
EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS SUSTAINABILITY: IMPETUS FOR ACHIEVING THE GOALS OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Sustainability of Educational projects is one of the cardinal ways to achieving the goals of teacher education in Nigeria. The bane of the Nigerian society of which the educational sub sector belongs has been that of the poor execution cum sustainability on one hand, and poor management on the other hand, of well articulated policies and programmes. The drive towards ensuring that educational projects are effectively and efficiently executed right from conception to final implementation and its sustainability is a onerous responsibility. The paper focused on the meaning of sustainability in relation to educational projects as a veritable tool for achieving the goals of teacher education in Nigeria, and as well highlighted the goals of teacher education. It also x-rayed the factors that impede against educational projects sustainability. Thereafter, recommendations were made to ensure viable and sound educational projects sustainability for the achievement of the goals of teacher education in Nigeria.

The gateway to modernization can be unlocked by education and the teacher is the custodian of the key to it (Akpotu & Nwaham, 2008). Without education, society will not have direction, because education brings about a fundamental change in the lifestyle and philosophy of life (Erinyodavwe, 2009), and only the teacher has the societal mandate to bring about that change in formal educational settings. The strength of a nation lies on how much of functional education she makes available or she is able to provide for her citizenry. This is so because education is a potent weapon that any society can use to bring about a monumental development. Obviously, if a society wants

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to attain the goals of education faster, then that society should fast track the structures and the facilities that are used to build the teachers in the educational system as well as develop adequately, maintain and harness the structures for sustainability at every point in time, because it is practically not possible for an educational system to rise above the quality of its teachers (FRN, 2004).

Teaching as an art in itself is a valued gold and teacher performance could only be better judged and rated through the teacher's ability in knowing exactly what is to be taught and how to teach it (Apeyuan & Aondokaa, 2001). The teacher is central to all teaching and learning activities (Ughamadu & Okoye, 1998). The ability of the teacher to perform, just like learning, is affected by the environment as posited by Apeyuan & Aondokaa (2001), and one of such environment which affects the teacher is the educational institution which is vested with societal mandate to prepare and produce teachers for the Nigerian society.

The effectiveness and efficiency of educational institutions is determined by the state and level of educational facilities and structures that are available at any point in time. The importance of educational facilities in the school system cannot be overemphasized, and as noted by Nwaham (2008), the educational facilities in the form of classrooms, laboratories, workshops, libraries, modern educational hardware and software are essential for the teaching and learning process to be effective.

The process of education has two main dimensions, that is, teaching and learning, and the teacher is at the center of it (Ughamadu & Okoye, 1998). Without the teacher, the establishment of formal educational system will be meaningless. According to Nwagwu (1983) in Ughamadu & Okoye (1998), 'the very existence of formal education system implies the availability of people specially selected and trained to teach something to somebody within a structured, regulated and supervised environment – the school'

These "people specially selected and trained" are the teachers. The quality of teaching is of paramount importance to national development. According to Akpotu & Nwaham (2008), the quality of teaching exhibited by teachers determines not only the extent of national development in Nigeria and the world over, it also influences the quality of graduates produced and brings about a functional nation.

The quality of the teacher can be engendered if the structures and projects that are used to select and train them are in a state of disrepair and neglect, for the sustainability of a sound educational system.

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Educational projects play a dominant role in the drive towards the achievement of the goals of teacher education in Nigeria. The paper is broken into four sessions. The first section expounds on what educational projects sustainability entails; the second section focuses on the elements of substantiality vis-à-vis the goals of teacher education in Nigeria; while the third section analyses the factors that affect project sustainability as instrument for achieving the goals of teacher education in Nigeria. Then, recommendations are made towards ensuring that projects sustainability is attained for a virile teacher education in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

Educational projects sustainability as a concept may be viewed from three words it is made of. These words are “Educational”, “Projects” and “Sustainability”. The word “Educational” simply means the totality of all issues that have to do with education. As for Education, it has been earlier opined that it is the key to modernization. According to Wheeler (1967), “Education may be thought of as an important social institution, the totality of structures and roles, processes, relations and material instruments built up around society’s interest in the enculturation or socialization of the young”

Education has a lot to do with teaching and learning of the values that are cherished by the society. It is a process of teaching, training and learning especially in schools or colleges to develop knowledge and improve skill (Hornby, 2004). Formal Education leans heavily on schools to achieve its aim. The school is an institution specially and purposely designed for consciously educating the child (Banjo, 1977). Whenever education is mentioned, the school readily comes to mind because the school is deliberately established by society to handle some of its educative functions due to circumstances arising from complexities of social structure (Onwuka, 1996). Education can be likened to the bedrock which national development is built upon. Education in Nigeria is an instrument “par excellence” for affecting National Development (FRN, 2004). The quality of man and his environment is largely determined by the quality of education (Ughamadu & Okoye, 1998).

As for “Projects” Hornby (2004) sees it as a “planned piece of work that is designed to produce something new or to improve something”. Igunnu (2006) opined that a project is seen primarily as a planning process which utilizes scarce resources for a specific time for the production of some economic returns at a later date, and goes further to define a project as a “task or series of tasks that have definable beginning and end, and require the expenditure of one or more resources that can be completed in order to achieve the objective for which they are instituted”. Projects are indispensable to

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meaningful national development. It is with it that new courses are charted. It is also with projects that existing courses and programmes can be evaluated and fine tuned to determine their contribution to national development. No meaningful national development can take place without meaningful education in any society, because education is an instrument for national development, and no educational system may rise above the quality of its teachers (FRN, 2004)

On the other hand, for a thing to be “sustainable”, it should be able to continue for a long time, as well as provide enough of what is needed in order to live or exist (Hornby, 2004). For a thing or project to be sustainable, it should have the potency not only to exist, but to also justify its existence. According to Igunnu (2006), sustainability is viewed from a decision to keep, support and continue with whatever is considered valid in the educational system. Sustainability may also mean maintenance in order to keep in existence. It requires giving support and encouragement to avoid breakdown and disintegration, so that an idea, structure, facility or project will continue to exist. Sustainability goes further to incorporate the process of keeping, supporting and continuing to ensure that a valid issue, idea, facility or projects is preserved.

Educational Projects Sustainability vis-à-vis the Goals of Teachers Education

The concept of sustainability is an important one, especially in the educational sub sector, because it is the force that brings about development after a project has been instituted. Sustainability has some critical elements. Igunnu (2006) highlighted the elements of sustainability as;

- i. Self-reliance;
- ii. Continuity and maintenance of human skills and institutional arrangements;
- iii. Economic sustainability, including cost-effectiveness and adequacy of working conditions and adequacy of operating budgets;
- iv. Political commitment based on considering activities with national goals;
- v. Responsiveness relevance and usefulness of activities;
- vi. Flexibility of capacity to respond to changing circumstances;
- vii. Environmental sustainability.

All educational projects should be seen to have the above elements for its sustainability to be assured. This calls for proper maintenance culture for educational projects and facilities so that the goals of teacher education are realized in the long run. These goals of teacher education as specified by the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004:39) are to:

- a. Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system;
- b.

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- c. Encourage further, the spirit of inquiring and creativity in teachers;
- d. Help teachers to fit into social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals;
- e. Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations;
- f. Enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

From the goals enumerated above, it is obvious that teacher education is a critical aspect of any nation's educational system. Teachers are inevitable and indispensable to the entire educational system of any nation, and the quality of any educational system depends on the educational attainment and personality of teachers (Nwaham, 2008). Thus, teacher education has an all important role to play in educational attainment and the personality of the teacher. The professional preparation of teachers is the main core of teacher education Whawo (2002), and only a well articulated teacher education system can bring about that professional attainment. A sound teacher education system can therefore be said to be in place when all existing projects, facilities and structures in the sub sector are appropriately conceived, implemented and sustained.

Factors Affecting the Sustainability of Educational Projects

(a) **Poor definition of needs and objectives:** At the conception stage of any educational project, the objectives of such projects are expected to be clearly defined in unequivocal terms. This is to enable the stakeholders know from the onset, the expected benefits and needs accruable by embarking on the educational project. According to Igunnu (2006), projects arise out of desire to satisfy some societal needs and one may undertake a project based on already existing scheme or programme in an educational institution, and that before any educational projects is embarked upon, the end users should be consulted and likely benefits outlined. If the objectives and needs of particular projects are ill-designed, devoid of clearly determined benefits, then its sustainability will be thwarted in the long-run.

(b) **Financial implication of maintenance:** The cost of maintaining instituted educational projects has a direct effect on the sustainability of such projects. When the cost of maintaining existing educational project is high, the tendency is that the degree of depreciation becomes faster because the likelihood to skip maintenance for a new project will be high. Furthermore, if the cost of initial maintenance of educational project for the first three years after completion is not embedded into the cost of execution, there will be lack of interest in the sustainability of the project. The high rate

of proposal and envisaged financial implication of maintaining a project is known to be responsible for the non-observation of the sustainability move, (Igunnu 2006).

(c) **Overloading of educational projects:** Every project has an estimated workload it can cater for. In other words, some projects are executed to take care of given number of persons. The practice in most educational institutions is that these projects and facilities are not only overloaded, but are also overstressed. An example is a lecture hall built to cater for (1000) one thousand students but is forced to accommodate (3000) three thousand students. Again, a library built to cater for six hundred users is sometimes forced to accommodate one thousand students. Overloading has a concomitant effect on educational projects sustainability.

(d) **Lack of commitment of school management:** This is another factor that affects the sustainability of educational projects. According to Igunnu (2006), some leaders of institutions may refuse to take responsibility of keeping alive an idea or structure that was not initiated by them, while others will simply concentrate on projects that their names can be attached as legacies they left behind. In other words, management tends to personalize educational projects to the detriment of the overall objectives and benefits of the projects.

(e) **Inadequacy of technical support:** The inadequacy or outright unavailability of technical support for educational projects is another factor that has effects on the sustainability of educational projects in Nigeria. After the execution of some educational projects, the technical support to operate, maintain and service them is sometimes absent. This leads to reduction in the life span of such projects as there are no capable hands to handle their operation, maintenance and servicing. Lack of spare parts may as well affect the sustainability of educational projects. Educational projects such as Information Communication Technology (ICT), Generating Plants and supply of Tractors and Agricultural education equipment fall within this category.

(f) **Poor execution of projects:** This factor as it affects the sustainability of educational projects is seen primarily from the aspect of the usage of inferior and sub-standard materials, as well as mediocre to execute projects. Some educational projects in Nigerian institutions suffer this fate as a result of corruption, to create room for personal aggrandizement so that those involved will make more money at the expense of the benefits accruable to a longer life span of projects. Largely associated with the issue of poor execution of projects, is poor supervision. Most projects are not properly supervised during the phase of execution so much so that immediately after their commissioning, dilapidation sets in. Education can be promoted through physical

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development of the learning environment, as noted by Maduewesi (2001) in Igunnu (2006) that the quality of the physical environment in which education takes place, plays a large part in the quality and behavior of the citizen.

Conclusion

There is no gainsaying that quality teacher education system is a sine qua non for an accelerated national development. Sustainable educational development in Nigeria can only be better achieved if attention is re-directed on proper execution and sustainability of educational projects. Every agency concerned with teacher education including the government at Federal, State and Local Government levels should attack the issue of decay in infrastructure and facilities in the educational sub-sector squarely. Teacher education is a onerous responsibility and every stakeholder should see it in this light. If teacher education is improved upon, there will be an increase in the standard of education and corresponding increase in national development.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis of this paper the following recommendations are made:

- a. Proper definition of objectives, needs and benefits derivable from educational projects should be made and stated in clear unambiguous terms before the actual commencement and execution of projects for teacher educational institutions.
- b. Implementation committee should be constituted for every project that has bearing with teacher education system, as this will guard against the problem of poor project execution.
- c. Leaders and management of institutions involved in teacher education should be enlightened through seminars on the need for maintenance and servicing of existing structural facilities and projects with their domain.
- d. Monitoring agencies like National University Commission (NUC), National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and National Teachers' Institute (NTI) should have programmes in place for continuous monitoring and upgrading of facilities and structures in teacher education institutions even after accreditation of courses have been granted.
- e. Sponsoring agencies like Educational Trust Fund (ETF) should double their stake in the sponsoring of projects in the teacher education system.

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