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## Pitfalls and Projections of Secondary School Education in Nigeria

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### **Abstract:**

*Education plays an important role in the development and globalization of any nation. It is the bedrock of social change and can often be described as an accelerator of social and economic progress. Secondary school education in Nigeria is the bridge between primary education and tertiary education. However, with as much importance as it carries, secondary school education in Nigeria is faced with a myriad of problems ranging from insufficient government funding to poor maintenance of infrastructure. This paper is aimed at highlighting some of the current problems stifling the development of secondary school education in Nigeria by addressing issues such as poor government funding, unavailability of infrastructure, poor maintenance of provided infrastructure, under qualified teachers, and poor supervision of schools. The study adopted exploratory research methodology through literature and documentary survey. This paper concludes that in order to achieve major improvements in secondary school education, the need to re-evaluate the priorities of the country in favor of education must be addressed. Also, issues of government funding must be re-addressed, governments should ensure that schools are properly and effectively supervised and inspected and extra effort needs to be put into ensuring adequately qualified teachers are recruited and remunerated accordingly, all in an effort to achieve meaningful development in secondary school education in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Educational development, secondary education, pitfalls, projections, school, Nigeria

### **1. Introduction**

In our country today and our world at large, education is considered as an instrument of social change, as well as a key player in the growth and development of any nation. The relationship between education and development is well established such that education is a key index of development (Kpolovie and Obilor, 2013). According to the National Policy on Education (2004), education is described as an instrument par excellence for affecting national development. Education is a very important factor, one that is responsible for the progress and prosperity of every economy and every nation. Education involves activities of instructing, training and breeding, which impart knowledge and skill. It helps in the proper upbringing of children and youngsters, especially knowledge of correct social behavior. According to Gbenu (2012), education enables individuals to fix themselves up in the society into which they have found themselves. It equips individuals with the ability that will enable them explore the world, manipulate it for their survival and establish themselves. Secondary school education is critical to the education of a child, being the bridge between primary and tertiary education (Chinelo, 2011). Apart from this, it provides the opportunity for a child to acquire more skill and knowledge beyond the primary school level

#### *1.1. Brief Overview of Secondary School Education in Nigeria*

Secondary school education, alongside western education, was introduced by the missionaries in 1842 (Adesina, 1977). These schools were established with two primary objectives; the conversion of children to Christianity and the training of these converted Christians to assist the missionaries in their work as catechists, lay readers and teachers (Oyebamiji & Omordi, 2011). Further study by Kosemani & Okorosaye, (1995) explained that the curriculum of the early Christian schools in Nigeria included mostly the 4Rs- reading, writing arithmetic and religion. These 4Rs suggested a clear indication that the earlier curriculum of the colonial education in Nigeria was mainly intended to train the students to be used for evangelism purposes for the missionaries, because this type of education did not in any way include science and/or technology. Thus, it

was not the intention of the colonial education to prepare Nigeria and other Africa Countries for independence and post-independence self-reliance (Thovoethin, 2012).

Initially, only primary education was being made available because it helped win the children into Christianity but when the need to further the primary school education arose, government started paying attention to secondary school education. The first secondary school (CMS Grammar School, Bariga, Lagos) was established by Church Missionary Society in 1859 (Adesina, 1977). After this school, the missionaries went ahead to establish St. Gregory's College was established in 1876, Methodist Boys High School in 1879, Baptist High School in 1885 and Hope Wadell Training Institute in 1895. According to Ige (2013), after the first secondary school was established, the colonial government refused to complement the efforts of the missionaries in providing secondary education until the establishment of Kings College, Lagos in 1909, the first Government owned secondary school. Today, there are over 56,812 secondary schools across Nigeria (Ifenkwe, 2013).

As Nigerians became more enlightened about education, criticisms about the educational system increased. These criticisms led to the introduction of the 8-6-2-3 educational system which brought about the establishment of the University College, Ibadan (now University of Ibadan) (Thvoethin, 2012). In this system, students were expected to spend 8 years in primary school, 6 years in secondary school, 2 years for higher school certificate and 3 years for university education. The dissatisfaction expressed concerning this system intensified some changes. This agitation led to the introduction of a new system of education in 1954, which was tagged 6-5-2-3 educational system. Under this system a student was expected to spend 6 years in primary school, 5 years in secondary school, 2 years for higher school certificate and 3 years in the university (Omolewa, 2007).

### *1.2. Scope of Secondary School Education in The Nigerian Context*

Secondary school education is aimed at developing a child to become better than the primary level, because it is obvious that primary education is insufficient for children to acquire literacy, numeracy, and communication skills (Ige, 2011). According to the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education (2004), secondary school education should equip students to live effectively in the modern age of science and technology; raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, and live as good citizens; foster the Nigerian unity with an emphasis on the common ties that unite within diversity; and foster the desire for achievement and self-improvement. Secondary schools are either owned by the federal or state government, private individuals or a community. In Nigeria, it is divided into 2 stages: (i) The Junior Secondary School (JSS) (ii) The Senior Secondary School (SSS).

## **2. Pitfalls of Secondary School Education in Nigeria**

The importance of secondary education in the development of the Nigerian child cannot be overemphasized. It is not a gainsaying that this level of education is unique because it fills the gap between primary and tertiary education in Nigeria. According to the National Policy on Education (2004), the general objectives of education in Nigeria are as follows:

- The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and of society. This is an objective which can concern mainly the affective domain;
- The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity. This is also an objective mainly in the affective domain;
- The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around. This is aimed at developing the intellectual aspect of human beings.
- The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of his society.

This objective is aimed at developing the intellectual, affective and psychomotor domains of human nature simultaneously. This is why education should be seen as aiming to develop all aspects of human persons simultaneously.

Every Nigerian child must pass through secondary education, meeting all the necessary requirements, before moving on to the next level. This is because the skills acquired at the primary level are insufficient to prepare such a child for tertiary education (Ige, 2013). However, despite the role of secondary school education, Omoriege (2005) and Ekundayo (2010) reported that it has been battered by a variety of problems. According to a report by Eze and Mwaura (2014), Nigeria is not sending enough students to secondary school compared to its neighbors due to inadequate funding of the sector by the government, there are not enough secondary school teachers to accommodate the students that do attend school, and the few teachers that are currently teaching do not seem qualified to do so. A critical analysis of secondary school's education in Nigeria reveals the following challenges disrupting the success of its set objectives.

### *2.1. Government Funding*

The need for adequate funding in sustaining secondary school education in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. For any organization or institution to function effectively, adequate financial resources should be readily available. According to Taggart (2003), finance is of vital importance to education and economic growth. Adequate funds are important in the sustenance of secondary schools because they are used to pay staff salaries, construct buildings, procure required facilities and equipment and maintain plants and services to ensure proper running of the school. Funds need to be applied to significantly improve facilities for teaching and learning, teacher quality and welfare and curriculum delivery. Funds are also needed to improve school safety and improve the reading culture among youths and for overall improvement in the quality of delivery of

education (Williams, 2015). According to Osuntokun (2013), the educational sector is funded by the government and can be referred to as public funding, which entails the disbursement of funds for public use. According to Charles (2002), it is regarded as the financial activities of public authorities in terms of taxing, spending, borrowing and lending and it includes the means of providing for the expenditure involved in the staffing, equipment and maintenance of educational institutions. However, 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 (Ige, 2013). Statistics from the Central Bank of Nigeria (2010) revealed that between 2000 and 2010, allocation of funds to the educational sector was not more than 14% of the annual budget which was expected to cover all aspects of education including primary, secondary and tertiary education. According to the United Nations Development Programme (2011), Nigeria allocated the least of its annual budget to education when compared to countries such as Kenya, Malawi, Botswana, Angola, Sierra-Leone and South Africa. And although the 2013 budgetary allocation to the education sector was higher than those of other sectors, it still managed to fall below the recommended standard of 26% of a country's total budget, as stated by UNESCO, (2011)

S/NO	Year	Total Recurrent Expenditure	Education Recurrent Expenditure	% of Education to Total Recurrent Expenditure
1	2000	461,600,000,000	57,956,640,000,	12.56
2	2001	579,300,000,000	39,882,600,000	6.88
3	2002	696,800,000,000	80,530,880,000	11.56
4	2003	984,300,000,000	64,782,150,000	6.58
5	2004	1,110,643,600,000	76,527,650,000	6.89
6	2005	1,321,229,990,000	82,797,110,000	6.27
7	2006	1,390,101,900,000	119,017,970,000	8.56
8	2007	1,589,269,800,000	150,779,270,000	9.49
9	2008	2,117,362,000,000	163,977,470,000	7.74
10	2009	2,127,971,500,000	137,156.620,000	6.45
11	2010	3,109,378,510,000	170,770,560,000	5.49
12	2011	3,314,513,330,000	335,837,890,000	10.13

Table 1: Federal Government Recurrent Expenditure.  
Source: Cbn Statistical Bulletin (2000- 2011).

S/NO	Year	Education Recurrent Expenditure	% Growth Rate
1	2000	57,956,640,000	-
2	2001	39,882,600,000	-31.19
3	2002	80,530,880,000	101.92
4	2003	64,782,150,000	-19.56
5	2004	76,527,650,000	18.13
6	2005	82,797,110,000	8.19
7	2006	119,017,970,000	43.75
8	2007	150,779,270,000	26.69
9	2008	163,977,470,000	8.75
10	2009	137,156,620,000	-16.36
11	2010	170,770,560,000	24.51
12	2011	335,837,890,000	96.66

Table 2: Growth Rate of Nigeria's Annual Budgetary Allocation to Education (2000-2011)  
Source: CBN Statistical Bulletin (2000- 2011).

According to (Kpolovie & Obilor, 2013), the inadequate funding of education by government has impaired the quality of education in the country. Although, there is no single definition of quality, the Education for All – EFA – Global Monitoring Report, (2005) states that there is a consensus on the imperative to improve the quality of education in terms of cognitive development and education's role in encouraging learners' creative and emotional development, in supporting objectives of

peace, citizenship and security. It is however unfortunate that complaint of inadequate funds for the development of secondary school education abounds in literature which further attributes to an availability of inadequate as well as a decay of infrastructural facilities in secondary schools (Ige, 2013). As a result of poor funding, Nigeria's educational system is bedeviled by a myriad of problems, which keeps worsening by the day. These include, among others, shortage of quality staff; dearth of infrastructure; inadequate classrooms and offices; inadequate laboratories for teaching and research; shortage of books and journals; indiscipline; low staff-student ratios; poor record keeping; fraud and self-deception with regard to accreditation and ill-conceived policies (Oseni, 2012).

## *2.2. Inadequate Infrastructure*

Infrastructure is an integral component of the learning and teaching context. This is because a school's infrastructure enables students and teachers to access a wide range of tools, services and resources to support learning and teaching (Bongani, 2014). The state of infrastructural decay in many secondary schools in Nigeria is a manifestation of poor funding of the system (Ekundayo, 2010). According to Educate a Child (2014), some of the attributes of adequate infrastructure include sufficient space per child usually guided by standards set by a country's Ministry of Education, sufficient student to teacher ratios to permit efficient use of teachers, construction methods that ensure the safety of children in school, suited to natural hazards of the region, adequate separate sanitary facilities for boys and girls and for staff and steady electricity and internet connectivity. Infrastructure in Nigerian secondary school connotes an availability of all material resources and physical facilities required to ensure effective teaching and learning. These facilities include adequate classrooms and suitable furniture, properly equipped laboratories for specialized subject areas, modern-day libraries, adequate staff offices, recreational facilities and adequate reading and writing materials for students. However, making these resources and facilities available is not enough to ensure effectiveness in learning and teaching. According to Bognani (2014), electricity and water should be readily available to ensure facilities are not rendered useless. For instance, lack of electricity renders the virtues of information technology useless in such a context. Dryden and Vos (2005), argued that even if infrastructure were provided, lack of maintenance of the provided infrastructure would lead to a decay of facilities creating an even worse situation than before. Mabogoane & Pateli (2006) also noted that lack of basic facilities and infrastructure in schools would play a negative role in attracting suitably qualified teachers.

## *2.3. Shortage of Qualified Teachers*

Quality teachers are the foundation on which the educational system relies. Teachers contribute the largest input of the educational system of any country because they influence the quality of the educational output (Fadipe, 2003). According to the National Policy on Education (2004), no educational system can rise above the quality of the teachers. This means that quality in education is determined by the quality of teachers. However, despite the significance of teachers in education, issues of inadequacy and low-quality teachers are still in very much in existence especially in Nigerian secondary schools (Omoregie, 2005). According to a report by Eze and Mwaura (2014), it was recorded that 274,000 secondary school teachers with another 65,000 teachers were needed in order to realize the Universal Basic Education standards satisfactorily. Out of the available teachers only 66% of those can be considered trained. Apart from the low teacher numbers, the lack of teacher expertise, difficult classroom environments, lack of support and continuous assessment for teachers and resource shortages are a strong determinant of low student achievement. Teacher supply and teacher quality are closely related issues; in time of surplus, theory holds that schools can select from the most-qualified candidates, while in times of shortage, schools will be forced to hire less-qualified teachers (Laitsch, 2003). When a school experiences a shortage in qualified teachers, it brings about a poor student to teacher ratio, thereby reducing the effectiveness of teaching in such schools. Nigeria's pupil-to-teacher ratio is the highest in the region, with 33 pupils for every one teacher. This high ratio is of concern as a high pupil-to-teacher ratio directly affects the quality of the learning environment and the quality of the learning that is able to take place (Eze and Mwaura, 2014). The reasons behind low-quality teachers may not be far-fetched however. According to Ngada (2008), teaching is seen as a dumping ground for men and women seeking employment. Thus, due to lack of dedication demanded by the job, the teaching output is low. And because of the lack of a better option, administrators of such schools retain these teachers rather than seek better qualified and motivated ones. Also, teachers' irregular promotion, low pay package (when compared to other public workers), societal perception of the job and many more have dampened the morale of teachers. Teachers are generally dissatisfied with their basic conditions of employment and their working conditions. This has resulted in low esteem of the profession (Teboho, 2000). When teachers are not motivated, their level of job commitment may be low and the objectives of the school may not be accomplished (Ekundayo, 2010).

## *2.4. Poor Supervision of Schools*

According to Ekundayo (2010), effective instructional delivery and maintenance of standards in the school system are enhanced through regular internal and external supervision. Ayodele (2002) argued that secondary schools are presently supervised by two categories of people, viz: (i) internal supervisors, from the within-the school, such as principals, vice-principals and heads of departments; (ii) external supervisors, who are formally designated officials from the inspectorate division of the Ministry of Education and the various Area or Zonal Education Offices. The primary responsibility of inspectors is to see that high standards are maintained and that schools are run in accordance with the laid down regulations. While it has

been argued that the principals have been discharging their duties as internal supervisors, the external supervisors (inspectors from the Ministry of Education) appear non-functional as they seldom visit schools to monitor the operations in these schools. This has invariably hinder effective teaching-learning in schools (Ekundayo, 2010).

### **3. Projections for Secondary School Education in Nigeria**

With respect to the role of secondary school education in the development of a child and of Nigeria as a whole, it is important that the challenges faced by this sector be addressed so as to ensure meaningful development of secondary school education in Nigeria. In order to achieve this, the following suggestions are made:

#### *3.1 Adequate Funding By the Government*

Financial resourcing for education is crucial to education planning and delivery (Eze and Mwaura, 2014). Because funding is vital in ensuring overall and effective delivery of education, it is imperative that the present government design a suitable guideline for funding education. It is important that the country tries to meet up to the required percentage recommended by UNESCO which is 26% of the total budget of the country. Although the system is expensive to keep afloat, quality however in any form is partly a function of the total fund made available to the system and judiciously utilized for the purpose to which it is meant for (Odia and Omofunmwan, 2007). Educational planning is concerned with the problems of how to make the best use of limited resources allocated to education in view of the priorities given to different stages of education or different sector of education and the need of the economy (Ololube, 2013). According to Odia and Omofunmwan (2007), funds are required and necessary to maintain both the human and material resources of the system in order to achieve desired goals. Therefore, priority should be placed on issues that need effective and immediate intervention and plans should be made to resolve upcoming ones.

#### *3.2. Recruitment and Adequate Remuneration of Qualified Teachers*

Teachers are the critical to the development of children in schools. The quality of teachers determines the quality of student's outcomes. Therefore, secondary schools should invest in recruitment of adequately qualified teachers. According to Esrom (2013), recruitment is an act of attracting people with the right qualifications to apply for a job and if an individual is found suitable for a particular job, he or she is employed. Qualified teachers are teachers who received relevant training in education for their teaching subjects up to a minimum level (Onyekuru and Ibegbunam, 2013). According to Esrom (2013), recruitment of unqualified and low-quality teachers is a problem due primarily to the low status of teachers (as evidenced by low salaries and condition of service). However, if the teaching profession was adequately rewarded, problems surrounding unavailability of qualified teachers would be greatly reduced.

#### *3.3. Teacher Development and Training*

Teachers and resources have the greatest potential for direct impact on students' educational experiences and ability to transfer the in-classroom knowledge to actual jobs and employment opportunities (Eze and Mwaura, 2014). For teachers, whether training new teachers with or without vocational skills or training in-service teachers, providing the skills and resources to effectively deliver on the curriculum will hugely impact student outcomes (Eze and Mwaura, 2014). With this in mind, it is pertinent to remember that an investment in teachers would ultimately bring about a turnaround in the outcomes of the students. It is important for schools, governmental bodies and other concerned parties to take advantage of the range of opportunities that exist to train and improve the intellectual standing of its teachers through bricks and mortar structure such as teacher's colleges, in addition to online and mobile resources available through a range of service providers in Nigeria and across the world (Eze and Mwaura, 2014).

#### *3.4. Regular and Effective Supervision of Schools*

Inspection and supervision of secondary schools plays a significant role in achieving quality in secondary schools across Nigeria. According to Teboho (2000), the role of inspectors was redefined to be advisors, guides, catalysts and sources of new ideas. The government promised to run in-service courses for inspectors and for new ones joining the service. It is essential to ensure that there is adequate implementation of policies that redefines the role of inspectors, as well as reverse negative perceptions about educational support that is to be provided by inspectors (Teboho, 2000). Issues concerning poor, ineffective and seldom inspection of secondary schools may also be caused by lack of motivation, manpower or funds. However, in order to ensure quality education in schools, these issues should be nipped at the bud. The ministry of education and other affiliated bodies should make sure to pay regular inspection visits to secondary schools and ensure that reports are presented and issues are addressed accordingly and effectively.

### **4. Conclusion**

Secondary school education forms part of the tripod upon which the educational system of Nigeria stands. If a member is crippled, the whole system would be in danger of tragedy. Therefore, it is important that the Nigerian government does everything in its power to ensure that secondary schools are well catered to. Adequate plans should be made to ensure education is made top priority on the country's itinerary as they try to meet up with the recommended standard of budgetary

allocation to education set by UNESCO as 26% of a country's total budget for a fiscal year. If funds channeled into the educational sector are properly managed and efficiently utilized it would greatly improve the educational sector and help alleviate problems of inadequate facilities and infrastructural decay, teacher remuneration and poor supervision of schools.

#### 4.1. Recommendations

The interested parties in this study are assumed to be the government of Nigeria and every stake holder in educational sector, government directorates, students, senior employees, supervisors, and teachers. The recommendation to the government is aimed at placing a greater emphasis on the secondary school building conditions and management of the users'. The government should take more caution regarding the provision of good education at all levels by having orderliness in place to control the facility and human resources of the public schools.

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