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# IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA FOR SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

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## **Abstract**

*This paper is a contribution towards addressing the challenges of development and insecurity in Nigeria using secondary education as a tool. In Nigeria, there are evidences of failed leadership characterized by dwindling educational, economic, social and political fortune due to the inability of the leadership to plan successfully for development using appropriate educational tools. Education for sustainable development can function to educate, train and undertake research to contribute to the sustainable development of any society, such that can provide the citizens with skills, values and knowledge to live sustainably. It can also produce leaders who manage the affairs of government and private industries for sustainable development. The concepts of quality secondary education, security and sustainable development were explained. The relevance of improving quality secondary education for security and sustainable development in Nigeria were discussed. Challenges of improving the quality of secondary education such as insecurity and insurgency, corruption, inadequacy of qualified teachers and lack of funds were also highlighted. It is recommended that education for peaceful co-existence be included in the school curriculum as a matter of necessity while government is encouraged to allocate enough funds to education where only qualified teachers should be employed to teach.*

Qualitative education sharpens the minds of citizens, equipping them to transform societies economically, socially and politically (Asiyai, 2014). At significant points in human and national development, challenges in educational development keep emerging and if not checked or properly handled, could thwart the potential efforts aimed at attaining sustainable societal advancement and bringing same to a grinding stop. In an effort to handle these challenges properly, provision of qualitative education has always been the handy tool. But when education, the curative agent of all other sectors faces eminent threatening challenges such as insecurity, failed leadership, corruption, inadequacy of

qualified teachers and lack of funds, what else could cure the curative agent and how? This paper x-rays these challenges under various subheadings and made appropriate recommendations with the conviction that if implemented, sustainable societal advancement could be achieved.

### **The Concept of Quality and Quality Education**

Quality according to Babalola (2007) is the “fitness to purpose in relation to the user and Customer needs. It can also mean that the product conforms to standards, specifications or requirements”. In Bamisaiye’s (1983) words, quality may be “the sum of composite of the properties inherent in a material or product”. Quality education on the other hand can be seen as relative term because what constitutes quality education vary between country to country based on their economic resources, value system, educational goals and philosophies among others. Provision of quality education can improve the quality of the work force by raising the levels of its skills and competence. Quality education gives a nation access to the world’s body of knowledge, hence, adoption and adaptation of modern technology to specific environment will be facilitated. The general outcome of quality education is a progressive increase in productivity and efficiency. Quality education enables people to express their potential capacities. Longe (1999) puts learning environment (process) and students’ outcomes (graduands) under the umbrella of quality of education. The granduand in this case should be able to prove their worth by their level of competence in the competitive labour market among other challenges that will confront them in the society. Therefore it can be affirmed through their comparability and international competitiveness of similar qualifications.

### **Concept of Secondary Education**

Secondary education is the education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage (FGN,2008). The broad aims of secondary education within the overall national objectives is contained in Section 4 subsection 18 of the National Policy on education (FRN, 2004: 16) are to: a) Provide an increasing number of primary school pupils with opportunity of higher quality, irrespective of sex or social, religious and ethnic background. b) Diversify its curriculum to cater for differences in talent, opportunities and roles possessed by or open to student after their secondary schools course. c) Equip students to live effectively in our modern age of science and technology. d) Develop and project Nigerian culture, art and language as well as the world’s cultural heritage. e) Raise a generation of people who think for themselves

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respect the views and feelings of others, respect dignity of labour and appreciate that value specify under our broad national aims and lives as good citizen. f) Foster Nigerian unity with an emphasis on the common tiers that unite us on our diversity g) Inspire students with a desire for achievement and save empowerment both at school and in our later life.

To achieve the above stated goals, the quality of secondary education can be improved by probably addressing the challenges of insecurity, corruption and paucity of qualified teachers among others.

### **Security**

Quality security system is an ingredient of peaceful and harmonious co-existence which is determinants of quality secondary education and sustainable development. Security can be viewed as a defence against external and internal threat as well as the overall social economic wellbeing of the society. United Nations (2013) understood security to mean far more than simply the absence of conflict and armed violence. Development, human right and protection from environmental hazards are pre-conditions for security and lasting peace. Nigeria cannot boast of security where injustice, kidnapping, man's inhumanity to man, neglect of the people's aspiration, unemployment and environmental hazards. Achunba, Ighonereho and Akpor- Irobaro (2013) defined security as the existence of conditions within which people in the society can go about their normal daily activities without any treat to their lives and properties. Their emphasis is that, security is the protection against all forms of harm whether physical, economic or psychological. According to Francis(2006), security is the condition or feeling of safety from harm or danger, the defence, protection and absence of traits to acquire valuable; security is not only the absence or availability of ammunition for destruction. It also has to do with the activities of managers of secondary school and the entire secondary school system. The quality of secondary education could be improved only when security of the system is assured.

### **Education for Sustainable Development**

Education for sustainable development allows every human being to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future. According to Nayar (2013), sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs. Nayar (2013) further stressed that sustainable development promotes critical thinking and decision making in a collaborative manner. Education for sustainability could explore students and

create opportunities for them to learn and examine how the resources they use affect the Earth. It includes learning about the environment, interacting with the environment to make choices and prevent harmful activities in the environment. It fosters and strengthens the capacity of individuals to make judgments and choices in favour of sustainable life style. Strategy aims at ensuring that learners are equipped with the relevant knowledge, and the key dispositions, skills and values to motivate and empower them to become informed citizens. Converse to the traditional way of teaching, education for sustainable development means adopting holistic approach, with the aim of creating a better world for the present and future generations. Presently in Nigeria, sustainable development has been incorporated into school curriculum to create awareness on issues such as climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, poverty reduction and sustainable consumption. To create this awareness in the classroom, it requires participatory, activity- based, learner centred teaching methods that could motivate and empower the learners to change their behaviours and take actions for sustainable development. The knowledge acquired could help the learners to be able to relate what they learn in the classroom to their real life activities and will increasingly be in a better position to take the lead in changing behaviours and adopting sustainable life styles. This means that if every child in Nigeria gains academic freedom to read and write irrespective of their tribe, age, background and gender, their lifestyles would be improved and sustained. Freedom is a natural law for all men. It is a law which protects an individual right to access, explore, consider and express ideas and information as the basis for a self-governing, well- informed citizenry. Thus Academic Freedom can be seen as the integral component of a democratic society. It leads to the expansion and discovery of new ideas of knowledge. It transmits and preserves culture developed in the learner's independent judgment in an environment free from external control and domination. Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica (2014) defined Academic Freedom as freedom of teachers and students to teach study and pursue knowledge and research without unreasonable interference or unreasonable restrictions from law, institutional regulations or public pressure. Fourie (2008) posited that academic freedom encompasses the freedom to hold, receive and disseminate ideas without restriction. Dictionary of Education, defines Academic Freedom in four ways:

The first is that it is "the liberty to teach, study through the medium of research, and published opinions and findings without censorship through the State or any of its units of authority such as School Boards' the right of teachers, especially

at higher/college levels to teach the truth as they see it without interference from the both national and international Groups.

It is the Freedom of Speech of the Press, and of practitioners in those fields of which one is especially competent. It is the right to interpret facts without censorship. Furthermore, Academic Freedom can be defined as the freedom where Scholars should have freedom to teach or communicate ideas or facts without being targeted for repression, job loss or imprisonment. The Universal Declaration of Human right (2010) Article 19 states that ‘everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, this right includes: freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers’. Education for sustainable development could be achieved through different strategies.

These strategies includes: Education for All, Gender Equality, Cultural Diversity, among others. Education for All (EFA) is a global movement led by UNESCO (United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization). The aim of the movement was to meet the learning needs of all children, youths and adults by the year 2015. The group saw the need for all to be educated because education is very crucial for sustenance of meaningful life.

### **Challenges of improving the Quality of Secondary Education in Nigeria**

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

#### **Insecurity and Insurgency**

Peaceful co-existence paves way for access and quality in education. The horrific images of insecurity and insurgency in Nigeria have posed a serious threat to the dream of Education for All and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Secondary education cannot thrive where there are conflict, crises and wars traceable to the activities of terrorism across the globe. The activities of perpetrators of insurgencies and terrorisms culminate in attack of school pupils and students, teachers, other education personnel and education as a phenomenon (O’ Malley, 2010). For example in Libya, Syria, Palestine, Mali, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Cameroun, Chad, Niger, Sierra-Leon, Liberia, and Nigeria among other nations, the debilitating effect of insurgency on literacy development in this nations cannot be accurately estimated for the degree of its enormousness. The outbreak of insurgency culminating in high level of insurgency has hampered children’s and adults’ access to all forms of education be it formal, non-formal, or adult education. Due to insurgencies, schools have been physically touched, destroyed, burnt or broken down. The

system of education in many countries globally has been adversely affected, communities scattered and destabilized, people displaced and killed (Adebisi, 2016). The incessant attacks on schools by the insurgents caused unprecedented decrease in students' enrolment particularly in states that are infested with this demeanour. It is particularly impossible for the students and the teachers to go to school where both are killed and the schools burnt down. Leah Sharibu and some other girls who were abducted from schools in Borno state have not been found and their fates remain a mystery. Schooling in Borno, Yobe, Katsina and Plateau states is nothing but nightmares. Therefore if challenges on insecurity and insurgency are not addressed the quality of secondary education will remain a mere illusion.

### **Corruption**

Corruption can be seen as any form of dishonesty or unethical conduct by a person entrusted with a position of authority, often to acquire personal benefit. It could also be described as anything that is being changed from its original form such as lies. Aguan (2007) asserted that many government officials tell lies right from the beginning of implementation. Akhihero (2011) opined that when many people are involved in telling lies with a view to gaining monetary or material reward, it is a sign that such people are personality or self-centred, and their actions will never favour other people and their environments. Hence, they misuse their position to enhance their greed.

### **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 which in turn depends on the academic and professional qualification as well as the level of competence and dedication to the primary function.

Secondary school teachers are trained 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, teaching in Nigeria has become a general trade where every Tom, Dick and

Harry goes 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, geologists, 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 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 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 will help improve their teaching effectiveness and thus improve the quality of output (students' performance). Such motivational factors could help to propel, channel, sustain and influence the teachers' behavior towards striving for excellence. The teachers' roles are very encompassing involving myriads of functions, which can be undermined if they 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 alternative. According to Ingwu and Ekefre (2006), the under payment of the Nigeria teachers have a variety of negative motivational consequences including low productivity, 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 led to endless strikes by the Nigeria Union of Teachers (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 in equipment and reagents needed for practical exercises. The common practice is for SS3 students to be exposed to practical only few days to external examination. 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).

### **Poor Application of Information and 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 and communication technologies are one of the policy innovations and changes that were 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 establishments 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 in 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 onetime, 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. These situations possess a treat to quality secondary education in the country.

### **Poor In-Service Training for Teachers**

In service training is the training given to employees while in the employment in order to enhance their performance. 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 challenge of quality secondary education. Over-crowded classroom 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) 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 centres, a class size of 1:80 is evidenced. This overcrowded classroom size poses 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).

### **Conclusion**

From the foregoing the relevance of secondary education as seen in its goals is a level of education that requires ultimate priority in order to obtain quality outputs which will ensure adequate security and sustainable development. In order to achieve this, government at all levels need to pay attention to the issue of insecurity and provide a conducive learning environment for both the students and teachers.

**Recommendations:-**

In order to improve quality secondary education in Nigeria to attain security and sustainable development, the following recommendations are made:

Government should fund secondary education adequately in order to provide facilities that guarantee quality performance of teachers.

Peace-Education curriculum should be well prepared to fit into the existing curriculum for schools and colleges.

Government should provide enough security outfit that will safeguard the lives and properties of all schools in Nigeria.

Employment of teachers should be based on their qualification and experience.

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