

# CHALLENGES OF QUALITY SECONDARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

The attainment of the goal of education for useful living within the society is possible if quality education is delivered to individuals within the system. The challenges of quality secondary education in Nigeria were the focus of this paper. The paper highlighted and examined the challenges of quality secondary education as incompetent teachers, poor teacher motivation, inadequate basic infrastructure and educational facilities, lack of and non-application of ICTs in teaching and learning, lack of in-service training for teachers, over crowded classrooms, students negative attitude to learning and examination malpractice. Based on the discussion, it was recommended among others that politicians should stop recruiting non teachers into teaching profession while stakeholders in secondary education should collaborate with religious organizations, private individuals, wealthy individuals and industries in providing infrastructures and other facilities for better quality delivery.

The federal ministry of education in Nigeria, FME (2004:4) recognizes education as an instrument "par excellence" for effecting national development. Therefore, at any level of the educational system in Nigeria, education must meet the needs of social, economic, political, scientific and technological national development. It becomes imperative therefore for stakeholders in education industry to operate education to respond to changes the educational system demands.

Secondary education in Nigeria is the education children receive after primary education and before tertiary stage. It occurs in two stages each lasting for 3 years. That is, the junior secondary school (JSS) and the Senior Secondary School (SSS).

The broad goals of secondary education as outlined in the national policy on education (2004:18) are:

1. Preparation of the individual for useful living within the society.
2. Preparation for higher education.

Specifically, secondary education in Nigeria shall amongst other aims: Inspire students within the desire for self improvement. Achievement of excellence, raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the dignity of labour, live as good citizens and provide technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development FME (2004:18).

The issue of quality of secondary education in Nigeria has attracted lots of criticisms from several authors. Some are of the view that the quality of secondary education in Nigeria has declined drastically. They based their argument on the performance of the products of the system. While others contest that the criteria for passing such judgment are fundamentally inadequate and defective since they are other environmental variables that bear on students learning. This paper discussed the challenges of quality secondary education in Nigeria.

## **Challenges of Quality Secondary Education in Nigeria.**

Myriads of problems besetting secondary education in Nigeria which has impinged on the quality of education delivery are:

### **Prevalence of Incompetent Teachers**

The teacher factor is the most crucial of the challenges of quality of secondary education in the country. This is because; it is the teacher that impacts desired knowledge, skills, values, attitude and competence into the learners. A teacher cannot perform these tasks

when he is incompetent. The quality of any educational system depends on the quality of teachers. The quality of teacher depends on the academic and professional qualification as well as the level of competence and dedication to the primary function.

Secondary school teachers are prepared at the colleges of education and *faculties of education* of universities either as regular or sandwich/part-time programme. A major defect is the poor quality of intakes into full time (regular teachers education programmes of universities). Majority of students admitted into the faculty of education are those who find it difficult to get admitted into other faculties or those withdrawn from other courses due to their academic inability to continue scholarship. This situation has made the teaching profession to be regarded by many as the profession of the never do wells. Besides, the sandwich /part-time programmes majority of students are serving teachers. But the program in terms of the structure and quality leaves much to be desired.

In addition, in Nigeria, teaching has become a general trade where every Tom, Dick and Harry go into without barrier, to run away at will. Corroborating this view, Mohammed (1999) asserted that such teachers go to teach with their minds already made up to the effect that once a better job comes, they flee.

We have persons not trained in the pedagogy of teaching all in the classroom. They are civil engineers, geologist, radiographers, quantity surveyors and the like in the class room teaching. As a result many are in doubt as to whether teaching is a profession. Even with the advent of the Teachers Registrations Council of Nigeria (TRCN), the situation is becoming worse daily because recruitment of teachers is highly politicalized. Again, the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) is quite inept in this regard as it has not been able to project and articulate the noble objectives of the teaching profession. This situation has inadvertently led to the influx of quacks and mediocre by politicians into the teaching profession. This negative trend has greatly affected the standard and quality of teaching and learning in Nigeria.

### **Poor Teacher Motivation**

Motivation is the inner urge that pushes, directs or influences the efforts an individual puts into performing a task. Individual must be motivated to get them put in their maximum efforts towards the realization of organizational goals.

Teacher motivation refers to factors within the school system which if provided to teachers will help improve their teaching effectiveness and thus improve the quality out put of students. Such motivational factors could help to propel, channel, sustain and influence the teachers behaviour towards striving for excellence.

The teachers roles are very encompassing involving myriads of functions, which can be undermined if teachers are not motivated. This is the situation in Nigeria. Several researchers have reported poor teacher motivation in Africa, especially Nigeria (Asiyai, 2009, Ingwu and Ekefre, 2006). A UNESCO report by Wire (2003 ) revealed that school teachers in Africa are unmotivated, under qualified, underpaid and many chose their profession for lack of something better to do.

According to Ingwu and Ekefre (2006), the under payment of the Nigeria teacher have a variety of negative motivational consequences including low productivity, low quality and absenteeism. In addition, the attitudinal disposition of the society towards the teacher due to poor treatment and low esteem accorded Nigerian teachers has lead to endless strikes by the NUT which compound the quality of secondary education.

### **Inadequate Basic Infrastructure and Educational Facilities**

This is another powerful challenge of quality secondary education. In most public secondary schools in Nigeria, the infrastructural facilities like classroom blocks, science laboratories and workshops for vocational and technical education and libraries are grossly inadequate to match the students' population. In some schools, students sit on broken blocks and windows during instruction as a result of lack of desk and seats.

In majority of the secondary schools, the science laboratories and workshops are empty, lacking the equipments and reagents needed for practical exercises. The common practice is for SS3 students to be exposed to practicals only few days before external examination begins. The issue of libraries for secondary schools is a thing of the past. Studies have shown that inadequacy of school infrastructures and educational facilities were significantly related to academic achievements in schools (Ikoya and Onoyase, 2008).

## **Lack of and Non Application of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs)**

The lack of ICTs and the internet and their non application to teaching and learning is a challenge to quality secondary education. Information communication technologies is one of the policy innovations and changes that was introduced into educational system by the federal ministry of education in 2004. ICT was made mandatory at every level of the educational system and an agency was charged with provision of information technology (IT) facilities for the various levels. Provisions were made for "training the trainers" using establishment like National Directorate of Employment (NDE) and the National Youth Service Scheme.

ICT integration in teaching in secondary school will help enhance teaching and learning, provides knowledge sources, provides supports to teachers in instructional planning, enhance problem solving skills and improves quality of teaching and learning (Asiyai, 2009). In the reports of Lopez, Kirschner and Woperies (2003), ICT integration in teaching results to radical shift from the traditional teacher directed or didactic approach. Telia (2007), in her study found that students were able to access information materials any time, saves students time, enable scheme to be covered on time, caters for different learning styles and caters for variety of learners.

Despite the benefits of ICTs to teaching and learning in secondary schools, majority of public secondary schools in Nigeria lack ICTs. The level of availability, utilization and computer literacy among students and teachers is at low ebb. This situation poses a threat to quality secondary education in the country.

## **Lack of In-Service Training for Teachers**

In service training is the training given to employees while in the employment in order to enhance their performance of task. In this era of knowledge and digital revolution, secondary school teachers need to be updated in knowledge and skills on a continuous basis. This is because knowledge of today is only sufficient for today.

In addition the incorporation of ICT into the curriculum presupposes the availability of computer literate teachers. Teachers need to update their knowledge in innovative learning techniques and the use of modern instructional materials through in-service training. The computer literate teachers will in turn transform the knowledge and skills to the learners. The problem of inadequate in service programmes for training and retraining of teachers has been a terrible challenge of quality secondary education. Overcrowded Classroom

This is another challenge that poses a threat to quality secondary education. In most public secondary schools in Nigeria, the class size is overwhelming for teachers. The federal ministry of education (2004:22 & 31) recommended a teacher: students ratio of 1:40 for normal classes and 1:20 for practical classes. But a visit to some secondary schools in urban centers, a class size of 1:80 is evidenced. This overcrowded classroom size pose a powerful challenge to the teachers and the quality of his teaching. When the classroom size becomes overwhelming, teachers spend much of the time handling disciplinary problems and interactions which are at variance with teaching and learning objectives. Studies have shown that the teaching effectiveness of teachers and educational achievements of students are dependent on a number of factors of which school population and class size is paramount (Fabunmi, Brai-Abu & Adeniji, 2001; Al-jark, 2006 ).

## **Students Negative Attitude to Learning and Examination Malpractice**

Students' negative attitude towards learning and their involvement in examination malpractice are two ills that have threatened the very foundation of secondary education in Nigeria. Majority of the students at this level are not interested in learning. The quest to get money has jeopardized their interest in learning. They prefer the easy way out and this has greatly affected the desire for acquiring new knowledge and skills needed for national development

This negative attitude of students is a reflection of the moral decadence in the society, line with this Onyeha (2006) opined that:

*Nigerian students are faced with the desire to get rich quick. This is because the rich people in the society are highly regarded more than the highly educated without money. Because of this, Nigerian students develop flares for programmes that would fetch immediate cash in their pockets (p. 19!)-*

Consequently students absent themselves from school. Some while at school do not alter classes and perpetrate all kinds of negative vices. During examinations, they indulge examination malpractice. Examination malpractice is a terrible crime against society, children future and God. It robs the educational system of integrity

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The numerous problems confronting the realization of quality secondary education in Nigeria have been identified and vividly discussed in this study. They include amongst others, the inadequacy of basic infrastructural and educational facilities, incompetent teachers, lack of ICTs and it's non application in teaching and learning.

For Nigeria to attain sustainable growth and development via secondary education, quality education delivery must be the priority of everybody. To tackle the challenges identified in the study, the following were recommended:

- Politicians should stop recruiting non teachers into the teaching profession but rather put up vibrant in- service training and retraining of teachers.
- Teacher motivation should be put into the political agenda.
- Stakeholders in secondary education, wealthy individuals, religious organizations and the private sector should collaborate with government in the provision of basic infrastructural and educational facilities and ICTs to match the students' population.
- Admission policy into teacher education programmes should be reformed.
- Parents should ensure proper upbringing of their children. School counselors, teachers and principals should continue to provide moral leadership in school.

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