

Enhancing Service Quality of the Nigerian Secondary School Education in the 21st Century

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Abstract

It has been observed by scholars all over the world that education is the key that unlocks the forces of economic development. The quality, efficiency and structure of nations and industries are determined by the quality of the people in them. Education emphasizes the need to develop a skilled and flexible workforce in order to compete in the twenty first century. The paper investigates some of the factors militating against quality service delivery in the Nigerian secondary education. The study adopted desk research using of relevant secondary data to draw generalization. Findings revealed that the Nigeria educational sector, a key driver of sustainable national development has been grossly neglected, abandoned and ill- funded by successive administrations amidst increasing economic growth, without commensurate investments and development. Also, this sector has been allowed to rot, and relegated to the background in our national planning and implementation, and service quality in the sector is quite dissatisfactory. The paper recommended the implementation of measures such as: the employment of adequate and competent teachers to ensure a balanced teacher-student ratio, the adoption of modern and improved teaching methods and aids, as well as increased investment in the development of infrastructure to enhance an efficacious and vibrant secondary educational system that will energize and propel Nigeria's sustainable national development in the 21st century.

Key words: Educational services, Service quality, Quality service delivery, Secondary schools Background to the study

It is widely accepted that the existence of an efficient educational system is the key prerequisite for the attainment of a sustainable level of economic growth and national development. The potentiality of education to growth and development is largely dependent on the quality of service delivery within that system. The educational system in Nigeria is structured along the lines of a six-three-three-four system. The choice of this structure was informed by the need to ensure that prospective students are adequately equipped with the requisite knowledge and skills at each level, with the overall objective of the improvement in the quantity and quality of the country's stock of human capital. In this structure, junior and senior secondary schools, which from now on will be collectively referred to as secondary schools, serve as bridge schools which assimilate the products of nursery and primary schools, and prepare them for the rigours of tertiary education. Undoubtedly, the senior secondary school structure may be regarded as the most important cog in the educational system of Nigeria. Thus, the need for high standards of

quality service delivery, occasioned by adequate funding, as well as conducive teaching and learning environment, etc cannot be over emphasised.

The need for the assurance of high levels of standards of service delivery in secondary schools and the educational sector as a whole is highlighted by Gbenu (2012) who pointed out the fact that the major cause of differences between the economies of developed and developing countries lies in the quality and quantity of education offered. The quality of education offered in developed countries is such that makes recipients creators of jobs rather than job seekers; largely in addition to the fact that basic education is mandatory which is responsible for their high literacy level.

However, the truth in Nigeria is that successive governments and administrators have only paid lip service to the importance of the secondary school system and the educational sector as a whole, without serious and determined efforts for the improvement and /or development of this sector. Gbenu (2012) observed that the state of education in Nigeria largely explains the high level of underdevelopment or low rate of development in the country. Schools and structures are dilapidated, infrastructure allowed to rot and collapse, ever increasing students' population, a declining teacher quality and supply, poor methods of ensuring quality within the education industry, (except recent attempts by the National Universities Commission, NUC towards quality assurance in the nation's universities). More worrisome is the use of obsolete curricula in Nigerian secondary schools today which have failed to address modern day challenges. The resultant effect of this malady is not encouraging and is an indication of the service quality and delivery mechanisms in our educational system at that level. It is heart breaking and alarming that no school could produce an average of 50% of its candidates at WAEC level having 5 credits including English and mathematics. In a similar vein, UNESCO (2008) referring to situations in Africa, argued that curriculum has to be revised if they are to prepare youngsters to live in a society marked by explosion of new knowledge and information in science, technology, and communication.

Farmer and Richman (1965) in Nwackukwu (2002:60) opined "without a literate, skilled, educated oriented population, other reforms are doomed to less than mediocre result at best... productive enterprises remain small, static and inefficient or largely conservative and more inefficient." It is right to conclude by saying that educational constraint is one of the factors that account for the differences in the performance of managers in different countries. Once a country has a poor educational standard and other factors in the country– political, social, economic, and legal will be sadly deficient.

The scenario so far described implies that there is an urgent need for the revitalization and implementation of new measures as well as the re-evaluation of existing ones, aimed at improving the standards of service delivery in the educational sector of the country. Adopting these measures will guarantee the future of our country, increase the quality and quantity of the stock of human capital that shall be the engine-room for sustainable national growth and development in the 21st century.

Problem Statement

Service deliveries in the Nigerian secondary school education system have experienced failures for some decades now. These failures are recognizable in the input, processes and outputs of this very important sector of our nation. Unless urgent remedial actions are taken and implemented by all stakeholders to salvage the deteriorating standards of our secondary educational system, especially in the public schools, Nigeria is heading toward national disasters in all sectors of her polity and economy, as well as development unattainable.

Study Objectives

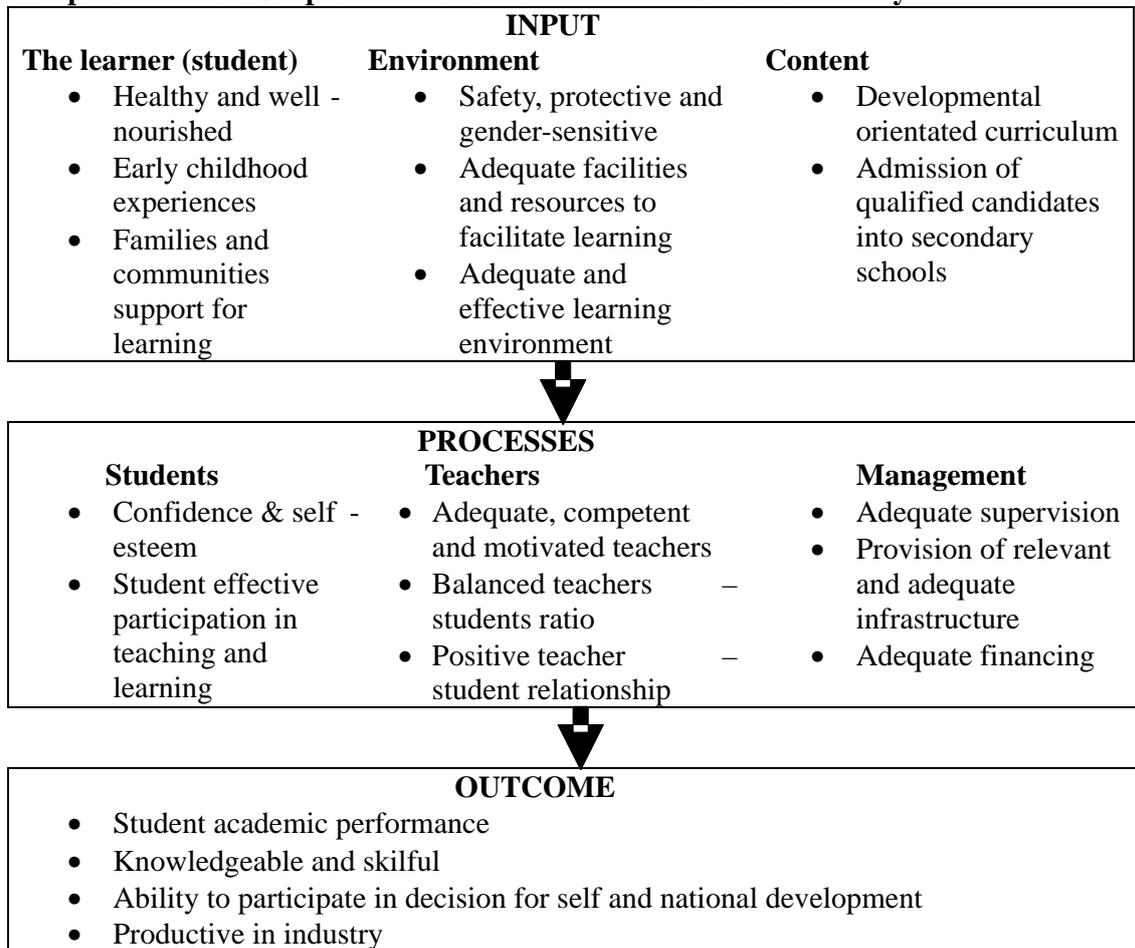
The main objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify the constraints to quality educational service delivery in Nigerian secondary schools, and;
2. To proffer some policy recommendations to solve to these constraints.

Education and National Development

Education imparts knowledge, teaches skills and instils attitudes to its recipients (students). Imparting knowledge means putting across facts, current thinking, theories, principles or laws; teaching skills is imparting practical skills, comprehension and ability to see implications or solve problems; instilling attitudes include inculcating tolerance, open-mindedness, scientific detachment and healthy scepticism (Langer, 1977). These factors are requisites for social integration, performance of productive tasks and for affecting national development (FRN, 2004). Education is the bedrock and ultimate value of society's development. In a broad sense, it is a process by which individuals acquire various and vital physical, social, mental and other skills and capabilities for the proper functioning of a society. The educational system of a nation has significant affect on her growth and development.

Input-Processes-Output Model of the Educational Service Industry



Model Implications

The input-processes-output model of educational service industry consists of input, processes; and outcome. Input (learner environment and content) and quality service of the Nigerian Secondary School Education

Quality learner: School systems work with the children who come into them. The quality of children's lives before beginning formal education greatly influences the kind of learners they can be. Quality learners are those who are healthy, well-nourished, having early childhood experiences and supported in learning by their families and communities. According to UNESCO (2000) a research conducted by Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) revealed that three aspects of nutritional status clearly affect achievement adversely: protein-energy malnutrition, temporary hunger and micronutrient deprivation.

A research conducted by Carron and Chau (1996) in Mexico (Puebla), India (Madhya Pradesh), Guinea and China (Zhejiang) adopted achievement tests, questionnaires, interviews with teachers, parents and local officials. The study revealed that illness and poor health are some of

the main reasons for absenteeism. Healthy development in early childhood, especially during the first three (3) years of life, plays an important role in providing the basis for a healthy life and a successful formal school experience (McCain & Mustard, 1999).

In a research conducted by Williams (2000) in twelve (12) Latin American Countries, using simple administration of tests (students) and questionnaires (students, parents and teachers), revealed that children whose parents had primary school education or less were more than three times as likely to have low test scores or grade repetition than children whose parents had at least some secondary schooling. UNESCO (2000) reported that healthy children with positive early learning experiences and supportive, involved parents are thus most likely to succeed in school. Another essential ingredient of a successful education system is a quality environment for learning.

A study by Bua and Ada (2013) on impact of Total Quality Management (TQM) on secondary school education for National Transformation: the case of Benue North-West Senatorial District of Benue State, Nigeria. The research work adopted the survey research design. Three hundred and ninety-eight (398) teachers from 20 grant aided secondary schools constituted the sample of the study. The study revealed that quality school facilities impact on school education for national transformation. Williams (2000) in research work adopted cross-sectional study, in single administration of tests (students), questionnaires (students, parents and teachers) and used 50,000 students as sample size. The study revealed that children whose schools lack classroom materials and had an inadequate library were significantly more likely to show lower test scores and higher grade repetition.

Most experts in the field of education agreed that when properly used, information and communication technology hold great promise to improve teaching and learning in addition to shaping workforce opportunities (Aduwa-Ogiegbean & Iyamu). For effective teaching and learning, well equipped laboratories and subject rooms are needed in our secondary schools. Quality content refers to the intended and taught curricula of schools, and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace. As correctly pointed out by Adeyinka (nd) one of the current problems of educational development in Nigeria is the unstable curriculum and subject syllabuses.

Processes (students, teachers and management) and quality service of the Nigerian secondary school education

Processes are means through which trained teachers use child-centred teaching approaches as well- managed classrooms and schools and skilful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities. Until recently, much discussion of educational quality centred on system inputs, such as infrastructure and pupil-teacher ratios, and on curricular content. In recent years, however, more attention has been paid to educational processes – how teachers and administrators use inputs to frame meaningful learning experiences for students. Improved quality health learning, facilities/environment and stable curriculum tend to enhance confidence, self-esteem and student effective participation.

Teachers' working conditions affect their ability to provide quality education. How and late remuneration may cause teachers to take on another job, which hurts students learning. A study conducted by Willms (2000) in 12 countries in Latin American, using cross-sectional single administration of test (students) and questionnaire (students, parents and teachers) revealed that children in schools where many teachers work in other jobs in addition to teaching are 1.2 times more likely to have lower test scores and/or higher grade repetition.

A study by Ayeni (2011) indicated that there was a significant relationship between teachers' qualifications and instructional task performance ($r = 0.681$ at $p < 0.05$), and between teachers' teaching experience and instructional task performance ($r = 0.742$ at $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that teachers' instructional task performance can be enhanced with good qualification and experience in teaching, while the challenges that teachers face in the tasks of instructional inputs and curriculum delivery require effective capacity development during service, so as to improve the quality of teaching in secondary schools and the overall quality of the education system.

A study by Emetarom (1992) on Owerri Urban and environs: revealed that both teaching experience and formal training in educational administration are necessary for the appointment of principals and vice-principals into administrative posts in education. Midat (2011) studied the quality of teachers' in relation to students' performance in English language examination at the Junior Secondary level. The results of the study revealed that the opinion of the English language teachers'; teacher's qualification, teachers' knowledge of Subject matter, teachers' communicative competence, pedagogical skills of teachers and teachers' length of service/ experience have direct effects on students' performance in English language. It was thus concluded that there is a significant relationship between: the teachers' academic qualification and student performance, between teachers' knowledge of the subject and student performance; between teachers' communicative competence and students' performance; between teachers' pedagogical skills and students' performance, as well as between teachers' length of service and student performance.

An uncertified teacher cannot prepare students for WASCE/GCE because it is unlikely that they could pass. Improving the quality of the teaching force in schools, is seen as the key to raising student achievement (Ijaiya, 1998; Lassa 2000; and Guga, 1998).

Teachers can make or mar the school curriculum; therefore, their adequacy and quality for better service delivery needs to be assessed on a regular basis. A study conducted by Akinsola (2010) on teachers and students' academic performance in Nigerian secondary schools: implications for planning. Twenty-one (21) public secondary schools one in each local government area from a population of thirty-one (31) local government area in the Ogun State. The senior school certificate examination results from 2000/2001 to 2004/2005 were used to analyse student's academic performance. The data were analysed using ANOVA and Spearman rank correlating to test the hypotheses. Findings revealed that teachers' qualifications, experience and teacher-student ratio were significantly related to students' academic performance. Positive teacher-student relationship remains a vital determinant to improving academic performance. A study

conducted by Miske & Dowd et al (1998) using pre-test and post-test gains scores, qualitative classroom observation, findings revealed that in schools with greater learning gains, supervisors regularly evaluated teachers, contributing to improved teaching practice.

The findings of Jaiyeoba and Ukandu (1998) indicated that the performance of PTA teachers, whether professionally qualified or not is high because of their subjection to rigorous supervision. From this finding, it is inferred that supervision is one of the major factors or variables that enhance teachers' performance, which could result into improved learners' performance. In an international study carried out by Senar (2003) to determine the impact of instructional supervision on teachers' performance and students' achievement in the secondary schools of Garchitorena, Camarines, etc. He concluded that the level of achievement of the high school students in English, Mathematics and Science was fair.

Bua and Ada (2013) in their study revealed that quality funding has impact on secondary school education or national transformation. Abimbade (1997) and Lasisi (2001) observed that no matter the method or strategies chosen to be effective, there is need to make use of appropriate instructional materials in facilitating learning. The use of audio based media as radio communication medium has been found to enhance learning. Nureni (2001) established that radio communication medium significantly affects or influences the knowledge of people on immunization programme. Other researchers confirmed that audio allows learners the capability to personalize message and instructions (Moemeka, 1980 and Augustus, 2001).

Furthermore, library has been identified as an important quality factor in schools. Researchers have opined that while education is an eye-opener, the library is the tool for opening the eye and its neglect will impair the acquisition of knowledge. As a result of the important role played by library in education quality, the National Policy on Education (2004) under its 'section 10' (Education services), has given a place for library provision, which is as follows "Libraries are one of the most important education services. Every state ministry needs to provide funds for the establishment of libraries in all education institutions and to train librarians and library assistants for this service"

Gbenu (2012) carried out a study to examine the state of the Nigerian educational system with emphasis on secondary education. While pointing out that both human and material resources were inadequate and those available dilapidated, the study emphasized on the need to adopt basic, general, technical and vocational education with quality maintained and sustained as experience has shown in developed countries like Britain, New Zealand, Germany, among others. To maintain and sustain quality, it was recommended that indices such as; students' capacity and motivation to learn in relation to curriculum and subjects to be learnt, qualified teachers, availability of requisite tools for teaching and learning, expected net effects of all the inputs on the students (academic, moral, spiritual, cultural values, etc.) and manageable teacher-students ratios be put in place.

Output and quality service of the Nigerian secondary school education:

Outputs encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society. The environment, content and processes that learners encounter in school lead to diverse results, some intended and other unintended. Quality learners' outputs are intentional, expected effects of the educational system. They include what children know and can do, as well as the attitudes and expectations they have for themselves and their societies. For quality output to be achieved, the input and processes need to be efficient and effective. A study by Bello and Oke (nd:11), on "the trend in entries and performance of candidates in some subjects in the WASSCE among the four member countries of WAEC" showed that "performance was not impressive especially in the core subjects (English Language and Mathematics) that are requirements for tertiary education. It is therefore recommended that policies and strategies to improve candidates' performance in WASSCE should be put in place by the Government of the various countries so that access to and quality of education in the sub-region could be sustained. This might possibly improve the overall development of each country".

Conclusion

The enhancement of quality service delivery in secondary schools in Nigeria is an urgent task for all stakeholders in the educational sector. We should not just talk-the-talk, but do-the-talk, if the nation intends to actualize her educational goals and the overall developmental objectives of the country as anticipated in the Vision 20:2020 road map. This clarion call is occasioned by the deplorable state of quality service deliveries in secondary schools of our country, especially in rural communities which can only result in socially undesirable outcomes and consequences. The improvement in the current status quo will involve the overhauling of a number of indices with respect to secondary school education. This also requires the political will, without which the laudable aspirations of the nation cannot be achieved. Therefore, like a value- chain, every stakeholder must make concerted effort in activities that will create, design, produce, deliver, facilitate and support the secondary school education in Nigeria for a sustainable national development in the 21st century.

Policy Recommendations

This study recommends the following measures if implemented will ensure high level of service delivery in Nigerian secondary schools:

1. Adequate monitoring systems
This can be done through the establishment of internal quality assurance departments in secondary schools, as is the case in most tertiary schools, as well as improvements in the level of supervision of secondary schools by bodies such as the federal and state secondary school education boards and SERVICOM, as well as the reduction in the level of corruption in such bodies which has seriously eroded their effectiveness.
2. Increased investment in the development of educational infrastructure
An improvement in the quality of service delivery in secondary schools in Nigeria cannot be achieved without the adequate investment in the provision of the necessary

learning infrastructure and teaching aids such as laboratories, libraries, class room infrastructure and buildings, teaching materials and aids, tools, etc. The adequate provision of these infrastructures will help improve the service delivery process in our secondary schools.

3. Use of modern information and communication technologies (ICT) learning aids

Modern information and communication technologies learning aids (e-learning, e-library, etc) will not only improve the level of assimilation of knowledge by students, they will make it easier for them to acquire and utilize information from a wide variety of information as well as make them be in line with current global standards and adaptable.

4. Improvement in the available monetary and non-monetary incentives

The saying goes “a hungry man is an angry man”. Thus, in view of the ever worsening economic conditions, there is a need to ensure that the monthly wages and other monetary entitlements of secondary school teachers are adequate and commensurate for them to have a reasonable standard of living. This will involve the implementation of a living-minimum wage policy for the educational system as a whole. This will not only be an incentive to increased effort and productivity, but will also reduce the level of corruption which has crept into the secondary school system in the last two decades.

Non-monetary incentives could also serve as a huge source of motivation for teachers. This could be in the form of opportunities for further development through seminars, conferences, training, retraining courses and exchange/sabbatical programs. This will in turn improve the quality of the teaching staff and hence their productivity by exposing them to improved teaching methods and current techniques. These will be mentally refreshing and re-motivating the available teaching personnel. However, this is not the case in Nigerian schools as Ayeni and Akinola (2008) reporting on Ondo State found that 57% of teachers in secondary schools were not given adequate training opportunities by their principals while facilities to improve their professional competence through in-service training were not adequately provided. This constitutes encumbrance to education quality assurance and requires an urgent reversal and redress.

5. Employment of competent and adequate number of teachers to ensure a balanced teacher-student ratio

Apart from poor condition of service especially in form of low pay, is the issue of work overload of teaching schedule due to teachers' shortage (a school-related condition). This ranked highly as affecting pupil academic performance adversely; and teachers' poor attitude to work and ineffectiveness. The problem is especially pronounced in secondary schools in rural areas where teachers are required to handle over 100 and in most cases 150 students per class. The result is that teachers are over worked and over stressed, a situation which will lead to a fall in their levels of productivity and quality of service deliveries, since the teacher has to stretch his mental and intellectual faculties to cater for the needs of an abnormally large student population. As the findings of Akinsolu (2010) revealed, teachers' qualifications, experience and teacher-student ratio

are significantly related to students' academic performance in secondary schools in Nigeria. Thus, there is an urgent need for the recruitment of more competent and qualified teachers to reduce the current workload of the existing workforce. As the ratio of teachers to students' increases, there will be an attendant increase in the productivity of the teachers and the quality of the services they provide.

6. The adoption of modern improved teaching methods
Most instructional methods of instruction used in Nigerian secondary schools, especially rural communities are either obsolete or counter-productive. The result is the ineffective communication of information from teachers to students. Thus the improvement in the quality of service delivered in secondary schools in the country will only be achieved if teachers are encouraged, through retraining programs and other measures; and the adoption of modern teaching methods. Such improved instruction processes must meet certain criteria which have been identified by Onwuegbu (1979) and Obiwusi (1981) as including the following:
 - a) It should progress from simple activities to the more complex ones.
 - b) It must possess the quality to arouse enthusiasm for active participation of students.
 - c) It should lend itself to accommodate the individual differences.
 - d) A good teaching method helps students' link classroom activities with real life activities.
 - e) It must be structured to satisfy the basic needs of the students.
 - f) It should be able to put into action all five senses (hearing, seeing, feeling, testing and touching) for effective retention of knowledge and transfer of skill acquired.
 - g) It should be a method that always motivates for higher achievement without boredom.
7. Improvement in the administrative staff
As a matter of national priority, administrators and managers must appoint and engage the services of the best qualified principals, academic and other administrative staff in order to ensure that our secondary schools are properly and efficiently managed, productive and result oriented.

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