

Management of Public Secondary Schools in Nigeria: Challenges and the Ways Forward

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Abstract

The management of public secondary schools in Nigeria is faced with many problems. This paper looks at the problems preventing effective management of public secondary schools in Nigeria. The secondary data sourced from the print materials and online sources were used to support the points raised in the paper. The paper identified: inadequate funding, inadequate professional teachers, and inadequate infrastructural facilities, shortage of instructional materials, and lack of data, corruption, insecurity, over-population and weak management as the problems preventing effective secondary school management in Nigeria. To address the problems identified, the paper recommended that: there should be adequate funding of public secondary schools, employment of professional teachers, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, provision of instructional materials, availability and adequacy of data for planning; reduce institutional corruption to zero level, motivation of teachers, ensure adequate security in schools and appointment of competent and dedicated individuals in school management.

Keywords: Challenges, Management, Public secondary school



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1. Introduction

The first secondary school in Nigeria was established by Christian Missionaries in 1842 (Ige, 2013; Adesina, 1977). Since then, the secondary school education has become part and parcel of the Nigerian educational system. Secondary school education according to National Policy on Education (2014) is education that learners receive after primary education and before the tertiary education. Ogunode, (2021), viewed secondary school education as post-basic education meant for preparing the children for specialization. Secondary Education is the education before higher education. Ige (2013), observed that Secondary education is critical to the education of a child, being the bridge between primary and tertiary education.

The National Policy on Education (2014), listed the objectives of secondary school education to include, the preparation of the individual for: Useful living within the society and higher education. In specific terms, the objectives are to: provide all primary school leavers with the opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of sex, social status, religion or ethnic background; Offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and future roles; Provide trained manpower in the applied science, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades; Develop and promote Nigerian languages, art and culture in the context of world cultural heritage; Inspire its students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence; Foster national unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity; Raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the view and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, appreciate those values specified under our broad national goals and live as good citizens; and Provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development.

It is important to note that, realizing secondary school objectives hinges on effective secondary school management. Educational Management is the act of applying educational resources to implementing educational programmes for the purpose of actualizing the objectives of the education via effective planning, organizing, coordinating and controlling.

Educational management in Nigeria has not been effective due to poor planning and poor implementation of programmes and policies at all level of educational institutions as a result of position miss-match. At the primary school education, UNICEF (2017) observed that even when children are in school, a large proportion is not learning. Nearly half of all children who have completed primary school in Nigeria cannot read a complete sentence, and more than two thirds of children in Northern Nigeria, remain illiterate by the end of primary school (NPC & RTI International 2011). The 2011 monitoring of learning achievement (MLA) survey showed a National Mean Score of less than 40 per cent in both literacy and numeracy with no significant difference between boys and girls (Federal Ministry of Education, 2015). Literacy rates have declined, especially among children in the lowest wealth quintile. Urban girls have higher literacy rates than urban boys and rural girls have lower literacy rates in general (NEDS 2015).

At the secondary school education, Ige, (2013), quoting Olamouisi (1998), lamented that the Universities and other tertiary institutions are complaining that candidates admitted on the basis of high grades in the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) are being withdrawn due to academic incompetency and the resultant inability to understand lectures. Adeyemi and Ige, (2002), Omoregie, (2005), and. Ige, (2013) observed poor quality of secondary school students and outputs in Nigeria, which reflects increasing failure in examinations, particularly the Senior School Certificate Examinations.

Stakeholders in education especially, secondary school education have blamed the poor academic performance of secondary students on ineffective management of public secondary school education in Nigeria. Based on this submission, this paper looks at the problems facing the public secondary school education management in Nigeria.

2. Concept of Public Secondary School Management

Educational Management is essentially concerned with educational planning and administration. Educational planning is the exercise of foresight in determining the policies, priorities and cost of an educational system. Educational management can be conceptualized to mean a deliberate and systematic process of making plans to source, assemble, allocate and use resources to achieve the aims and objectives of the educational system. The scope goes beyond the school system to include micro and macroeconomics in the national economy (NOUN 2006).

The functions of educational management include instructional functions, staff or personnel services, student services and financial and physical resource management, school community relations. According to NOUN (2006) the purposes of educational management among others include:

- a. Ensure adequate and effective planning of all educational services;
- b. Provide efficient administrative and management control for the maintenance and improvement of the system;
- c. Ensure quality control through regular and continuous supervision of instructional and other educational services and;
- d. Provide adequate and balanced financial support for all educational services.

Educational Management covers all educational institutions including secondary schools.

Secondary school management refers to the process of planning, organizing, coordinating human and materials resources of secondary school to realize the objectives of the secondary school. Secondary school education management is thoughtful, careful and skilful utilization of human and materials resources to achieve the secondary school objectives through effective planning, organizing, controlling, coordinating and evaluating.

The management of public secondary schools in Nigeria takes three dimensions. The Federal government manages the Unity Schools across the country, the States' Ministries of education is saddled with the responsibilities of managing all state government secondary schools within the state while private secondary schools are managed by the individuals that own such private educational institutions. According to Nigeria constitution, education is on concurrent list meaning that, the states are empowered to manage its own secondary schools through their state ministry of education. The State Ministries of Education shall have responsibility for the following:-

- (i) policy and control over primary, secondary education and tertiary institutions owned by the State in accordance with the requirements of the National Policy on Education;
- (ii) planning, research and development of education;
- (iii) inspectorate services for monitoring and improving standards;
- (iv) the provision of broad educational services;

- (v) coordination of activities of school Boards and/or Local Education Authorities as prescribed by law;
- (vi) examinations, testing and evaluation at primary and junior secondary school levels; and
- (vii) providing appropriate educational laws and ensuring their enforcement (NOUN, 2006)

Educational management takes place within and outside the educational institutions. The within is known as internal management which is handled by the school manager. The school managers include the principals, vice principals and head of departments. The external managers are the ministries of education and agencies established purposely to support the management of various educational institutions in the country.

3. Challenges Facing Management of Public Secondary School in Nigeria

There are many challenges facing management of public secondary schools in Nigeria. Some of these challenges include; inadequate funding, inadequate professional teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, shortage of instructional materials, lack of data, corruption, insecurity, over-population and weak management.

3.1. Inadequate Funding

Inadequate funding is a challenge to effective management of public secondary schools in Nigeria. The annual budgetary allocation for the management of public secondary schools across the country is not adequate. Ige, (2013) in agreement with Obe, (2009), opined that, without adequate funding, standards of education at any level shall be tantamount to a mirage that is, building castles on the air. Money is important in school management because, it is used for buildings construction, purchase of needed equipment, payment of staff salaries and allowances, maintenance of the plants and the provision of services. 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 low consistently in spite of the strategic role of the sector in the training of manpower for the development of the economy. (Ige, 2013; Central Bank of Nigeria, 2010). Ogunode (2021), also opined that inadequate funding is one of the major problem facing the administration of secondary school education in Nigeria. The budgetary allocation for the administration and management of secondary school education in Nigeria is grossly inadequate. Njideka, Esther & Confidence (2015), observed that funding of education remains one of the important resources that are needed to manage the school system. All levels of education; primary, secondary and tertiary require sufficient level of funding in order to improve on the standard of education in the country. When funding is not provided in the right quantity and at the right time, it affects the education sector in so many ways. Due to underfunding of public secondary schools in Nigeria, many school administrators cannot afford to maintain the school under them. Njideka, Esther & Confidence (2015), observed that when funds are not available for the provision and maintenance of these facilities, it could result into a dilapidation of existing structures as a result of wear and tear and lack of maintenance. Funding is also required to upgrade facilities in the school environment and make them useful based on modern trends. Poor funding of public secondary school is responsible for shortage of teachers, infrastructural facilities, instructional materials and poor quality education.

3.2. Inadequate Professional Teachers

Inadequacy of professional teachers is another major problem preventing effective management of public secondary school in Nigeria. Managers of public secondary schools need a lot of

professional teachers to be able to manage the secondary school well. Teachers are the implementers of school curriculum. Their functions include to teach, prepare lesson note and lesson plan, to evaluate the students, set examination questions, provide marking guide for answers. Their functions also include providing leadership in classes, perform academic services, relate with parents on feedback on students' progress and sometimes organize and escort students on excursion with school permission. The teachers are very important factors in the management of educational institutions especially the secondary schools. Teachers' roles cannot be replaced in teaching and learning processes. It is unfortunate that as important as teachers are to achieving the objectives of secondary school management, many public secondary schools do not have adequate professional teachers. The scarcity of professional teachers is more pronounced in mathematics and science programmes (Aiyedu & Ogunode 2021). Ogunode (2021), observed that shortage of professional teachers is a very big problem facing the administration of public secondary schools in Nigeria. There are many effects of shortage of professional teachers in the educational institutions. According to Ogunode (2021), the inadequacy of professional teachers in the Nigerian educational institutions has led to overcrowded classes where teachers had to contend with higher number of students contrary to standard rules of teaching and learning engagement. In Nigeria, FRN (2013) recommended student-teacher ratio of 1:25 for pre-primary classes; 1:35 for primary and 1:40 for secondary schools. The negative effect of teaching large classes is the poor quality of education we are now experiencing in the educational institutions. Ogunode (2021) and Junaid, (2013) observed that no quality education can be achieved in an educational institutions where the number of students is larger than the number of teachers. To this end, the nation needed to produce a total of 330,033 teachers annually in order to achieve the EFA goal by 2025. Omofonmwan, (2007) submitted that acute shortage of teachers can result in poor outcome in teaching and learning. Inadequate professional teachers is preventing effective management of public secondary schools in Nigeria.

3.3. Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities

Inadequate infrastructural facilities is a very big challenge to effective management of Public Secondary Schools in Nigeria. School manager needs infrastructural facilities to be able to achieve the objective of educational institutions. Sullivan and Sheffrin (2003), defined infrastructure as those products, services and facilities that are needed for an institution to function. Njideka, Esther & Confidence (2015), observed that the ability of the school system to achieve her objectives depends on the availability of these products. Infrastructures are very important for learning to take place in any educational institution (Njideka, Esther & Confidence, 2015). Eseyin, Okaforand Uchendu (2014), submitted that "infrastructures play a significant role in the provision of quality education in any nation". They aid in the dissemination, assimilation and transmission of knowledge (Njideka, Esther & Confidence, 2015). Peter (2017), observed that majority of Nigerian secondary schools, the classroom accommodation is grossly inadequate as a result of the large enrolments in these schools, the classrooms are usually overcrowded, with up to sixty or more students receiving instructions in classroom designed for only thirty or, forty students. In most cases, the chairs and desk are not enough; you see them sharing chairs, standing up, or sitting on windows or broken desk. When students are overcrowded like this, there is a stalling of the teaching-learning process and a disruption of the children's mental activity, a situation that generally militates against effective teaching and intellectual development of the children. Ige, (2013), CBN (2010) observed that a school with inadequate classrooms and facilities such as chairs, lockers, libraries, textbooks, laboratories, workshop will be uncomfortable for pupils/students to learn. Unfortunately, there are inadequate

infrastructure and facilities in many secondary schools in Nigeria.

3.4. Shortage of Instructional Materials

Another important educational resources that manager needs for effective management of public secondary schools is instructional materials. Kochher (2012), opined that instructional materials are very significant learning and teaching tools. Isola, (2010), observed that instructional materials are objects or devices that assist teachers to present their lessons logically and sequentially to the learners' understanding. Oluwagbohunmi and Abdu Raheem (2014), made a discovery that instructional materials are such that are used by teachers to explain and make learning of subject matters understandable to students during teaching and learning process. From past research, it is observed that researchers do not examine the extent to which teachers use instructional materials in the teaching and learning or whether they make use of it at all. The use of instructional materials is central to the teaching and learning simply because teaching should not be only abstract. Research has it that many public secondary schools in Nigeria do not have adequate instructional material to deploy for teaching in the classrooms.

3.5. Lack of Data

Lack of current data on secondary school education is also posing challenge to effective management of secondary schools in Nigeria. Educational managers need current data to plan and take decisions. Data helps educational managers to act fast and achieve results. Ogunode, (2021) observed that inadequate data is frustrating planning of secondary schools in Nigeria. NEEDS (2014), submitted that it is challenging to obtain data with current statistics for assessment mainly due to the fact that current data on the education sector is generally not available in the public domain. The assessment therefore relied on available data, some of which were more than three years old and had not been updated at the time of the study while British Council (2014) agreed that access to reliable and complete information on education in Nigeria has for a long time proved difficult. The development of a national database for education statistics has been slow and various data generating agencies including the Federal Ministry of Education, Universal Basic Education Commission, National Population Commission and National Bureau of Statistics often used different sample designs, methods of data collection, analysis and reporting, different modes of disaggregation and definitions of indicators. The absence of rudimentary data at school and local level in many areas is often viewed as a crisis, inhibiting the development of effective education planning, monitoring, programming and policy-making. So, lack of current data on public secondary school education is a problem to effective management of secondary school in Nigeria.

3.6. Corruption

Corruption is another biggest challenge hindering the effective management of public secondary schools in Nigeria. Meaningful management of education cannot take place under a system full of corruption. Corruption is capable of destroying the educational institution if not tackled. Ogunode (2021), observed 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 sometimes ended up in private pockets. 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 programmes and projects in the ministries are been diverted into personal uses. 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. Njideka, Esther & Confidence (2015), argued that corruption is a social problem that is affecting most of the sectors in Nigeria. The educational sector has also not been spared from misappropriation and underutilization of funds set aside for the improvement of the education system. Njideka, Esther & Confidence (2015), also submitted that 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.

3.7. Insecurity

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 security 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. Insecurity in Nigeria has led to killing of students, teachers and school administrators. Many school infrastructural facilities have been destroyed by the insurgents. Ahmadu (2016), discovered that Boko Haram insurgency has led to the developmental challenges through destruction of lives and properties, destruction of schools which have led to the closing down of so many schools, had affected the performance of students in such areas and destruction in businesses, reduction in government revenue, and political instability among others in the North Eastern part of the country. Education is worst hit by the Boko Haram activities.

Dorcas, OluremiFareo & Aziza Muktar (2020), did a study that investigated the Impact of Boko Haram insurgency on the academic performance of senior secondary schools students in Madagali Local Government Area of Adamawa State. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics such as Mean, Standard Deviation and ANOVA. The results obtained showed that: there is a significant difference between school attendance and academic performance of secondary school students in Madagali Local Government area of Adamawa State; there is a significant influence of school facilities on academic performance of secondary school students in Madagali Local Government area of Adamawa State and there is a significant difference between insurgency and school attendance in Madagali Local Government Area of Adamawa State. Based on the findings, the study concluded that Boko Haram insurgency has demoralized students from attending regular school period because of the unsafe environment which is prone to attack at any unpredicted time.

Ogunode (2021) quoted the Cable (2018), which reported that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) says Boko Haram has killed 2,300 teachers in Nigeria's North-East since the start of the insurgency in 2009. In the 2018 UNESCO global education monitoring report (GEM), the UN agency said 19,000 teachers have been displaced in the region, affecting access to education. "In North-Eastern Nigeria, as at 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 out that, 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 North-East, 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 is a challenge to the development of secondary school education in Nigeria.

3.8. Over-Population

Over-population in the Nigerian public secondary schools is another problem school managers are battling with. Managers need a lot of human and material resources to manage large population of students in the schools. These resources are not in the possession of managers for planning and organizing the schools. Njideka, Esther & Confidence (2015), observed that 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. Also Bua, Olatunde and Amough (2013), stated 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 enrollment 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. This overpopulation has forced some state government in Nigeria, especially Northern Nigeria to result to running two sessions in many of their primary and secondary schools by having morning and afternoon sessions with morning session starting at the normal morning school time while afternoon session usually start by 12 noon to 1pm for primary and secondary schools respectively.

3.9. Weak Managers

Weak managers appointed by the government to manage various educational institutions especially the public secondary schools are also major problem preventing effective management of public secondary schools in the Country. Many of these school managers do not have the right leadership skills and leadership qualities to ensure effective management of schools. Some of these school managers do not possess the human relationship skills and team work skills to allow them manage the various teachers under them. The inability to effectively manage the teachers and coordinate them well definitely will lead to management failure and school failure.

3.10. Brain-Drain

Brain-drain is a very big challenge preventing effective secondary school management. Brain-drain refers to the movement of professionals from developing countries to developed countries, from less developed institution to well-developed institutions for better working conditions. Due to mass movement of professional teachers from the educational institutions especially the secondary school, school managers do not have adequate professional teachers to deploy for teaching assignment in their schools. Peter (2017) submitted that as for teaching staff in Nigerian primary and secondary schools today, the problem is no longer that of unavailability, but that of instability. This does not help the development of the education system. Because of the comparatively poorer conditions of service of teachers in the Nigerian society, the tendency for many teaching in the nation’s school today, as was the case with their predecessors in later colonial and independent Nigeria, is to use the teaching profession as a stepping stone to other highly esteemed and more attractive jobs. In consequence, teaching is gradually becoming a profession for fresh graduates of Universities and Colleges of Education who are ready to quit, without provocation, as soon as they find greener pasture elsewhere. From time to time, therefore the teaching staff in Nigeria educational institutions are usually unstable.

4. Way Forward

For effective management of secondary school education in Nigeria, the following have been put forward: adequate funding, employment of professional teachers, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, provision of instructional materials, and generation of current data for planning; fight all institutional corruption, motivation of teachers, ensure adequate security in schools and appoint competent school managers

- 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 employ more professional teachers. This will help to reduce the high students-teacher ratio in the classes
- c. The government should provide adequate infrastructural facilities like chairs, table, desks, water, electricity, ICT facilities, classrooms, administrative offices, libraries, laboratories and whiteboard.
- d. More instructional materials should be provided to all the secondary schools.
- e. The government should ensure that current data are generated in the secondary school education. This will help to plan and take critical decision.
- f. 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.
- g. The government should come up with welfare packages to motivate teachers and prevent them from leaving the educational institutions especially the secondary schools.
- h. The government should provide adequate security in all public secondary schools.
- i. The government should appoint competent and capable school managers to manage the public secondary school across the country.

Conclusion

In conclusion, secondary school education is the education before higher education. In Nigeria, public secondary schools are facing many problems. This paper examines the problems preventing effective management of public secondary school in Nigeria. The paper identified: inadequate funding, inadequate professional teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, shortage of instructional materials, lack of data, corruption, insecurity, over-population and weak managers as the problems preventing effective secondary school management in Nigeria. To solve these problems identified, the paper hereby recommended that: adequate funding of public secondary school, employment of professional teachers, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, provision of instructional materials, generation of current data for planning; fight all institutional corruption, motivation of teachers, provision of adequate security in schools and appointment of competent school managers should be done by the government.

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