



CURRENT PROBLEMS FACING SECONDARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: THEIR EFFECTS ON THE ECONOMY AND THE WAYS FORWARD

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ABSTRACT

The article highlighted and discussed the various current challenges facing Nigerian Secondary Education. The effects of the products from education with these challenges on the Nigerian economy and the ways forward were also highlighted. The paper defined secondary education as the education that children received within the ages 12 to 17 years after primary education and before the tertiary stage. Based on the experiences the author of this article has gathered over the years as a secondary school teacher, the following were some of the current problems facing secondary education in Nigeria. These problems include over population of Nigerians, shortage of classroom buildings and laboratories, examination malpractices and poor funding. Others are corruption among Nigerians, shortage of qualified and dedicated teachers, weak process of recruiting teachers by their employers and weak regulatory body of teachers and so on. Furthermore, high illiteracy, armed robberies, rituals, unemployment and unstable academic calendar were some of the resultant effects of these challenges on the Nigerian economy. As one of the ways forward, the paper recommended that the budgetary allocation to education at all levels of government should be increased to 30% of the total annual budget. The article concluded that the problems presently facing secondary education are caused by Nigerians and they can also be solved by Nigerians.

Keywords: Challenges, current, effects, secondary education, solutions.

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the sectors in Nigeria that produces all the employees and employers of all other sectors. All human and non human resources are emanated from education. The human resources such as personnel and the non human resources such as equipment and other facilities that enable human resources to function well effectively, are the products of education. In any attempt for any government to plays politics with education, definitely, there will be an imbalance in all the sectors of the economy including education. This implies that education is the central processing unit of all sectors in Nigeria. In fact, this crucial role of education has been taking for granted by successive administrations in Nigeria.

Education, as the name implies, is the process of exposing the child to the acceptable values and norms of the society. In other words, education is the process of integrating the child into the positive values and norms in an organised manner in the society. This process will enable the child to separate the good aspects of the values and norms (positive) from the ill ones and assimilates the good ones in order for him or her to be useful to himself or herself and the society at large. In a model society viewed from the constitution perspective, education is the process of exposing the learners to the learning of the values and norms that are in line with the constitution of the country. The values and norms of two or more countries may not be necessarily the same. In the formal setting, Sulai and Sulai (2020) defined education as the process of receiving systematic instruction at a school. Furthermore, Ategwu and Obia (2019) viewed education as a process of discovering and living the truth, expanding one's vision of life and the world and of acquiring practical knowledge. Education is a vehicle for national development (Nwosu, 2020). This means that without education, there will be no meaningful development in any country. In other words, education pilots the development of all sectors of the economy. Also, the author further stated that education is a means through which political, economic, and social changes can be achieved. By this definition, effective political, economic and social changes depend largely on education.

Education in Nigeria is divided into three (3) stages, namely, primary education, secondary education and tertiary education. The secondary education is the median education. Secondary education is the education received by a child in between the primary education and tertiary education. According to the Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) defined secondary education as the education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) went further and stated that the broad goals of secondary education shall be to prepare the learner for useful living within the society and for higher education. These broad goals of secondary education were further split into specific terms by the Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) as follow:

- a) Secondary education will provide all primary school leavers with the opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of sex, social status, religious or ethnic background.
- b) Secondary education will offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and future roles.
- c) It will provide and promote Nigerian languages, art and culture in the context of world's cultural heritage.
- d) Secondary education will provide trained manpower in the applied science, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades;

- e) Secondary education will inspire students with a desire for self improvement and achievement of excellence.
- f) It will foster National unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity.
- g) Secondary education will raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, appreciate those values specified under our broad national goals and live as good citizens.
- h) Secondary education will provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development.

The goals of secondary education stated above by the Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) covered the three (3) domains of the learners, namely, cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. Secondary education is a stage of education that exposes the students to wide ranges of subject areas when compared to primary education and tertiary education. From 1960 till date, several reforms have been carried out by the federal government of Nigerian on secondary education. The essence of all these reforms is to ensure that there is high standard of secondary education in Nigeria. Despite all the reforms carried out by the federal government of Nigeria over the years on secondary education, the standard of education of students, especially those in the secondary schools still remained low day by day in Nigeria. Although, there are secondary schools owned by the state governments, federal government and private individuals. Each provides the human and material resources needed by their schools. The percentage of secondary schools owned by the state governments is relatively higher than the percentages of secondary schools owned by the federal government and the private individuals. But, the majority of the secondary schools controlled and managed by the various state governments, especially those schools located in the rural areas, does not really look like ideal school environments.

Therefore, this paper will examine the problems that are presently facing secondary education in Nigeria, the effects of the challenges on the economy and the possible ways forward.

Current Problems Facing Secondary Education in Nigeria

There are numerous problems presently facing teaching and learning at the secondary education stage in Nigeria. These current problems will be discussed one after the other.

1. **Overpopulation of Students:** No doubt, the population of Nigerians has been exploded (Aduwa, 2020). According to Campbell (2018) quoted the former chairman of the National Population Commission (NPC), Eze Duruiheoma and reported that Nigeria as a country has no population policy that would limit births, and the people of Nigeria have traditionally valued large families. The large population of students from the exploded population of Nigerians has affected the teaching and learning in the secondary schools. This is because, overcrowding of students in a class during teaching and learning causes a lack of control and at the same time have a negative effect on the students (Alyssa, 2018). In addition, Ochonogor and Umudhe (2007) also added their voices and said that the high population of students in some classrooms made class management very cumbersome and by extension rendered teaching and learning ineffective.

2. **Shortage of Classroom Buildings and Laboratories:** Because of the large number of students from the already exploded population of Nigerians, there are not enough classrooms for the students to be accommodated during teaching and learning in the majority of the secondary schools owned and managed by the state governments in Nigeria. With respect to the shortage of laboratories, Maduabum (1996) reported that well-equipped and adequately maintained science laboratories were lacking in the Nigerian secondary schools. Studies have shown that science students in schools with well-equipped laboratories did significantly better than their ill-equipped schools. The few classrooms available are overstretched by the students. This problem of shortage of classroom buildings and laboratories is very common in secondary schools controlled and managed by states and private individuals.

3. **Examination Malpractices:** Examination malpractice is a process of passing an examination through illegal means. It belongs to the negative aspect of the values and norms of the society. But, right now, the level of examination malpractices in the majority of the secondary schools controlled and managed by states and private individuals is very high. This examination malpractice is being perpetuated by some teachers, principals, students and their parents during external examination conducted by West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO) for senior secondary school students in Nigeria. Because of the examination malpractice, West African Examination Council (WAEC) has blacklisted some secondary schools and supervisors from participating in the senior secondary school examination in the recent years. Despite several measures put in place by West African Examination Council (WAEC) to check examination malpractice during the external examination, many secondary schools are still indulging in it. Furthermore, a situation where majority of the senior secondary school students passed their external examinations through illegal means (examination malpractice), to my understanding, they are sending a wrong signal to the economy of Nigeria. In fact, the minds of the majority of the students that are currently in the junior secondary schools have been polluted by some of their teachers, parents and principals with examination malpractice. The majority of the students in the secondary schools controlled and managed by states and private individuals are no longer ready to actually prepare for their external examinations because of examination malpractice.

4. **Poor Funding:** Generally, education in Nigeria is poorly funded by Federal, State and Local governments. The percentage of the annual budgetary allocation to education is very low. The governments at all levels in Nigeria prefer spending more money on the political appointees and their aides. It is a pity that the central processing unit (education) of all sectors of the economy has been neglected. Poor funding of education by the owner of schools in Nigeria is a major problem currently facing the sector. According to Odia and Omofonmwan (2007), for meaningful development to take place in the educational sector, the governments at all levels should take the issue of funding very seriously.

5. **Corruption:** Corruption belongs to the affective domain. It is the willingness of the people to ignore what is right and do what is wrong. Corruption in Nigeria is increasing day by day. The governments at all levels that are supposed to fight corruption, they are indirectly supporting corruption. Because of this, model Nigerian

children now see corruption as a normal way of doing things and also as part of our values and norms. This negative practice has affected all the sectors of the economy including education.

6. **Shortage of Qualified Teachers:** Majority of the secondary schools established by governments and private individuals lacked qualified teachers in the different subject areas, especially in schools owned and controlled by state governments in Nigeria. Despite this problem, millions of Nigerians are turned out every year from secondary schools (poor quality graduates). Based on corruption, staff that are not competent enough are employed as teachers.
7. **Weak Process of Recruiting Teachers:** Presently, our leaders in Nigeria are politicians. Teaching is one of the professions in Nigeria. Teachers to be recruited into the profession in our secondary schools must be professionally qualified. But today, most of the teachers found in our secondary schools are not professionally qualified. The question is who employed them? The teaching profession in Nigeria has been abused to the extent that it has become the least profession in Nigeria. As a result of this, it has lost its value before many Nigerians.
8. **Weak Regulatory Body of Teachers:** The Regulatory body of teaching profession in Nigeria is very weak. The weak regulatory body of teachers is one of the factors that is responsible for the weak process of recruiting teachers. Presently, the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) is the regulatory body of teachers. The policies and programmes of TRCN are merely on paper. Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) has told Nigerians that unqualified teachers in our secondary schools will be flushed out many years ago. But, up till now, nothing has been done to implement such policy.
9. **The Attitudes of Nigerians Toward Education:** The attitudes of some teachers, parents and the general public, to some extent, are not satisfactory. There are some teachers that are not interested in the teaching profession but they are in the various secondary schools as teachers. Such teachers are present in the schools just because of the salaries and allowances. We equally had cases where parents follow their children to schools to fight teachers just because such teacher punished their children and in some cases destroyed school properties. Teachers and school administrators are now beginning to scare in correcting their students because of the negative attitudes of some members of the public in Nigeria.
10. **Weak Admission and Promotion Processes of Students:** Normally, the entrance examination into the various secondary schools owned by the state governments and private individuals is been conducted by the state ministry of education of each of the states in Nigeria. The students will write such entrance examinations in their primary six (6) final examination. The successful students will then moved straight to the secondary schools without further examination. In some cases, some students that failed the placement examination were admitted by some secondary schools. The promotion of students from one class to another class is another problem. In some secondary schools, once a student failed and the school asked him or her to repeat the class, before the school will realise, such student has moved to another secondary

school to continue his or her education in the new class. In addition, some parents even ask their children to jump classes because of the reasons best known to them.

11. **Non Uniform Welfare Packages for Staff:** The salaries and allowances paid to teachers in the federal, states, local government and private schools are not the same. Although, education in Nigeria is placed on concurrent legislative list. These non uniform salaries and allowances for teachers do not encourage hard work among the staff of the secondary schools. By standard, a teacher of the same grade level and step should received the same salary and allowances whether he or she in the public or private secondary schools.
12. **Lack of Instructional Materials and Facilities Meant for Extra Curricular Activities:** Instructional materials are the teaching materials that assist subject teachers to deliver their lessons in a clear and understanding manner to the students in the classrooms. Extracurricular facilities are the school facilities used by the students for out of class activities during school periods. These instructional materials and extracurricular facilities are lacking in the majority of the Nigerian secondary schools. For proper comprehensive assessment of the students' academic performances, the three (3) domains of the learners-cognitive, affective and psychomotor, must be critically evaluated. Without these instructional materials and extracurricular facilities, the holistic evaluation of the students is not complete.
13. **Entry Age into Secondary Schools:** The Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) recommended that secondary education is the education given in institutions for learners aged 12 to 17 years plus. This means that on the entry into Junior Secondary School 1 (J.S.S1), the child must be at least 12 years old. But today, children that are below 12 years of age are admitted into Junior Secondary School 1 (JSS 1) by nearly all the secondary schools in Nigeria. To many Nigerians, especially the parents, this problem is not noticeable by them. Such children that are below the acceptable age (12 years) are not mature enough for secondary education. This problem has been equally extended to our higher institutions in Nigeria. Majority of such children that are below the acceptable age may not be able to face the stress of the academic activities in the secondary schools.

The Effects of the Challenges Facing Secondary Education on the Nigerian Economy

The effects of the problems facing secondary education on the Nigerian economy are highlighted below.

- 1) There will be mass production of poor quality secondary school graduates, hence high level of illiteracy.
- 2) There will be high level of unemployment in the country since the majority of the secondary school graduates are not self reliance.
- 3) There will be more insecurity such as armed robberies, rituals and kidnapping activities in the country.
- 4) Corruption will continue to be increasing day by day.
- 5) There will be unstable academic calendar as a result of strike embarked upon by the academic staff pressing for the improvement of their welfares.

- 6) The economy of Nigeria will continue to remain underdeveloped because the majority of the products of the secondary schools are not sincere to themselves and the country at large.

Proposed Solutions to the Problems Facing Secondary Education in Nigeria

If put into considerations by Nigerians and their leaders, the paper proposed the following remedies to the problems currently facing secondary education in Nigeria.

- 1) Governments at all levels should build more classrooms and laboratories, and equip them to international standard.
- 2) The budgetary allocation to education by the state and federal governments should be increased to at least 30% of the total budget annually.
- 3) Secondary schools controlled by the state government in each of the communities that are close to each other should be merged. A well equipped secondary school can serve 5 to 10 communities.
- 4) Federal government through an appropriate examination body should conduct entrance examination for all candidates seeking admission into secondary schools owned and managed by federal, state and private individuals after primary six (6) final examination.
- 5) Our leaders at all levels of governments should emulate the leadership qualities of leaders in the advanced countries of the world with respect to education.
- 6) All Nigerians should have positive attitudes toward education of our children and follow the laid down guidelines stipulated by the National policy on education.
- 7) All school administrators should ensure that students that are to be admitted into the secondary schools are within the ages of 12 to 17 years. Parents should strictly comply with this instruction.
- 8) All Nigerians should shun corruptions at all times.
- 9) Governments at all levels and private individuals should not play politics with the education of Nigerians. Although, education is placed on concurrent legislative list but it should not be abused.
- 10) Governments should provide instructional materials such as textbooks to teachers freely and make such textbooks available to all students at an affordable price.
- 11) Secondary schools that are established without extracurricular facilities should not be allowed to exist by the appropriate authority.
- 12) Federal government should introduce policy to control births. The ideal of parents give birth to children without control is no longer sustainable to the development of the country.
- 13) Only qualified teachers that are sound in the teaching subjects and education, and at the same time interested to teach should be employed by the governments and the private individuals in their various secondary schools.

Conclusion

Nigeria as a country is been governed by Nigerians. Therefore, the current challenges facing Nigerian secondary schools are caused by Nigerians. Nigeria is blessed with abundant human and natural resources. The average mindset of many Nigerians towards the development of the country is negative. Secondary education will only move forward if Nigerians accept the pains that this sector must move forward. All Nigerians should not

discriminate themselves irrespective of the states they come from. We should see ourselves as one Nigeria. Education as the central processing unit of all other sectors of the economy should be the number one priority of governments.

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