objectives of secondary education are to be effectively accomplished and to ensure sustainable development in Nigeria, all these management challenges must be properly addressed by all stakeholders of secondary education and work relentlessly towards alleviating them.

Recommendations

Based on the submission of this paper, the following suggestions are made:-

- Schools should be established with the students as the focus for determination of the school location.
- Politicians should allow the education authorities to select leaders of schools with stated standards; this will give chance for experts and qualified leaders to take leadership positions in schools.
- School curriculum should be designed with focus on the norms of the society.
- Appointments on education should be based on experience and area of specialization as this will help to achieve the goals and objectives of education as the appointees are well grounded on the field of educational management and administration.
- Effective training must be given to our students so that they would not be involved in cultism and social vices.
- Education should not be politicized, it should be well financed as recommended by UNESCO and modern equipment and facilities should be in schools for smooth teaching and learning process.

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