
The Issues of Access, Quality and Relevance of Education in Nigeria

Michael Olugbenga
Department of Educational Foundation and Curriculum.
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
and
Nuhu Tata Yakubu
Department of Educational Foundation and Curriculum
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Abstract

The paper addresses three distinct related matters in education – issues, quality and relevance of education. It focuses on how funding, politicization of education, corruption, insecurities militate against delivery of quality education in Nigeria. The ultimate goal is to understand the relevance of education and the issues bedeviling the educational sector and how these issues can be overcome through qualitative education which can be achieved through quality assurance. The paper concludes that education should be taken seriously and there should be an improvement in budgetary allocation to education as funding propels the educational sector towards achieving her objectives. The study suggests that government at all levels should provide quality education through proper funding, development of progressive curriculum, training and retraining of teachers, adequate supply of instructional materials.

Keywords: Issues, Quality, Relevance, Education

Introduction

Education is the bedrock for development, advancement of humanity and society in general. It is through education that humans acquire knowledge that transforms the society. Many scholars believed that the Nigerian educational system was divided into (3) which is the basic, post basic and tertiary for the reason that quality education should be passed unto learners; the structure that exists is superb as it sets to achieve goals described in the National Policy on Education. Education in Nigeria is design to achieve the following as stated in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

- A free and democratic society
- A just and egalitarian society
- United, strong and self-reliant nation
- A great and dynamic economy

- A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

As important as education is to the citizens in Nigeria it is strangled by so many challenges that prevents the equal and quality spread to all (Sani & Ali, 2019).

The paper seeks to explore the issues of accessible education for all, ensuring quality of education and the relevance of education in Nigeria.

Issues of Access:

Funding: education is next to health care that is seriously underfunded in Nigeria. In 2018, only 7% of the national budget was allocated to education, far below UNESCO'S recommended 15% - 26%. In 2020, it was worse as education got 6.7% as allocation. Many schools in Nigeria are owned and funded by the government, it is also a sector that is heavily privatized making schools expensive and out of reach for most Nigerians, who live below poverty line. Public schools, which are funded by the government, are generally cheaper but they typically lack quality facilities, learning tools and conducive environment. Classrooms are usually in disrepair and many public schools are falling apart. In tertiary institutions, most lecturers are not well paid or most times owed allowances which have led to incessant academic staff union strikes every year since 1992.

The education sector got a slice of 7.04% of the #8.6trillion in 2018. The total sum allocated to the sector was #605.8 billion, with 435.1 billion for recurrent expenditure, #61.73 billion for capital expenditure and #109.06 billion for Universal Basic Education Commission. In view of the forgoing, it is evident money allocated to Nigeria's education on yearly basis is not enough for the smooth running of our educational affairs. This results to lack of proper instructional materials, poor teachers' welfare packages, poor infrastructure and absence of training for teachers (Omolewa, 2017).

Curriculum: the present curriculum used in our schools is becoming obsolete and irrelevant to meet present day challenges. The universal basic education programme adopted in 1981 is still used in our schools. The use of such old curriculum prevents our students from acquiring digital skills which seem to be the order of the day. The curriculum at any level is basically traditional in nature which basically focuses more on teaching and writing examination. It is not progressive and thereby prevents students to embark on projects, hands on activities etc. it is important to update them regularly as things evolve in the world. It is appalling seeing our schools still use the black and white TV for electronic practical classes in the 90s till date whereas better and sophisticated televisions have emerged. There is a disconnect between what our students see at home and what they watch on TV and what they are being taught in school. There is also the issue of disjointed curriculum as some schools operate the Quranic curricular while others operate the Montessori (Chinwendu, 2018).

Teacher training: according to a 2012 inter- ministerial committee report on the state of Nigerian universities, just 43% (37,508) of Nigeria's university lecturers has PhDs and at the secondary school level the Nigeria Union of Teachers has been unable to change the unsatisfactory conditions under which teachers work. UNESCO also reports that 34.4% of the teachers had neither the pupils' textbook nor teachers' guide for any of the school subjects. This trickles down to lower levels of education where there are few qualified teachers and a lot of less qualified ones. There is also the problem of absence of a guideline for hiring teachers and private schools are not properly regulated. Most teachers are comfortable with their skills which have become obsolete and discourage teachers from embracing new methods and use of technology in class. Shortage or lack of training incapacitates teachers in manipulating some sophisticated instructional materials and thereby making most teaching and learning abstract. The lack of adequate training of majority of the teachers to meet the prevailing standard in global education trend has made the

average teacher an incapable domineering entity, both intellectually and attitudinally in training the students effectively (Obanya, 2014).

Corruption: International anti- corruption conference (2020) stated that corruption has filtered into almost every sphere of the Nigerian economy, including the education sector.

This has contributed to the country's education crises, where an increasing number of children are failing to go to school. Many schools especially in the northern part of Nigeria lack adequate number of schools to admit students, there are few teachers; they lack infrastructure and even manpower to do it. It was also revealed that a lot of money had been budgeted to finance construction of school and to ensure the welfare of teachers but all those things are not in place because the money meant for the projects are diverted to other uses. It was also reported that corruption exist in different forms as in stories of paid- for certificate, "special center for standardized examinations" sexual harassment, extortion and leaked questions are common, especially in the country's standardized examination. WAEC (2020) stated that 40% of the failure in WAEC examination is as a result of malpractice which most times results to completely cancellation of centres.

School safety: according to UNICEF (2020) most of Nigeria's out of school children are in the northeast and northwest of the country, regions that have been heavily impacted by boko haram, banditry and kidnapping for almost a decade. It was further reported that in North eastern Nigeria, 2.8 million children are in need of education and emergencies support in three conflict affected states (Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa). In these states, at least 802 schools remain closed and 497 classrooms are listed as destroyed with another 1,392 damaged but repairable. The issues of security have worsened and have moved from not just the northeast to every part of the nation. In recent times schools in Kaduna state and Niger state have been the major target for kidnappers and UNICEF (2020) further reported that states like

Kaduna, Kastina, Niger, Zamfara, Borno, Yobe and Adamawa are the worst hit in terms of insurgency. Such insecurity situations promote fear and loss of lives and properties and the same time limiting students' performance in schools. For instance, the pass rate in five papers and above of May/ June WAEC examinations have being fluctuating since 2016. In 2016 the pass percentage was 52.97%, 59.22% in 2017, 49.98% in 2018, 64% in 2019 and 65% in 2020. The result shows that most percentage passes comes from the south east and south west which is an indication that violence in the northern part of the country brings fear, disruption of school calendar and reduced enrollment in schools.

Politicization of education: Nsemba (2013) stated that as from 1999, Nigeria has witnessed an unequivocal increase in the number of educational institutions, following the private driven economy in Nigeria. For example, the number of private universities in Nigeria now stands at over 50. This is accompanied by quite a number of ever increasing states and federal universities and tertiary institutions in the country. In spite of the increase, the standard of education has been deteriorating as the objectives for which they are established are much to be desired. This problem is more worrisome as revealed in the recent ranking of webometrics of 2021 as only one Nigerian university (University of Ibadan) makes list of the first 20 best universities in Africa. The politicization of education has led to the loss of intercontinental cross fertilization of scholarship in Nigerian universities. As long as recruitment of people to pilot the educational sector is done on the basis of primordial consideration of ethnicity, religion and politics the system will continue to produce poor leadership and followership in the society. The system ends up as a mere jamboree where grading of students is determined by such institutional Misnomer and as such also tends to produce graduates that are unproductive to themselves, their immediate social milieu and the larger society.

Quality of education

Education is a human right issue and quality delivery is important. It has to do with systematic development and cultivation of the mind and other natural abilities. It is specifically the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, habits, values or attitudes to make those committed to it useful, functional members of the society. It further entails the outcome of the process of both learning and teaching. Thus, education requires quality inputs if it has to provide the enabling environment in which the philosophy and goals of the nation and individual needs can be achieved. The **quality** of education can be described as the worth of education. **Quality** itself is something good, ideal or of high quality. The components of quality in education can be assessed on the basis of the inputs, processes, environment and output. Inputs here include the teachers, trainees, instructional materials, and the curriculum as a whole. Processes in this context involve instructional delivery system, evaluation and assessment methods. The environment has to do with classroom organization and control, interaction between different components of the instructional situation. Then outputs which are reliant on other components are the academic achievement and attainment with the educational system. This is the quality of value added to the learner's knowledge, skills and attitude during and after ones exposure to the educational system. Quality in education can be accepted as being multi-faceted due to the different inputs of education, organization and management, content of learning and learning outcomes (Comfort, 2014).

Education needs to be given greater attention and should be given more priority in the government developmental plan and budget allocation. When this is done, quantity will give way for quality in the Nigerian education system. Quality education is the right of every Nigerian child and to put the activities of educational actors in check, the quality assurance system was set up for monitoring the implementation of quality standards in education. The federal inspectorate in the

federal ministry of education is responsible for quality control. The importance of quality assurance in education can be seen from the features and attributes of the products and services provided through education.

Federal inspectorate service ensures that there is a component of quality control strategy in education. More specifically FIS

- Aids the maintenance of high standard in education.
- Provides basis for monitoring and supervision.
- Determines quality of teachers' inputs, adequacy of facilities.
- Ensure prudent and judicious utilization of fund.

Quality assurance is a powerful means of improving the effectiveness of education. The key actors in education industry such as teachers, counselors, and head teachers are and monitored and constantly checked for improving educational performance; also the disbursement of fund needed for the smooth operation of the system is also monitored for efficiency and effectiveness.

As difficult as it is for education to thrive in the faces of all its challenges, education continue to be a service that is sought for all over the world because of its relevance to the students who are committed to it and to the society at large. It is evident that education is important and continues to plays a huge role in this modern, industrialized world. Education is needed to survive in this competitive world. Education empowers everyone and its relevance according to Nsemba (2012) cannot be overemphasized:

Relevance of Education

Education makes better citizens: man is nothing but an animal. It is the education that teaches him many things, teaches manners, rules and regulations of life. All these things result in converting man from an animal to well - mannered citizen.

Eradicating Poverty: education helps in eradicating poverty, if a person is educated, he can get a good job and fulfill all the basic needs and requirement for his or her family.

Safety and security against crime: education increases an individual's breath of understanding and makes one less prone to involve in domestic violence and other social evils. Education builds maturity in man which leads a healthy relationship. This means that people are less susceptible to being cheated or becoming a victim of violence.

Women Empowerment: it brings recognition to women and also helps to crush some old customs that was used to make them feel inhumane. Through education the voices of women are heard especially when treated in an unjust way. Education has being able to break down the meaning of so many fundamental human rights.

Communication: the relation between education and communication apparent. Good education helps one communicate better with other people. It is also a good tool for improving communication skills such as speech and body language. Education makes a person feels confident within him to confront or give speech in front of a large public or lead a meeting or seminar.

Impact on democracy: education helps to impact on democracy, human right governance and political stability through increased understanding of non- violent ways to solve problems and mutual understanding between groups and conflict.

Mould character and develop sound attitude: education is known for imparting societal norms. Education strengthens cultures, values and leadership among learners. Education helps build social skills, problem solving skills, decision making skills and creative thinking skills. It introduces one to different cultures, religions and thought processes that one may never be exposed to otherwise.

Conclusion

The development of any nation depends, to a large extent on the quality of education it provides. Great nations of the world do not toy with their education sector. Most western top countries take education matters more seriously which reflects in the percentage of budget allocated to education. For education to thrive, it must be funded properly. The numerous problems must be faced with so much sacrifice and injecting the right attitude, adequate finance, human and material resources now and reap the benefits of national development.

Recommendation

It is hereby recommended that:

- Government should take funding of education more serious at least meet 50% of UNESCO benchmark.
- Examination regulatory bodies need to continue to strategize to curb examination malpractice.
- Curriculum needs to be revised and improved upon. It needs to be more progressive.
- Teachers need to be trained and retrained periodically.
- Teachers should be provided with quality and up to date instructional materials.
- Teachers' salaries need to be improved, this will serve as a motivation for them to be more effective and dedicated.
- Students should be admitted into school based on merit only.

References

Chiwendu, N. (2018). Challenges of Curriculum Implementation and the Realization of National Philosophy of Education in Nigeria. *International Journal of modeling, simulation, and Scientific Computing*, 1 (1) 15 – 21.

Comfort, M. (2014, May 14). Quality education: bedrock for national development in Nigeria: the Way forward for Nigeria, Akwa Ibom, Nigeria.

Fazilah, H (2016). Quantity and quality: a focus on Nigerian education.
International journal for cross disciplinary subjects in education, 6 (2), 2195- 2201.

International Anti- Corruption Conference. (2020). Designing 2030: truth, trust and transparency. Virtual edition.

Nsemba, E. (2013). Politicization of education in Nigeria: Implications for national transformation. *Global journal of human social science and political science*, 13, (5), 23-33.

Obanya, P. (2014). Educationeering: Heinemann educational books Nigeria.

Omolewa M. (2017). Traditional modes of education: Their relevance in the modern world.
International review of education, 53, (5/6), 593-612.

Sani, B. & Ali, A. (2019, September). Problems and Prospects of Accessibility to Quality Basic Education in the 21st century. Kano, Nigeria.

United Nations International Children Fund. (2020). The Challenge: "one in every five of the World's out-of school children in Nigeria".

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2016).The real costs revealed Through national education accounts.

West African Examination Council Result Statistics (2016-2018): Data source: National Bureau Statistics 2019.