

CHALLENGES OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: CONSEQUENCES AND SOLUTIONS TO THE MENACE

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Abstract

The paper focused on the challenges militating against sound educational development in Nigeria, which include poor funding, low teacher quality, poorly motivated teachers that largely lack respect in our societies. Similarly, inadequate and dilapidated infrastructure and inconsistencies in our educational curricula are additional factors. The consequences of the neglect to provide sound training to our youths have also been highlighted, which result in poor and low quality personnel in all sectors of human endeavour, with no jobs for the youths after graduation and hence, becoming threats to national security. Some solutions to the menace identified revolve around roles that the youths, parents, communities and government should play, including the adoption of electronic teaching.

Keywords: Challenges, Development, Education, Menace and Youth

Introduction

The word education is derived from two Latin words “educare” and “educere” (Amaele *et al.*, 2011). Accordingly, “educare”, means to train, to form or to mould. In other words, it means that the society trains, forms or moulds the individual to achieve the social needs and aspirations. “Educere”, on the other hand means to build, to lead, or to develop an individual. It is a known fact that education is being transferred from one person to the other through formal, semiformal or informal means. The word education has also been defined by many scholars. Thus, Education has been defined as the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes through various forms of learning such as instruction, study, or practical experience. It is not limited to formal schooling or academic institutions, but can also be acquired through informal means such as life experiences, apprenticeships, or self-directed learning (Johnson and Majewska, 2022). Thus, it can be argued that the function of education is to develop the natural potentialities in a child to enable him function in the society according to his abilities, interests and needs (Adesope, 2021). Ajayi and Afolabi (2009) have also remarked that education is largely perceived in Nigeria as an indispensable tool which will not only assist in meeting the nation’s social, political, moral, cultural and economic aspirations but will also inculcate in the individual knowledge, skills, dexterity, character and desirable values that will

foster national development and self-actualization, in accordance with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal number 4, which is quality education (United Nations, 2020).

Nigeria is one of the most populous countries in the world, with an estimated population of 224,060,530, and ranking 6th in the world (Worldometer, 2023). It has been estimated that 60% of Nigeria's population is under the age of 25, making it the youngest country in Africa. It is a well-known fact that most of the Nigerian youths are not gainfully employed, which make a significant number among them to be involved in inappropriate practices to earn a living, not minding the legality or otherwise of what they do. Above is certainly not unconnected with various factors that revolve around shortcomings from different quarters such as the youths themselves, their parents and guardians, local communities, and the government at local, state and federal level.

Challenges Militating Against Sound Educational Development in Nigeria

Several factors can be identified as being responsible for setback to achieve sound educational development in Nigeria. Among these factors are inadequate funding, low teacher quality, poor recognition of the teachers in our societies, poor infrastructure and curricula issues. These factors are briefly discussed in this presentation.

Funding is fundamental, without which, no meaningful and qualitative projects can be executed for nation building. Global education agency, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, has agreed that any government that is serious on the education of its citizens should allocate at least 26% of its annual budget to education (UNESCO, 2015). Unfortunately, Nigeria has for long been budgeting much lower percentage of the prescribed minimum over the years. The current budgetary allocation to education in Nigeria is only about 8.8% (₦1.79 trillion) out of the total of ₦20.5 trillion, though in 2016 it was 7.9% of the total budgetary allocation (Premium Times, 2023).

Low teacher quality is another fundamental factor that is playing a negative role in declining quality of education in Nigeria. This may not be unconnected with the fact that the teachers, especially at primary and secondary school levels do not get adequate and requisite training due to lack of basic and adequate teaching and learning facilities in their schools, while undergoing training. Most of their teachers were not there on the job for passion but largely because they lack alternative means of survival. In addition, inadequate capacity building, through training and retraining of the teachers is common at both primary and secondary school levels. Consequently, to many, teaching job is taken as a stepping stone, before another job is secured. Our society has nowadays transformed from that which value and respect teachers to the highest level, to the one that attaches more respect and value to money, irrespective of its source. Unfortunately, to a significant number of our people, clean and dirty money are all the same. It has gone to the extent that some families may not even find it comfortable to give their daughter for marriage if the seeker is a teacher. This may be due to the fact that most of the teachers will not and do not have access to public funds to embezzle, while in the actual sense it can be counted as a blessing.

The strangulated infrastructure in most of the nation's educational institutions can make any concerned and well-meaning Nigerian to weep. It is imperative to remember that most of those currently steering the mantle of leadership today benefited from free and sound education in the country. However, almost at all levels of the government, the neglect in the sector is beyond imagination, largely due to misplacement of priority and lack of appropriate check and balance in the system. It is common to find out that in most government schools, primary, secondary and even universities, class rooms, workshops, seats, books and requisite equipment are grossly inadequate.

Motivation of teachers is drastically on the low side. The new remuneration for Secondary school teachers recently approved by the Federal government in 2022 was strangulated, and promised to be effected in 2023, which is yet to see the light of the day. At University level, the situation is also sympathetic. Thus, it is a well-known fact that the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has gone on strike actions several times in this country in an attempt to force government to honour agreements they freely reached with the Union, which they largely fail to honour. Above leads to multi-dimensional problems with inflicting consequences on the lecturers, students, parents/guardians, government and also the general society.

Another challenge against sound educational system in Nigeria is frequent changes and modifications in the curricula being operated in the country, revolving around British and American system of education. This

results in lack of focus on our local needs to achieve desired results. Some of the changes in the system encountered include the 6-3-3-4 system introduced in 1973, which replaced 7-5-2-3 system, then to 1-6-3-3-4 system, and in 2008, 9-3-4 system was introduced (Udofia, 2021). Presently, at university level, the National Universities Commission (NUC) has introduced Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards for Nigerian Universities (CCMAS) at undergraduate level and it is about to take effect, based on what is called global best practice. The CCMAS is expected to gradually face-out the existing Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) that was introduced in 1989.

Consequences of the Neglect

The neglect of the education being faced at various levels in Nigeria has currently reached an alarming state. Among the problems that can arise as a result of the above include the following:

1. Poor or low quality personnel can result who will be found in various sectors, impacting negatively on the innocent persons. Thus, low quality medical doctors, pharmacists, engineers, architects, teachers, lecturers and lots more could be on the increase. All these can be sources of worry to the nation. Nonetheless, professional and other regulatory bodies are doing their best to check the menace.
2. Due to inappropriate educational curricula in operation in the country that consider the actual need of the nation, a large number of our youths, including graduates are left with no job to do after graduation. These can become a source of worry and concern in terms of security in our communities and beyond.
3. Redundancy can make a substantial number of the affected youths to be engaged in social vices, including drug abuse and all sorts of criminal activities.
4. The envy or jealousy level between the rich and poor will be on the increase, with its attending consequences.
5. There will certainly be no meaningful development in any society that is full of illiterates, half-baked educated population, and where majority of the youths are not gainfully employed.

Solutions to the Problems of Educational Development in Nigeria

As the problems are multi-dimensional, they need to be addressed through different approaches and holistically. Thus, the youths, parents, communities and government have to be up to their responsibilities and do the needful in order to out of the woods and reach the Promised Land.

Consequently, the following are proposed as the way out of the issues highlighted in this paper:

1. The Youths

Our youths need to re-think, understand the reality in the country and the globe at large in order to become useful to themselves and the society. Consequently, the youths should embrace low income menial jobs and forget about white-collar jobs that are grossly unavailable. Entrepreneurial jobs should be accepted by the youths for survival and reduce over dependence on parents and guardians. Today, it is an indisputable fact that going by the present predicament, government cannot provide jobs for all the youths.

2. The Parents

Parents should be up to their responsibilities and pay appropriate attention to the education of their subjects. Parents should be financially disciplined and spend their earnings wisely with appropriate attention to the education of their children. They should do everything possible to shun away from encouraging their children from participating in examination misconduct, which can be a root course of poor or low quality personnel in the nation.

3. The Government

Government should increase its annual budgetary allocation to education in line with the UNESCO minimum of 26%. If this is done and appropriately implemented, dramatic change in the system could be obtained. Similarly, government should always ensure that only appropriate and responsible school heads are appointed, who are expected to exhibit exemplary leadership and ensure that the teachers operate in accordance with the laid down regulations. In addition, training and re-training of the teachers should be given an utmost attention due to its impact on educational system. Infrastructure in our schools that are largely inadequate or dilapidated should also be revisited with the view to do the needful towards improving the system. Through appropriate funding, and devoid of inappropriate practices, more class rooms, laboratories, workshops, equipment and other teaching facilities can be made available. Moreover, there should be special salary package for those in the teaching profession, which can make the teachers to concentrate on the job and also gain respect in the society and be out of the current state of demoralization.

Fundamentally, only qualified and interested teachers should be engaged in the teaching to make it result-oriented. Government should also be up and doing in enlightenment programmes to sensitize all categories of people, including agencies and parastatals to keep up to their responsibilities in accordance with the law for the benefit of our youths and beyond.

4. The Community

Members of the community that are financially capable should be extending their helping hands to the children of the poor, orphans and other needy members of the society. They should also be actively involved in securing jobs, skills acquisition and other craft works for our teeming unemployed youths in our societies. Among these, establishing community schools will also play an important role in curbing the current menace. In addition, scholarship for the well deserving members of the society, for the children of the poor should be encouraged. This will go a long way in reducing the gap between the rich and the poor in our societies, hence creating shock absorber. Private school owners should see themselves more as rendering community service than seeing it more as a profit oriented business. On the other hand, government should consider downward review of tax they are charging private school owners, as they are complimenting the government to carry out its own responsibility

5. Electronic Teaching

According to National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023), Nigeria has 222.5 million active mobile telephone subscribers as of the end of 2022, and 25 – 40 million smart phone users (Petroc, 2023). This presents an opportunity to leverage technology to improve education delivery, especially in areas where there are shortages of teachers. With the smart phone technology more e-learning platforms, distance learning, and online courses can be open to learners, which can go a long way in improving access to education. This can help immensely as a large number of the youths have smart phones, largely use for social media purposes.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Since quality education is necessary for nation building and responsible youths are largely the drivers and indicators of growth, it follows that for Nigeria to grow in the right direction, necessary attention has to be given to our teeming youths to achieve the desired goals especially during the current economic recession. Consequently, hands must be on deck between the youths, parents, guardians, other members of our societies and indeed the government, to work holistically towards curbing the menace facing our educational system and the feature of our youths. If the above measures are taken, Nigeria can become a prosperous nation, and attain realistic social, scientific, technological political, moral, cultural and economic development that we can all be proud of. Indeed, without a rethink and doing the needful by all the stakeholders, the problems are likely going to escalate in the near future and the consequences would certainly be regrettable to any well-meaning Nigerian.

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