Secondary School Education in Nigeria: Problems, Prospects and Solutions

Abershi Japhet Zhenseh
abershijaphet@gmail.com

Mikky, Wunubo Gani
wunubomikky@mail.com

Ogunode N., J.
ogunodecob@gmail.com

Abstract: The quality of public secondary education in Nigeria is falling. This is as a result of numerous problems facing the public secondary schools in Nigeria. This study discusses the problems hindering the development of public secondary schools in Nigeria. The paper used both qualitative and quantitative data to provide empirical support on various points raised. The paper identified inadequate funding, shortage of teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, insecurity problem, corruption, poor supervision, over-population, inadequate instructional materials, and politicization of appointment of persons into Education Boards and Commissions and weak administrators. Based on the problems identified, the paper among other recommendation suggested to the federal and states government to increase the funding of the public secondary schools across the country.

Keywords: Corruption, Education, Administration, Democratic.

Introduction

Post-Basic Education and Career Development (PBEC) is the education children receive after a successful completion of ten years of Basic Education and passing the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECCE) 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 Schools, or Senior Secondary graduates that are not proceeding to the tertiary level, as a means of preparing them for the world of work, wealth creation and entrepreneurship (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Ige (2013) observed that secondary education is critical to the education of a child, being the bridge between primary and tertiary education. Ige went further and submitted that the importance of secondary education in educational system cannot be overemphasized. Apart from serving as the link between primary and tertiary education, it provides opportunity for a child to acquire additional knowledge, skills, and traits beyond the primary level. A major factor that necessitates the acquisition of secondary education in Nigeria is that the education being provided at the primary level is proving to be insufficient for a child to acquire permanent literacy, communicative, and numeracy skills expected from him/her at the end of the training (Chinelo, 2011; Ige, 2011). The objectives of Post-Basic Education and Career Development (PBEC) according to Federal government of Nigeria (2013) are to: a. 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; b. offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, disposition, opportunities and future roles; c. provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades; d. provide entrepreneurial, technical and vocational job-specific skills for self-reliance, and for
agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development; e. develop and promote Nigerian languages, art and culture in the context of world's cultural heritage; f. inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence; g. foster patriotism, national unity and security education with emphasis on the common ties in spite of our diversity; and h. 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. The public secondary schools in Nigeria is faced with many challenges (Ogunode, 2020; Atiga & Ogunode 2021; Ige, 2013). Many researchers have identified poor quality education as among the problems hindering the development of public secondary schools in Nigeria.

Edeh, (2021) cited World Economic Forum (2019) who accessed 140 countries, including 38 African countries, to rank the best education systems based on skill development. The report looks at the general level of skills of the workforce and the quantity and quality of education in each country. Factors considered include: developing digital literacy, interpersonal skills, and the ability to think critically and creatively. Scores were rated on a 0 to 100 scale, where 0 represent the optimal situation. The report revealed the top 10 countries in Africa in the following order. Namibia ranked 100th position in global education system and 10th in Africa with a score of 52.7%, and ranked 43rd on extent of staff training and 82nd in critical thinking in teaching. This was followed by Egypt which ranked 99th position on global education system, and 9th in Africa with 52.8 points, slightly ahead of Namibia; Cape Verde follows closely behind Egypt, at 98th position on global education ranking and number 8th in Africa with a score of 53.3%. Kenya ranked 95th position on global education system, ahead of India and behind Brazil, and 7th best in Africa with a score of 55.4. Botswana ranked 92nd position on global education system behind Iran and ahead of Brazil. It held 6th position in Africa with a score of 56.7. It ranked 67th on the extent of staff training and 76th on school mean years of schooling. Among other things, Algeria with 88th position in global education system, came 5th in Africa, with 57.5 points, while South Africa offers the 4th best education system in Africa with a score of 58.5. Mauritius has the 3rd best education system in Africa, with 61 points. U Odd the 74th position on global education system; and ranked 40th position on the extent of staff training and 47th position on quality of vocational training globally. On the other hand, according to the report, the second best education system in Africa is Tunisia, which came 71st position on global education system with 61.4 points. Schychelles holds the position for the best education system in Africa with 69.3 points. It is the only African country in the 50 education system globally, at 43rd position ahead of Ukraine, Hungary, Russia and UAE. It holds a global ranking of 28th position on critical thinking and teaching and 34th on skill set of graduates. Unfortunately, Nigeria seats at 124th position in the world and 25th in Africa behind Rwanda, despite its enormous human and material resources (Edeh, 2021). It is against this background that this paper discusses the problems hindering the development of public secondary schools in Nigeria.

Secondary School Education in Nigeria and Its Problems

In this paper, the following would be considered as problems. Inadequate funding, shortage of teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, insecurity problem, corruption, poor supervision, over-population, inadequate instructional materials, politicization of appointment of persons into Education Boards and Commissions and weak Administrators.

Inadequate Funding

Ogunode, Abubakar, Yahaya, Ajape (2021) and Olowonefa & Ogunode (2021) opined that inadequate funding of public secondary schools in Nigeria is preventing quality assurance programme. Funding is very important in quality assurance programme in secondary schools. Adequate funding is needed to procure the human and materials resources required to ensure quality in the secondary school education system. Among the resources needed for the effective administration of the educational sector, funding has been identified as an indispensable instrument. This is because funding serves as the life-wire for the management and administration of most sectors of the economy including the educational sector. It is based on

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this fact that UNESCO recommended that 26% of the annual budget of any nation should be set aside for the administration and management of the educational sector (Nwafor, Uchendu, & Akani 2015; Odia & Omofonmwan, 2007). Ike (2013) opines that the importance of adequate funding in educational development cannot be overemphasized. No organization can carry out its function effectively without adequate financial resources at its disposal. Ogunode (2021); Ike (2013) and Obe (2009), observed that without adequate funding, standards of education at any level shall be tantamount to a mirage, that is, building castles in the air. Money is important in a school because it is used to construct buildings, purchase needed equipment, pay staff” salaries and allowances, maintain the plants and keep the services going. In Nigeria, secondary education derives its major fund from the annual allocation to the education sector. Unfortunately, allocation to the education sector on which secondary education depends has been consistently low in spite of the strategic role of the sector in the training of manpower for the development of the economy Ike, 2013, Ogunode (2021; Ike, 2016;). The poor funding of secondary school education is responsible for the poor implementation of quality assurance programme in the public secondary schools.

**Shortage of Teachers**

Ogunode, Abubakar, Yahaya, Ajape (2021) and Ogunode (2021) observed that 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. 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 Schools across the nation. 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. No quality education can be achieved in an educational institutions where the number of students is larger than the capacity of the teachers.

**Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities**

Mohammed, Ogunode, & Yahaya (2021) and Ogunode & Abara (2021) submitted that infrastructural facilities which include classroom, administrative blocks, libraries, ICT facilities, chalk board, tables, chairs, desks, water, electricity, internet services and good roads. Many school administrators of secondary school in Nigeria do not have adequate infrastructural facilities to deploy for implementation of teaching programme. Many public secondary schools do not have adequate classrooms, tables, chairs, offices, water, electricity, internet services etc. Alagbu, (2003) observed that administration of secondary school is becoming difficult due to inadequate infrastructural facilities. Alagbu, (2003) also argued that large number of secondary schools suffer an immense deprivation of facilities that aid teaching and learning. It has been observed that teachers’ ineffectiveness in delivering their duties is attributed to inadequate provision of infrastructural facilities for effective teaching and learning. This kind of situation has consistently presented enormous challenges to school heads. Factors responsible for inadequate infrastructural facilities in the Nigerian secondary school include inadequate funding, lack of strategic plan on infrastructural facilities, overpopulation, poor planning and institutional corruption. Ikegbusi, (2014) observed that in a school, where these infrastructures and amenities are not well provided, heads of secondary schools efforts to administer schools diligently will be disenchanted. Probable outcomes of this kind of situation comprise unruly and disorderly students, non-literate population and an unresponsive teaching workforce. These hinder the fulfillment of educational objectives.

**Insecurity Problem**

Mohammed, Ogunode, & Yahaya (2021) and Atiga, & Ogunode, (2021) noted that insecurity is another great threat to effective secondary school management in Nigeria. Effective School
management cannot be possible in an unsecured environment. Nigeria as a country is battling with insecurity challenges and this is affecting the entire educational institutions. The public secondary schools seem to be the most target sectors of the educational institutions in the country. The insecurity problem in Nigeria has led to killing of students, teachers and school administrators. “In north-eastern Nigeria, as of late 2017, there were 1.6 million IDPs, including an estimated 700,000 school-age children, as a result of violent attacks on civilians by Boko Haram, which began in 2009,” the report read in part. “Boko Haram has destroyed nearly 1,000 schools and displaced 19,000 teachers. Reports indicated it had killed almost 2,300 teachers. The education needs assessment found that out of 260 school sites, 28% had been damaged by bullets, shells or shrapnel, 20% had been deliberately set on fire, 32% had been looted and 29% had armed groups or military in close proximity.” UNESCO lamented the shortage of qualified teachers in the northeast, stating security and poor remuneration as reasons why the teachers are emigrating from the region. “Ongoing safety concerns, coupled with teacher salaries that do not cover even basic expenses and delays in payment, perpetuate a shortage of qualified teachers,” UNESCO added. Insecurity challenges is a challenge to the development of secondary school education in Nigeria (Cable, 2020, Atiga, & Ogunode, 2021). Reasons for high insecurity in the county include high rate of unemployment, over-population. The shortage of instructional aids in the primary schools is affecting the administrators of the schools.

Corruption

Ogunode (2021) opined 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. Funds meant for the capital and recurrent services in the secondary schools are been diverted by the officials of the ministries. Funds budgeted for different programme in the ministries are been diverted into private banks. Many public funds meant for the development of education in Nigeria are diverted and mismanaged. The limited funds provided for the planning purposes in the various ministries, department and agencies of education are been diverted and this is affecting the planning of education. Osunyikanmi, (2018) opines 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. Hence, the amount being spent on education is much lower than the figure in the budget. The Corruption Perception Index 2016 revealed that Nigeria had a score of 28. The score ranges from 0 for the highly corrupt to 100 for the least corrupt. The country occupied the 136th position among the 176 countries ranked. Concerted efforts are required to tackle corruption so that development will not elude Nigeria. Edeh, (2021) and Ayobami (2011) pointed out that corruption can be systematic in nature but in a long run will affect the whole life of an institution or society. Corruption can therefore limit the goals of an institution thereby resulting to wastages. Some of the funds made available for the provision of quality education are sometimes diverted for selfish use while in other cases, the budget for the educational sector are misappropriated. This has given rise to the inadequacy of funds for managing the secondary level of education.

Poor Supervision

Olowonefa, & Ogunode (2022) opined that Poor supervision of public secondary schools is another big challenge to the quality assurance programme. When institutions established to ensure supervision, inspection and quality control are weak and unable to carry out their function, the outcome would be poor supervision of instructions. Ogunode & Ajape (2021) disclosed that the present situation shows that instructional supervision of education at every level of education is weak. Educational supervision in the Nigerian educational system has not received maximum attention from the government. Another problem facing the administration of public Post-Basic Education and Career Development (PBECED) is the problem of ineffective supervision according Ogunode & Abara (2021) the various agencies saddled with the responsibility of supervising the public Post-Basic Education and Career Development (PBECED)
in Federal Capital Territory have not been effective. Supervision is key to the achievement of quality public Post-Basic Education and Career Development (PBEC) in Federal Capital Territory. Department of Quality Assurance (DQA) is saddled with the task of ensuring that the highest standards are adhered to and maintained by public and private schools within the FCT. This is done through the constant monitoring of school activities including resumption and mid-term school assessments of schools. The Department has use this planning tool of monitoring for efficiency of performance of teaching and learning system. The DQA’s key functions are inspection, adherence to the dictates of management of schools and accreditations of public and private schools in the FCT (FCT Seb, 2019). Many quality assurance agencies within the territory are not provided with adequate supervision resources to enable them carry out their functions. There are many factors responsible for poor supervision of public secondary school in FCT. Umar, Hauwa’u and Nura (2017); Ogunode & Ajape (2021) and Ogunode & Ugborne (2021) identified poor communication, unqualified and untrained supervisors, lack of materials resource, inadequate supply of personnel, financial constrains, poor human relation, administrative problems, political instability, low teachers morale, indifferent attitude of ministry of education officials to the supervision of instruction, insecurity and inadequate transportation facilities as problems hindering effective supervision of secondary schools.

**Over-Population**

Atiga, & Ogunode, (2021) opined that over-population in the Nigerian public secondary schools is another problem school managers are battling to manage. Manager need a lot of human and materials resources to manage large population of students in the schools. These resources are not in the possession of managers for the planning and organizing the schools. Atiga, & Ogunode, (2021) cited Nwafor, Uchendu, & Akani, (2015) cited Edem in Bua, Olatunde and Amough who pointed out that “Evidence shows an increasing rise in the total population of the African continent and in particular, school age increasing at the rate of 2.5 to 3% per annum and enrolment into schools is on the increase annually”. Increase in population has therefore been a limitation to adequate planning for the delivery of quality education among secondary school students. Secondary schools enrollment rate in the last four decades has 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.

**Inadequate Instructional Materials**

Inadequate instructional materials for the implementation of curriculum is affecting the quality assurance programme of public secondary schools. Slavin (2010), observed that a well planned and imaginative use of visual aids in lessons should do much to banish apathy, supplement inadequacy of books as well as arouse student’s interest by giving them something practical to see and do, and at the same time helping to train them to think things out themselves. Instructional materials helps to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Okhakhu, Oladiran, & Omoike, (2016) did a study to find out the effects of instructional resources on the academic achievement of secondary school students. The findings showed that instructional resources play a significant role in enhancing performance of students in schools. Furthermore, the results revealed that schools with adequate quality of teachers and enough instructional material resources showed superiority in academic achievements test than schools without adequate teacher quality and instructional material resources. As seen in the findings from this research, it could be easily concluded that the main reason for lack of proper use of instructional materials in the secondary schools is the lack of users’ education.

**Politcization of Appointment of Persons into Education Boards and Commissions**

Edeh, (2021) submitted that education quality improvement in Nigeria has adversely been affected by the practice of politicization of recruitment. Politicization takes place when merit system is considered secondary to other factors like political affiliation of the candidates, quota system, etc. as advantage for appointments, career mobility and training, when government
pressurize civil servants to reflect the interest of its party in the execution of its functions (Edeh, 2021; Osakwe, 2007). Appointment of board members in the education sector has often been based on political considerations and patronage other than merit. Hence, square pegs are put in round holes leading to inefficiency in policy implementation. Boards and commissions have often been used to compensate those who worked for the party in power without due recourse to their qualifications and professionalism their jobs demand. The sensitive nature of education boards and commissions require egg heads with requisite qualifications, skill and experience to be able to make sound policies and implement them efficiently towards improving the quality of education. Unfortunately, this has not been the case in Nigeria. Edeh, (2021) cited Abah, Edeh & Nwakamma (2016) who opined that in Nigeria, certain social realities have made government to adopt measures which seem to encourage politicization of governmental activities and this cause is severe setback to implementation of social welfare services including education. For instance, the adoption of Federal Character Principle and quota system in distributing government social welfare packages. The consequences of politicized appointment/recruitment to the organization includes corruption, cult of mediocrity, low productivity, inefficiency, indiscipline, poor leadership, overstaffing, low morale, disunity, divided loyalty, etc.

Weak Administrators

Atiga, & Ogunode, (2021) observed that many school administrators appointed by the government to head the various educational institutions in the country are weak and lacks the leadership and administrative competence, skills and ability to manage the various educational institutions towards realizing their objectives. Many people who are appointed as minister, commissioners of education are not professional in education. Some Directors, School administrators appointed to manage educational institutions are mis-fit and this is affecting the administration of education in the country.

PROSPECT FOR SECONDARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

According to Ike, (2017), the prospects of secondary schools in Nigeria includes the following:

a. Government and the private sector should pull in more effort and resources towards the development of education.

b. Educating and re-orientation of teachers, parents and students on the need to discourage examination malpractice in schools.

c. More vocational and technical education centres be establish and the few existing ones property equipped and staffed.

d. An independent inspectorate committee should be put in place to regularly monitor activities in schools as the existing inspectorate unit has seize to function effectively.

e. Government should take over payment of enrolment fees for both primary six examinations and secondary schools external examination.

f. Qualitative and affordable education by made available for all

g. Schools should be properly staffed and equipped.

h. Applicants seeking job replacement irrespective of grades obtained and institution attendee should be given fair and equal opportunity to compete for placement.

i. More modern learning aids such as computers, internet Web sites facilities, overhead projectors, firms etc should be provided in schools.

j. Online registration being introduced now for school examination enrolment, by the Nation Examination Body should be encouraged; this will reduce the exploitative tendency by school.

k. Review of school curricula for promoting relevant learning and extra-curricular activities.

l. Quality assurance in terms of class size, number of teachers and instructional material.
Conclusion

The paper concludes that inadequate funding, shortage of teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, insecurity problem, corruption, poor supervision, over-population, inadequate instructional materials, politicization of appointment of persons into Education Boards and Commissions and weak Administrators.

Recommendation

To address the above identified problems, the following recommendation were made:

A. The government should increase the funding of secondary school education in Nigeria. This will provide the school managers with funds to carry out their functions.

B. The government should provide adequate infrastructural facilities like chairs, table, desks, water, electricity, ICT facilities, classrooms, administrative offices, libraries, laboratories and whiteboard.

C. The government should employ more professional teachers. This will help to reduce the high students-teacher ratio in the classes

D. The government should provide adequate security in all public secondary schools.

E. The government should use ICT and effective monitoring and evaluation system to fight all forms of institution corruption in the agencies of education and specifically in secondary schools across the country.

F. The government should improve the capacity of various quality assurance agencies in the country. This will aid effective supervision of secondary schools across the country.

G. Adequate instructional materials should be provided in all public secondary schools across the country.

H. The government should appoint competent and capable school administrators to manage the public secondary school across the country.

References


