

Fundamental Issues in the Management of Secondary Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper x-rayed the fundamental issues in the management of secondary education in Nigeria. It sought to examine the roles of government, teachers, school heads and provision of infrastructural facilities in the management of secondary education in Nigeria. Because a well-focused and defined pattern of educational system that is all embracing that is fashioned and well-developed can lead to goal actualization; considering the fact that whenever developed minds talk about development in the society, they also talk about the role of education and training in building people's productive capacities to stimulate, strengthen, spread and sustained growth. Therefore, viable suggestions were made with a view to sustaining and enhancing qualitative secondary education, believing that all the stakeholders in education will synergize efforts to curb the menaces of decadent issues in educational management.

Keywords: fundamental, issues, management, secondary and education

INTRODUCTION

Education is generally acknowledged to be means of empowering an individual through the acquisition and utilization of knowledge and skills to enable him/her become useful to himself/herself in the community. Nwadiani (2000) acclaimed education as a magic wand for the solution to the problems that plague mankind. Education therefore is the aggregate of all processes by means of which a person develops abilities, attitude and other forms of behavior of positive value in the society in which he lives. Hence, in Nigeria, there have been introduction of a series of "targeted" forms of education such as Education for development, Global education, Education for peace and human rights, Education for women, Education for citizenship and so on. Secondary education plays important roles in the actualization of making an individual self-reliant and developing the nation. Hence, over the years, many secondary schools were opened and the existing ones were expanded in availability of infrastructure, so as to provide the formal education needed for the secondary school going age. When the issue of producing qualitative secondary school leavers comes to mind, the need for qualified, efficient, dedicated, experienced and effective teachers cannot be over-looked. However, these schools can achieve nothing without qualitative and efficient teachers, as well as a vibrant and result-oriented secondary school system.

Government purported huge capital outlay on human capital formation and capacity building for increased job performance for teachers and enhanced secondary school system in Nigeria seem not to be yielding the expected results. Perhaps, governments lip service on enhancement of teachers remunerations, infrastructural development, welfare package (which includes teachers' hazard allowance), and other acclaimed incentives are cosmetic. Heads of schools who are commonly referred to as school managers are allegedly made to bear the brunt of the government's ineptitude, although they have their own share of the blame. Management of secondary schools has involuntarily come under focus by stake holders of education as the bane of pragmatic secondary school education. Parents, students and other stakeholders may only maintain a stance of simulated innocence but could also be blamed in their respective concerns. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to elucidate the fundamental issues in the management of secondary education in Nigeria with a view to proffering suggestions that will help advance the prospects of secondary education in Nigeria.

Obviously, there appears to be a plethora of fundamental issues that will come to the fore when the problems of management of secondary education are to be examined. For the purpose of sequence and clarity,

these issues will be discussed under the following sub-headings: the role of government, teachers, students, parents, etc. To this end, there is need to accelerate, spur greater integration, encourage and also create socio-economic environment that is more lenient, increased access to knowledge and skills-training will be essential in the process of improving productive capacities that can be sustained and lead to national development and transformation.

CONNECTING EDUCATION WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

All the foregoing complex interrelationships call for a restructuring of education and technology in such a way that the coordinating unit such as “Ministry of Education, Innovation and Technology” to replace the traditional stand-alone Ministry of Education. This paper is responsible for harnessing basic education and entrepreneurial innovations and then connecting them with the other socio-economic and environmental segments of the society. This restructuring becomes necessary because of the much discussed disconnection between education and the labour market on one hand and between school management transformations in Africa with special reference to Nigeria. Babalola (2013) asserts that development is concerned with the transformation of the individuals, households, communities, private as well as public institutions through building of human capacities to ensure that available resources are properly managed and directed towards societal and economic improvements. Sustainable development connotes the ability to keep going and keep up the progress made in the social,

economic and ecological segments of the society without making the future generation worse off. Stiglitz (1998) introduces the concept of structural transformation to the definition of development by saying that: Development represents a transformation of society, a movement from traditional relations, and traditional ways of dealing with health and education, traditional methods of production, to more “modern” ways. The changes that are associated with development (that) provides individuals and societies with more control over their own destiny. (And that) enriches the lives of individuals. Moreover, World Bank (2003) asserts that “development is sustainable if it “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. This paper is significant in creating networks for researchers, policy makers, business community (responsible for tapping, creating ideas and technologies used for balanced socio-economic metabolism; therefore, an increase in investment in rural, urban/vocational training will enable young people to acquire the skills needed to succeed in education industry as this is centered on development and sustainability.

Efficient management of education means efficient management of the economy such that wealth of the nation could be made to translate to people’s welfare through adequate investment in health services, education services, enabling environment and employment opportunities to ensure maximum contribution of skilled labors to National productivity and the growth of the society

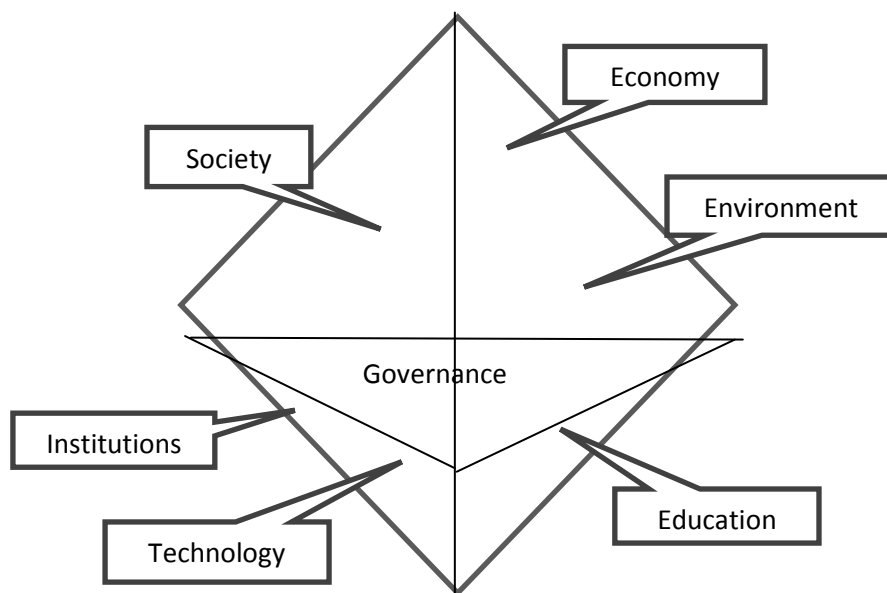


Fig. 1: Education and technology for Sustainable Development. Source: Scoullas (2007).

Fig. 1 clearly spells out the place of education and technology as tools for sustainable development as tools for sustainable development. The model is made up of two pyramids in which the upper one contains the three pillars of sustainable development while the lower portion is made up of three tools that can be used to address challenges of socio-environmental impacts of economic activities involved during the process of structural transformation of a society. The basic thrust of the concept is that social institutions including institutions of learning (through their curricular, teachers and learners) should endeavor to educate (in attitude, skills and knowledge) the society to attune (in everyone's consciousness and mentality) to the fact that the environment whether renewable or non-renewable is the source of the national wealth and that some irreparable damages could be done to this important root of wealth.

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Perhaps, one of the most important issues that agitate the minds of stakeholders' in secondary education is that of government policy in relation to the secondary education system. These issues include prompt payment of salaries, refusal to implement approved wages and salaries as outcomes of negotiations, supervision of schools, recruitment policies, reward structure for hard work, politicization of the education sector and advancement of car loans to the teachers (Omorogbe, 2013). The above list is by no means exhaustive but they represent core areas where government has failed to live up to its responsibilities.

Government appears to be paying lip service to funding of secondary education in Nigeria. International benchmark on the percentage education to be received in relation to the total national budget is estimated to be in the neighborhood of at least twenty six percent (26%). It is sad, yet true, that budgetary allocation to education in Nigeria over the last two decades to be specific is a far cry from this benchmark. No doubt, the quality of education a nation can provide her citizens is a function of the funding profile accorded the education ministry at all levels. Nigeria has not done much in this regard (Omorogbe, 2013). Therefore, government's lip service to education portrays an outward demonstration of commitment that may be seen to be there, but a closer perusal reveals yawning gaps that are craving for serious attention.

Furthermore, government's inability to accord teachers their rightful place in society and implement policy decisions that are capable of enhancing their living standards is an important issue in the management of secondary education in Nigeria. By virtue of the various

roles the teacher plays in the community, almost every school child and most members of the community where the school is located knows him. As the mainstay of the educational system, the teacher promotes the teaching learning process in various capacities as an instruction counselor, researcher, friend and innovator. To enhance the quality of education therefore, adequate provisions should be made by the government for the production of highly motivated, dedicated, devoted, respected and competent teachers who can fit adequately into the social life of the school, community and the society at large. This can be realized only, if both the government and the general public recognize the job of the teacher as being crucial for the survival of the individual and development at large and to give him the social recognition he deserves (Ehiaguina, 2009). The government seems to fail to accord teaching the befitting status of a profession; hence the shoddy way and manner in matters affecting the profession are treated.

Underlining the importance of teachers and the need to retain them in the secondary schools, Fagbemiye (1998) put it succinctly that any mention of falling standard of education should seem facile without tackling the root cause – the public image of teachers, the untold consequences of teachers' poor self-image, confidence, the related problem of teachers and effectiveness. Notable Nigerian researchers like Ukeje (1992), Ogunu (1998) and Adesina (1982) all attributed the high attrition rate and seeming instability of the teaching service to poor salary, low public image, poor retirement benefits and poor conditions of service, which are all predicated on government's irresponsible attitude to teachers and the education system.

Although, the secondary school system is expensive to keep afloat, quality however, in any form is partly a function of the total funds made available by government to the system and judiciously utilized for the purpose to which is meant for. Funds are required and necessary to maintain both the human and material resources of the system in order to achieved desired goals. Also, there is the need for an effective monitoring of management of funds presently being allocated to the sector, as effort should be intensified to improve on what is currently being allocated to the system.

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS

The most important person in the curriculum implementation process is the teacher. With their knowledge, experience and competencies, teachers are central to any curriculum improvement effort. Teachers are the most knowledgeable about the practice of teaching and are responsible for introducing the

curriculum in the classroom. Since implementation takes place through the interaction of the learner and the planned learning opportunities, the role and influence of the teacher is indisputable (Eimuhi, 2014).

When the roles of teachers are critically viewed against the backdrop of socio-economic development and capacity building for increased job performance, the need for highly qualified experienced, dedicated and efficient crop of teachers needed for the effective management of secondary education cannot be over-emphasized (Ehiaguina, 2009). In spite of the large numbers of teachers so far produced by the various teachers' institutions and the enormity of teachers absorbed over the years, it is baffling to observe the number of teachers in the teaching profession is still grossly inadequate.

The shortage of qualified and experienced teachers who should have brought about the realization of the laudable national education objectives in our secondary schools gives cause to worry because it is at the secondary level that career decisions are made by young graduates. When the idea of producing qualitative School leavers comes, the notion of having adequately qualified and experienced teachers cannot be overlooked because without them, there can be no qualitative education. At present, not only are the teachers insufficient to meet the management needs of the secondary school system, the few ones already there are allegedly leaving the system. As reported on page five of the Nigerian Tribune of August 12, 2008 under the caption "Government needs 39,239 teachers yearly," it was stated that "both the state and federal governments needs to recruit 39,239 qualified teachers annually into the secondary school system for the next eight years to set up the standard of education ... it required the commitment of the state government to hire qualified teachers to fill emerging vacancies..."

The present staff strength in the secondary school system could be attributed to the attrition of the available teachers to other sectors that are deemed more economically viable; thus the teaching profession being used as a stepping stone to other professions. This may account for the decline in the level of personal discipline amongst teachers in schools. Indiscipline among teachers can be manifested in absenteeism, lateness to school, I –don't care attitude to assigned tasks and general lack of enthusiasm among such teachers. There is also the problem of limited level of exposure of some secondary school teachers, arising from their inability to network with other colleagues within and outside the shores of their localities, local government and states. This situation could be more

disturbing when many teachers have not attended any workshop, seminar or development programme since recruitment into the teaching profession. Training is organizational effort aimed at helping an employee to acquire basic skills for the efficient execution of the function for which he was hired. It is all about learning and planned or structured activity or approach that is designed to help an individual or a group of people to do different things. Such trainings include all activities engaged in by professionals (teachers) during their service and these activities are designed to contribute to professional improvement.

In fact, the quality of teachers at the secondary school level is an important management issue. In terms of numerical strength, it can be argued that there are more teachers in schools now than in those days that standard of education was adjudged very high. However, majority of those who were the miracle workers in schools in the 1970s and 1980s have retired from service. The ability of some teachers in our secondary schools in Nigeria is declining. Many factors are responsible for this phenomenon but one that needs to be given attention here is the part time programme syndrome. In my view, all that relate to this programme in relation to full time courses of study is in short supply and deficient whether in the area of contact hours (lectures), assessment during examinations, project writing etc.

However, in loco-parents, i.e. poor parenting, not in the sense of home experience but in teachers' unwillingness to accept they are parents by virtue of their roles in the school system, is also an issue. No sane parent will watch his/her child drifting into destruction without concern. A teacher is a parent in school and so, must strive to give such care to students who need attention in school.

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL HEADS

The principal maintains a school tone and culture that create the climate of social responsibility. Effective curriculum implementation does not take place in a school where the principal is incapable of executing supervisory functions. (Eimuhi, 2014).

The administrative style of some school heads is an important management issue. Some school heads see themselves as bosses, not first among equals. Some heads adopt the autocratic leadership style and therefore nucleate a reign of terror on the teachers in their circumstances and may work in fear and subdued silence. Some school heads may use *laissez-faire* or participation leadership styles. Suffice it to depose, however, that the type of leadership style that is adopted

by the school head has an impact on this managerial efficiency. Ideally, an educational manager as a formal leader in the school plays a key role in developing teachers' identification with the school and its goals. The adoption of these characteristics will help the school head to motivate teachers and other staff members not only to participate in the school activities, but also to commit themselves to the life of the school.

According to Hoy and Miskel (1991), the greater inducement pattern created by the school leader, the more committed teachers and other staff members will be to the school. It is therefore, expected that the leadership behavior of the education manager will be a force in the generation of teachers and other staff members' commitment. Schools that are led by leaders who provide structure, resources, considerations, influence, professional support, work facilitation and non-controlling and manner should be the work place that elicits teachers and other staff members' commitment to the school system.

More so, lack of accountability and transparency as core elements in the value system in present day Nigeria, which has crept into the education sector, is also a management issue. Subventions and other collection are allegedly not adequately accounted for by school heads (Orboh, 2010). However, undue involvement in politics of the days by school heads without being mindful of the fact that they belong to a calling that is divinely set apart for the advancement of humanity. As mentioned earlier, the quality of school administrators have decline too. Some principals, do not reside in localities where their schools are situated. Some access their schools at most twice and thrice weekly. This kind of attitude has far-reaching implications for the entire school system and academic performance as a whole.

PROVISION OF INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES AND MANAGEMENT

Facility management (FM) is an interdisciplinary field devoted to the coordination of space, infrastructure, people and organization, often associated with the administration of office blocks, arenas, schools, convention centers, shopping complexes, hospitals, hotels, etc. However, FM facilitates on a wider range of activities than just business services and these are referred to as non-core functions. Many of these are outlined below but they do vary from one business sector to another. In a 2009 Global Job Task Analysis, the International Facility Management Association (IFMA) identified eleven core competencies of facility management. These are: communication; emergency preparedness and business continuity; environmental stewardship and sustainability; finance and business;

human factors; leadership and strategy; operations and maintenance; project management; quality; real estate and property management; and technology. FM is subject to continuous innovation and development, under pressure to reduce costs and to add value to the core business of the client organization where possible (Mudrak, Wagenberg and Wubben, 2004). No meaningful teaching and learning take place without adequate resource materials e.g. whiteboards, flip charts, simulators, models etc. The availability and quality of resource material and the availability of appropriate facilities and personnel such as teachers, administrative and technical staff has a great influence on curriculum implementation in the secondary schools.

Decayed infrastructure is another management issue in secondary education. A visit to some schools especially in the rural areas, reveals that a number of classroom blocks which was in use in the 1980s have either their roofs blown off, or are now in the bush due to lack of care and attention. Although the situation has improved slightly in some states, we are yet to get to the Promised Land. There is also the issue of teaching/learning resources. Many schools lack modern chalkboard, libraries, sporting facilities, desks and chairs, water supply, electricity, laboratories, workshops, reagents/chemicals, internet facilities among others. (Omorogbe, 2013) The absence of most of these basic facilities has resulted in poor academic performance in most schools.

CONCLUSION

For an educational system to be classified as functional and effective it must be all encompassing, all embracing and should be fashioned out and well- developed. The struggle for the restoration of Secondary education in Nigeria to its rightful place is worthwhile. It is however, the submission of this paper, that all the stakeholders in the education industry – government, school heads, teachers, students and parents are joint collaborators in the decline observed in the educational standard in the country today, with the government playing a leading role. Therefore, in order to elucidate these fundamental issues, there is need for synergy of the afore-mentioned stakeholders that will culminate in chasing away the decadent issues in the management of Secondary education in Nigeria, so that what is learnt in the school can be made to translate to sustainable creation of wealth in the society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of all that has been discussed so far, the following measures are suggested in order to redeem the dwindling of the academic performance and management of the secondary education in Nigeria.

There is need for a total turn around in terms of government's attitude in the area of policy implementation towards Secondary education. Government should stimulate the growth and increase in education industry as well as effective management so as to achieve the desired goals. As a matter of urgency, attention should be paid to these issues:

1. Revitalization and restructuring of ministries of education particularly, the inspectorate wing. There is need to invigorate this arm so as to forestall undesirable practices and restoring core professional values in schools.
2. As a matter of priority, there should be prompt attention to academic issues and challenges before they go out of hands such as;
3. Prompt payment of teachers' salaries
4. Prompt implementation of resolution relating to wages and conditions of employment.
5. Due process should be followed in matters relating to discipline of teachers and students.
6. There should be massive infrastructural development in rural and urban schools.
7. Need for attitudinal change among teachers so as to be punctual, disciplined and committed to their jobs.
8. Finally, there should be massive recruitment of teachers across subject areas or specialization at the Secondary School level.

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