Primary School Administration in Nigeria: Issues, Problems and way Forward

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Abstract: Primary school education is the foundation education and it is vital for the development of education in Nigeria. It is unfortunate that as important as the primary school education is to the social economic and technological advancement of the country that the education is faced with many issues and problems. This article discussed issues and problems facing primary school administration in Nigeria and the way forward. Secondary data were used to support the various points raised in the paper. The secondary school data were sourced from print materials and online publication. This paper identified insecurity, large out of school children and poor quality of learning as some of the issues affecting the administration of primary schools. The paper also identified inadequate funding, shortage of professional teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, ineffective supervision, corruption and lack of data to plan as problems militating against effective administration of primary schools in Nigeria. To solve these problems identified, the following were recommended; that the government should increase the funding of primary school education by implementing the UNESCO 26% recommendation for an annual budget of education in Nigeria. This will aid effective administration of primary school education in the country.

Keywords: Administration, Challenges, Education, Primary School

Introduction

The Nigerian educational system comprises of the basic education and post-basic education. Ahmed, Ajemba, & Ogunode (2021) observed that the Basic Education is the education given to children aged 0-15 years. It encompasses the Early Child Care and Development Education (0-4) and 10 years of formal schooling. Early Child Care and Development Education however is segmented into ages 0-4 years, situated in daycare or crèches, fully in the hands of the private sector and social development services, whilst ages 5-6 are within the formal education sector. Basic Education, to be provided by Government, shall be compulsory, free, universal and qualitative. It comprises: 1-year of Pre-Primary, 6 years of Primary, 3 years of Junior Secondary Education and post-secondary school education (FRN, 2013).

Primary school education in Nigeria is plagued with many issues and challenges preventing its effective administration. This paper is aimed to examine the issues and problems hindering effective administration of primary school education in Nigeria.

Concept of Primary School

The primary school education is one of the component of basic education. The FRN in its National Policy on Education (2013) defines primary Education as the education given to children aged 6 — 12 years. Osiesi, (2020), observed that primary education, globally, is the basis of formal education. It is the thread that connects other higher levels of learning, developing in young minds the very skills, experiences and knowledge for a tougher and higher pursuit in academics. Through primary education, the art and act of writing, reading, acquisition of necessary skills, attitudes and the basic information needed for appropriate adjustment into the
society and the world in general is imbibed. This level of education is paramount to the core advancement of many economies, a reason for its inclusion into the Millennium Development Goals of the universal primary education. Various problems ranging from insecurity, illiteracy, religious violence, ignorance and political servitude in Nigeria for example, can be curbed or eradicated by the aid of primary education. This has caused most governments (Nigeria included) to make primary education free and declare it universal and compulsory (Ahmed, Ajemba, & Ogunode 2021; Kubiat, 2018). Ogunode, Ugbome & Musa, (2021) viewed primary school as the post-pre-education system that deals with the provision of functional education for the children. Primary /basic school are educational institutions that prepares the learners for junior and secondary school education. The basic education is designed to provide the learners with basic forms of education. The objective of primary school education include to inculcate functional literacy and numeracy, develop the ability to communicate effectively, and enhance positive attitudes towards cooperation, work, community, national development and continuing learning (UNESCO, 2011). Ahmed, Ajemba, & Ogunode (2021) and Osiesi, (2020) opined that the functions/importance of primary education across Nigeria is: help learners master the art of writing, reading and Arithmetic; help learners develop and be of good conduct and behavior, to help learners in acquiring vital skills and appreciate the worth of manual labour. The objectives of primary education according to FRN (2013) in the National Policy on education are to: inculcate permanent literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively; lay a sound basis for scientific, critical and reflective thinking; promote patriotism, fairness, understanding and national unity; instill social, moral norms and values in the child; develop in the child the ability to adapt to the changing environment and provide opportunities for the child to develop life manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capability. In pursuance of these objectives, primary education shall be compulsory, free, universal and qualitative; and curriculum for primary education shall be as follows: primary 1-3 and 4 to 6. The realization of the objectives of primary school education hinges on effective administration and planning (FRN, 2013, Ogunode 2020).

Concept of Primary school Administration

Ogunode & Abashi, (2020) opined that administration deals with systematic organization, arrangement, integration, evaluation and co-ordination of both materials and human resources in an effective and efficient way to realize the general educational objectives while Ogunode & Atiga (2021) noted that primary school administration refer to administration that takes place at the primary school level in which the head-teacher and his assistants are directly involved. Primary school administration can be defined as: wise utilization of both human and material resources within the primary school system such that the objectives of the primary school are achieved or accomplished. National Open University of Nigeria (2011) observed that primary school administration is the process through which all human efforts and materials are appropriately mobilized and harnessed towards the realization of the goals of primary school. It is also the process through which primary school head teacher (administrator) plans, organizes, coordinates, directs and controls the affairs and activities as well as the human, material and financial resources in the primary school maximally to accomplish the corporate goals of the primary school.

Issues in Primary School Administration

There are many issues facing primary school administration. Some of them include insecurity, large number of drop out school children and poor quality of learning.

Insecurity

Insecurity is a very big issue affecting the administration of primary school education in Nigeria. Ogunode (2020) submitted that insecurity is one of the major problem 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. One of the most insecurity challenge facing the country is the Boko Haram group, kidnapping and militant group. Boko Haram has carried out violent attacks in the north-eastern parts of Nigeria. Thousands of Nigerians have been killed and many have been forced to flee their homes. Schools have been the primary target of the attacks. Since 2011, Boko Haram, whose name means ‘Western Education is Forbidden, has expanded its attacks to the direct target of schools. It has resulted in the killing and abduction of hundreds of teachers and students and the destruction of school buildings and teaching materials. Olowonefa, Ogunode & Ohibime (2022); Ogunode, 2020 Ahmed, Gregory, Abubakar 2021; Ahaotu & Ogunode 2021)

Large Number of Drop Out of School Children

Another issue facing the administration of primary school education in Nigeria is the problem of large number of children out of school. Nigeria stands out globally in its number of out-of-school children. Though the number is debated in the country, the latest estimates (based on the 2013 Demographic and Health Survey, DHS) indicated that 13.2 million of basic education school age children, i.e. age 6-14 years old, are out of school. This figure includes children who never entered school as well as dropouts. Unfortunately, the trend is also negative, as this figure represents an increase of 3.3 million from the 2010 estimate. An overwhelming majority of out-of-school children 12.6 million are in the North (World-Bank, 2017). FME (2018), with about 10.5 million out-of-school children out of the 20 million worldwide, Nigeria has the highest number of out-of-school children in the world. These include the almajiri, girls of school age (who constitute 60 percent), children of nomadic pastoralists and migrant fishermen and the one million children displaced by the Boko Haram Insurgency (FME, 2018).

Poor Quality of Learning

The issue of poor quality of learning in the primary schools in Nigeria is a very big problem. Ogunode, Ohibime, Nasir, Gregory (2021) submitted that the poor learning outcome among the children of Basic education in Nigeria is another challenge the programme is facing. This submission is reaffirmed by Ogunode (2020) and World Bank (2017), who noted that the quality of Basic education measured in terms of student learning outcomes, is low in Nigeria. According to international standards, children who have completed grade 3 are expected 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). In terms of variation across the States, a test administered to grade 4 pupils as part of the 2013 Service Delivery Indicator (SDI) Survey produced an overall low score of 32 percent, with the two southern states leading the ranking (59 and 54 percent) and the two northern states with significantly lower scores (23 and 20 percent). Ogunode, Ohibime, Nasir, Gregory,(2021) also cited Alsom Asodike, &Ikpitibo, Clinton (undated) cited Omotayo, Iheberene and Maduewesi who established that poor implementation strategy, management and lack of assurance as responsible factors that contributed to the failure of the UBE to attain its goals since its inception more than 10 years ago. Other predicaments include financial problems in terms of misappropriation and embezzlement of funds, and financial crimes of all sorts being perpetuated by those in authority. As a result, there is an absence of adequate financial resources to implement programmes and policies that will promote this level of education. Also incompetence on the part of some teachers and head-teachers leads to poor quality assurance, delivery and supervision in the system.

Challenges of Primary school Administration in Nigeria

There are many challenges facing the primary school education in Nigeria. Some of them include; inadequate funding, shortage of professional teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, ineffective supervision, corruption and lack of data to plan.

Inadequate Funding

Inadequate funding is a major problem facing the administration of primary school education in
Nigeria. The budgetary allocation for the educational sector is inadequate and below the recommendation of the UNESCO 26% for developing countries like Nigeria. Funding is very important to the development of primary school. No any meaningful administration can take place without adequate funding (Olowonefa & Ogunode 2021; Ogunode, Ugborne& Musa, 2021). This submission is established by (Ogunode, Adah, Aud, Pajo (2020); Ogunode (2020) who noted that inadequate funds is a very big problem hindering the administration of primary schools. There are many factors responsible for inadequate funds for administration of primary schools in Nigeria. These factors according to Ogunode and Stephen (2021) include corruption. They opined that the little funds released for the administration of the Basic education is diverted by the officials and political office holders. The corruption practices in the administrative level of Basic Education is among the factors responsible for the shortage of funds for the administration of the Basic education in Nigeria. Shortage of funds for the internal administration of primary schools in the country is caused by the administrative corruption in the administrative offices and ministries in charge of primary school administration. Ogunode, Ugborne & Musa, (2021) identified that poor budgetary allocation, lack of political-will to implement UNESCO recommendation for education, corruption in the administration of primary school, fall in revenue and demand from other sector of the economy are the factors responsible for shortage of funds in the administration of primary school education. The effects of underfunding primary school education according to Ogunode, Ugborne & Musa, (2021 will leads to poor quality of education, shortage of infrastructural facilities, shortage of professional teachers, shortage of instructional resources and poor implementation of primary school policies and programme as the effects of underfunding of primary school education.

Shortage of Professional Teachers

Shortage of professional teachers is a very big problem hindering the effective administration of primary schools. For instance, at the basic education level, the UBEC’s 2012 National Personnel Audit Report revealed gross inadequacy in the quality and quantity of teaching personnel in the nation’s primary and secondary schools. According to the report, there were 564,569 teachers in 59,007 primary schools in the country in 2012, of whom 297,960 were males and 266,609 were females. Also, there were a total of 133,338 teachers, comprising 68,085 males and 65,253 females, in 11,295 junior secondary schools in Nigeria. Considering that there were 20,291,709 and 4,313,164 enrollees in primary and junior secondary schools, respectively During the personnel audit period, the teacher-to-pupil ratios of 1:60 and 1:37 were obtained for the nation’s primary and secondary schools, respectively (UBEC, 2012; Independent 2019a). There is no doubt that the inadequacy of qualified teachers has negative impacts on the general quality of basic education in the country. However the basic education level in Nigeria according to Musa (2016); Philip & Okoroafor, Iro, (2015); Ejere (2011) is plagued by acute shortage of professionally qualified teachers.

Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities

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 (Ogunode 2020; Adamu, & Adole, 2015; Christine & Hayatu, (2014). Ogunode & Agwor, (2021) sees school Infrastructural facilities as social capital within the school environment. They include school buildings/complexes such as classrooms, tables, exam hall, chairs, auditoria, desks, staff offices, seminar/conference/board rooms, laboratories, workshops, studios, farms, gymasia, central libraries, specialized/professional libraries, faculty libraries, departmental libraries, etc., Institute/centers’ specialized facilities e.g. ICT infrastructure, special laboratories, conference facilities, etc., and Boards e.g. interactive, magnetic, screen and chalk, etc., ICT that is computer laboratories and services, network connectivity, multi-media system, public address system, slide, and video projectors, and Ergonomics furnishing in laboratories, libraries, and lecture rooms/ theaters, moot courts, and studios, etc. Students’ hotels or accommodation include boys and girls hostels; municipal/physical infrastructure i.e. power supply, water supply, good road networks, sports,
health and sanitation, staff schools, security facilities, etc. The importance of infrastructural facilities in educational institutions include effective delivery of administrative functions in schools; makes the delivery of services fast and reliable; enables teachers to deliver lessons fast; Infrastructural facilities provide a conducive working environment for both teachers and students; Infrastructural facilities enable learners to learn at ease and learn well; Infrastructural facilities enable the teachers to teach well, prepare their lessons, and deliver them online (ICT). The importance of school infrastructural facilities in the realization of educational goals cannot be underestimated. School facilities aid the delivery of the teaching and learning process in the schools. The school offices provide a conducive working environment for teachers, the classrooms help the learners to learn while the school fence protects students, the teachers, and school administrators from criminals. Olowonefa & Ogunode (2022) noted that school infrastructures plays a vital role in student’s academic performance. The school plant protects the entire human resources from the sun, rain, heat cold, and snow. As important as these facilities which are to aid effective teaching and learning in primary schools, it is unfortunate that Ogunode (2020) acknowledged the shortage of infrastructural facilities in public primary schools in Nigeria. Tijani (2014) observed that one of the outstanding problems of primary education in Nigeria is inadequate provision of infrastructural facilities such as school building, classroom, library, sporting facilities and equipment.

Ineffective Supervision

Poor supervision of primary school education in Nigeria is another factor responsible for poor quality of primary school education. Ogunode (2020) observed that the problem of poor school supervision by the respective school administrators have also contributed to the challenges facing the administration of basic schools. Many school administrators do not effectively supervised the basic schools under their watch. The Nigerian government recognized the need to monitor not only the financial management of the school, but also the teaching and learning in schools. In the light of this the government created quality control department at federal state and local government areas for ensuring quality in education. It has been established that quality and standard could be maintained in the educational institutions through regular inspection and continuous supervision of instruction in the schools. Supervision and inspection have been identified as very germane to the day-to-day activities of educational institutions (National Open University of Nigeria, 2009; Onele, & Aja 2016). The supervisor assesses and records the performance of teachers, their ability and consistency in carrying out the classroom activities and keeping of high quality records. The activities of supervisors include the following: inspecting, monitoring, rating, assisting, recommending etc. Ogunode, Jegede, Ajape (2021) identified the following challenges; inadequate funding, shortage of professional supervisors, inadequate supervision materials, political instability, and policies instability, poor capacity development of supervisors, corruption, inadequate transportation facilities and insecurity problems.

Corruption

On the effects of corruption on Basic education administration, Ogunode and Stephen (2021) pointed out to poor implementation of Basic Education policies and programme. They noted that poor implementation of Basic Education policies in Nigeria is as a result of the corruption practices in the administration of Basic education. There are many policies designed and formulated for the development of primary school education in Nigeria. For instance, teacher-student policy of 1:35, ICT facilities policy, feeding programme etc. All these policies and programme are poorly implemented because of the high corruption going on in the various agencies, commissions and ministries responsible for the implementation of the policies and programme. Ogunode (2020), opines that corruption practice in the Nigerian educational institutions is another major challenge preventing the implementation of primary school policies in Nigeria. Research reveals that funds released for the implementation of nationwide Home Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) of the federal government for primary school pupils was diverted into private bank account. This actions is affecting implementation of the nationwide Home Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) (Thewhistler, 2020). Another
effects of corruption on primary school administration according to Ogunode & Stephen (2021) is shortage of infrastructural facilities. Ogunode and Stephen (2021) observed that shortage of infrastructural facilities in the Nigerian Basic Education is also as a result of corruption in the administration of Basic Education in the country. Infrastructural facilities include; administrative block, classrooms, libraries, laboratories, ICT centre, tables, desks, black board, white board, water, electricity, internet services and road network. Many Basic Education schools in Nigeria do not have adequate infrastructural facilities to deploy for teaching and learning. Funds allocated for the provision of capital projects, replacement of facilities, repairs and maintenance in many primary schools in the Nigeria ended up been diverted into private account leaving the primary schools to suffer shortage of facilities. The inadequate infrastructural facilities are affecting the administration of the Basic Education. In order to ensure infrastructural facility development in the Basic education school across the country. The federal government provided a counterpart grant for Basic Education. The UBE facility was created by the Olusegun Obasanjo administration to help provide facelifts to schools at the Basic Education level (primary and junior secondary). Also, Egbefo, (2012) and Suleiman (2005), observed that corruption coupled with economic and political mismanagement has led to instability and gross abuse of power, led to the decaying infrastructure, inadequate staffing, poor and failing education standards, the disappearance of grants, trust funds, loans and of entire project without a trace.

Lack of Data For Planning

There is a problem of data generation and distribution in Nigeria. There is limited educational data on basic schools. School administrator needs data to be able to plan and take decision. Ogunode (2018) conducted a study that investigated the challenges facing the planning of Basic Education in FCT, Abuja, Nigeria and results showed that: 100% of the respondents agreed that there are challenges facing the planning of Basic Education in FCT, Abuja, and the challenges facing the planning of Basic Education in FCT include; lack of reliable data/information, inadequate funding of planning, inadequate planning tools, inadequate educational planner, poor capacity of educational planners, political influences and political instability. Based on this finding, the study recommends that the government should increase the funding of education and specifically the funding of educational planning in the country.

Way Forward

To address these issues and problems facing primary school administration in Nigeria, the following were recommended:

1) The government should implement the UNESCO 26% recommendation for an annual budget of education in Nigeria. This will aid effective administration of primary school education in the country.

2) The government should employ more professional teachers and deploy to all primary schools across the country to aid effective administration of primary schools in Nigeria.

3) The government should provide adequate infrastructural facilities to all the public primary school 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 in the primary schools.

4) The government should improve on the supervision of primary schools by improving the quality of all supervision agencies in the country.

5) The government should fight all institutional corruption in the educational institutions through effective monitoring of funds allocated for management of schools.

6) The government should provide adequate security in all the public primary schools across the country to prevent kidnapping and other forms of crimes. Government should address all issues causing insecurity in the country.
7) 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.

Conclusion

Primary school education is vital for the development of education in Nigeria. Primary school education is the foundation education. It is unfortunate that as important as the primary school education is to the social economic and technological advancement of the country that the education is faced with many issues and problems. This article discussed challenges facing the primary school administration in Nigeria. This paper identified insecurity, large out of school children and poor quality of learning as some of the issues affecting the administration of primary schools. The paper also identified inadequate funding, shortage of professional teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, ineffective supervision, corruption and lack of data to plan as problems militating against effective administration of primary schools in Nigeria. To solve these problems identified, the following were recommended; that the government should increase the funding of primary school education by implement the UNESCO 26% recommendation for an annual budget of education in Nigeria. This will aid effective administration of primary school education in the country.

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