

NAVIGATING THE NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: TRENDS AND CHALLENGES ACROSS LEARNERS, WORKERS, AND ENVIRONMENTS

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Abstract

The Issues and Challenges of Nigerian Educational System: the trend in the learner, the worker and the environment will be looking at issues and challenges in the Nigerian educational system, and discuss specific issues and challenges like lack of supervision, lack of Inspection, non-record keeping, non-implementation of Policies, finance, audit reports, School safety and their way forwards. This discussion is ending up with conclusion.

Keywords: Issues, Challenges, Nigerian Educational System, and the Trend.

Introduction

In global discussions on educational issues, Trade Schools (2023) has the following as their observations; that *government funding for education* (90 percent of the funding for public K-12 schools comes from state and local governments in the 2019-2020); *school safety* (57 percent of teenagers said they were worried about the possibility of gun violence at their schools), here in Nigeria our teenagers are worried over kidnapping in their schools; *disciplinary policies* (banning, suspension and expulsions take away valuable tools that teachers can use to combat students misbehavior), discipline in Nigerian schools is abstract; *bullying* (study revealed that over 22percent of students reported being bullied once a day and 6.3 percent reported experiencing bullying two to ten times in a day on their way to or from school); *poverty* (student poverty rate is a growing problem, data showed that from 2019-2022 school year in America low-income students comprised majority-52%); in Nigerian situation number of students cannot pay their WAEC and NECO fees because of the poverty level of their parents and guardians; *class size* (according to NCES data in the 2017-2018 school year, the average class size in U.S public schools was 26.2 students at the elementary level and 23.2 students at the secondary level), here in Nigeria we have 30-50 pupils in our primary schools and 50-100 in our secondary schools.

Mamie, Sharon and Lesley (2022) in their contribution highlighted that current issues in education include where *the money* will come to implement the educational decisions taken.

Looking at educational challenges in Nigeria Chinedu (2023) is of the view that *Inadequate Funding* is one of the key issues, according to him the educational sector received only 10% in 2021 budget (UNESCO, 2021).

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The Nigerian Educational System, according to Sharda University (2023), adopted Chinese and German education systems as 1 year for pre-school, 6 years for primary school, 3 years for lower secondary school, 3 years for senior secondary school and minimum of 3-4 years for graduate education. The intention of the Nigerian education system as at 1989 was to develop the learner sequentially from primary to tertiary; taken into consideration the rudiments in the educational sector but the implementation of these rudiments derailed. Each Minister of Education that comes set up his own educational standard outside the norm and till date we have not got it right. Like learners today can go to their schools and leave the school premise at any time they wish to. Standout with their teachers fighting for an offense they knew they are guilty of. Infrastructures are erected at the wish of the contractor in spite of the approved engineer's design. These and other cogent reasons the Nigerian educational system needs overhauling; particularly the lower sectors (primary and secondary schools).

A lot had been said with regards to the educational system globally and Nigeria in particular. In any organizational set up there are rudiments of governance that keeps the system right and this is not out of place in the Educational System in Nigeria. It has its own rudiments of governance which the article sees as issues and challenges. And the article tends to discuss these issues and challenges under the following sub-units. The issues and challenges under the discussion may appear minute but they are useful ingredient to education as salt to a pot of soup. These educational ingredients under this discussion are lack of supervision, lack of inspection, non-record keeping, non-implementation of policies, finance, audit report and school safety in the school system. Taking one at a time, the paper starts with:

Lack of Supervision

The idea of going round to see staffers working, structures level of dilapidation, the availability of teaching, learning, working materials and infrastructures is now an issue challenging the educational system in Nigeria. Supervision which has to deal with staff, learners and infrastructures in the school system is now in Keep in View (KIV) list. And staffers are doing their jobs the way they like, not as the school system guide stipulated and thereby keeping the learner under the shade of incomplete scheme of work; and later send him to the next level of education or the labor market as fractionally trained. The aftermath is the production of cultist in the higher Institutions and hoodlums in the society; rather than producing intellectually demanding students admitted into our higher Institutions and contributive labor forces graduated out in our higher Institutions into the Labor market in the society.

Way Forward

Organizations are straightened with the laws surrounding them implemented. The school system as an organization needs to implement their laws to straighten their system. And to have this done, the head Teacher needs to go out daily to see whether the staffers are on their seats or in the classroom and doing the needful or not. This daily supervision will check the excesses of the Staffers and make them to be more devoted in their

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duties. Peradventure the Head Teacher does not have time to carry this function, he/her could equally send his Second-in-Office to carry out the supervision and give him/her the report.

In addition to what the Head Teacher will be doing, the Schools Education Boards have to conduct their own Supervisions too. They are to supervise the Head Teacher as well as the teachers and non-teachers in the schools. On the part of the staffer's supervision has to be made based on the report the Head Teacher have given to the Board to see whether he/she is objective or not in the report given. The Ministry of Education has its unit of supervision, they should wake up too. The Federal Government Education Authorities in their various States should be up and doing as well. The Education Authorities in the Local government areas should as well take up their supervision seriously.

The State Education Ministry can draw up a supervisory Schedule for all the educational units in the state to get involve when it gets to their turn on the Schedule. If this done in our schools, workers, teachers in particular will sit up and give the best to the learner and the negative narratives on the part of the teacher will change for better (Meador, 2023).

Lack of Inspection

The idea of going round to see staffers working, structures level of dilapidation and the teaching, learning and working materials is not sufficient to take adequate decisions. What will complement the supervision is the inspection. For instant the staff, how are they keeping their office records? The academic staffers, are they writing their lesson notes and plans up to date? If they are, are they really impacting what they have prepared for the learner? Other areas worth noting are the content of what the teacher has prepared for the learner, whether they are in line with the scheme of work or not. The tenses used in given out the notes are in correct form or not.

The furniture and desks for teachers and students whether they are in good form or not. Books for teachers and students whether they are available and putting them into a good use or not. These are some of the works meant for the inspectorate's departments.

With these duties worth attending to, the questions that come to mind are, were the relevant authorities still inspecting the schools annually as scheduled in their office programs? Were the reports been submitted into their offices? And if they are, why is it that the schools' systems have not been improved as compared to other outstanding schools' systems? These are worrisome questions that are begging for answers.

Way Forward

To keep the system working positively and, in an attempt, to answer the questions above, the school Authorities should go out to see how these things are working. The academic staffers should be made to writing their lesson notes and plans up to date if found wanting. And again, Teachers be made to impact what they have prepared for the learner. The content of what the teacher has prepared for the learner should be in line with the scheme of work. The tenses used in given out the notes should as well be in correct form. All the above issues

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highlighted could be achieved if inspection is being carried out by the relevant authorities. Let the Educational Ministries in the various States should make it compulsory for all the requisite units to go for Inspection in their schools and implement disciplinary policies should there are failures.

Non-Record Keeping

Records are documents containing past informed positions that enable entrepreneurs or Office Chief Executives to make reference and take further immediate decisions. The act of keeping records in office is common but its' importance is not known by a good number of record keepers. With this ignorance files are dumped anyhow in the offices. And the implication of any record that is not found at the time needed it, puts off a decision that would have been taken to make progress in the school system. And to the business man time lost is money lost and can never be regained; since that time can never be retrieved, (Nyawo, 2021). Those that are doing it, see it as their regular daily duties; hence no meticulousness is attached to the job. As a result, records that could be traced for one or two days could be traced for months. Such workers or individuals do not see recording as a course that need to be studied. If many workers are consciously aware of the damages been done to file owners, they would have paid more time and attention into this discipline and be wishing to get more educated in it. This doesn't deter the progress of the business men alone but also those working in the civil service and the educational Institutions. But can this be left unaddressed? This article proffers solutions at the way forward point.

Way Forward

According to Wikipedia, (2023) there are four forms of records and these are official records, transitory records, non-records and personal records; and they are to be kept in short term areas and long-term areas. Enforcement should be made by Head Teachers on office workers to store records in Filing cabinets, and file rooms. There should also be seminars organized for those working as non-academic staff in the school system. Let there be awareness of the danger attached to non-record keeping, such as deferred decisions, time lost and colossal loss of money. Like what Hosea 4:6 says 'my people perish for lack of knowledge'.

Non-Implementation of Policies

Implementation from Oxford Dictionary, (2019) is the process of putting a decision or plan into effect or order. Rouse, (2015), defined it as the carrying out, execution or practice of plan, a method or any design idea, model, specification, standard or policy for doing something, The Author sees implementation as a move by authorities to effect decisions taken on rules guiding staffers, learners, parents, guardians, government and other organizations when faulted. So, implementation in this context is born out of rules and decisions taken. So, what are then the rules?

Rules: These are instructions that tell you what you are allowed to do and what you are not allowed to do (Collins Dictionary, 2019). In other words, they are the principles guiding organization activities that need to be followed by employees and employers. But most times failure occurs in an organization as a result of non-compliance of

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these rules by both parties and authorities' refusal to act on the punitive measures spelt out. Rules are indeed shelters to business as fences are to houses. They are made to protect all facets of an organization. And this concerns the staff, learners, parents and government officials as it affects the school system. Therefore, there none implementation, to a greater extent, will lead to closure of an organization.

Decision Taken: Decision taken in an organization is of two phases. The first set of decisions taken is decisions made to move the activities of the organization forward positively; for example, in a school system, the initial decisions is to draw curriculums of various subjects, how teachers and non-teachers are to be employed, structures are to be built, learners to be admitted and many more decisions to move the organization forward.

The second set of decisions is the guiding rules that will enable the organization authorities to act in case there are failures or lawlessness; for example, what will be done to the learner, teacher or parent if indulge in examination malpractice.

These two sets of decisions are not implemented to the letters most times. And is one of the reasons why our schools are more unproductive and have less nurtured graduates in the three tiers of educations; that is the primary, secondary and tertiary.

Way Forward

The way out to safe guard the educational system in terms of non-implementations of policies, is to carry out all decisions that are tied to the rules, which are the laws guiding the school system. *Like* Trade Schools (2023) *stated concerning disciplinary policies*; banning, suspension and expulsions should not be taken away from the school system, they are indeed valuable tools that teachers can use to combat students' misbehavior in the school system. if this done, will go a long way in settling the non-productivity and less-nurtured graduates menace in our educational system. A Philosopher once said that in any organization that does not say stop-the-menace, has afflicted itself with impunity (Owolo, 1935). Let policies not be only on papers but authorities should go ahead to enforce the implementation of the policy or decision taken.

Finance

In any organization, monies are tied to specifics, and when utilized, are accounted for. And the school system as an organization is not out of this measure. But is sad of note that most of the finances assigned for specifics projects in the school system are diverted into personal use and uncompleted projects littering here and there. This has resulted to series of abandoned projects all over the school system. The ratio to the learner per Infrastructure is a sad story to talk about. This is evidenced by the learner sitting on bare floor or at best four learners sharing a seat meant for two learners. This is the situation in most Nigerian schools. This is a singular situation out of the multiple misappropriations of monies tied to specific projects in the school system. According to Uchendu, (2023), the educational sector received only 10% in 2021 budget (UNESCO, 2021). Sub-Sahara Africa, (2022) equally gave the following budgetary statistics in Africa: Namibia 9.64%; Sierra Leone 9.07%

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Lesotho, 6.7%, South Africa 6.6% and Nigeria 5.4%. And from this information, Nigeria has the lowest budgetary allocation. So which educational sector problem will this percentage solve in Nigeria? Though The Cable (2023), reported that the 2023 budget rise up to 8.4%, yet it is still behind some African education budget.

Way Forward

There is no worse sin than one against his own conscience (Tim, 2023). As humans we are guilty of not listening to our subconscious mind when need be. One way out is the conscience adjustment by individuals that are indulge in carrying out these nefarious acts. When such is done the issue of finance misappropriation in our schools will be realigned.

Another way out is to place Nigeria first in any contract or office work we are doing in the school system. The issue of getting car or resident out of the contract value before starting a contract work should never be a priority; neither office workers leaving office and taking jobs meant for contractors or bargaining with contractors to reduce the job quality, should be. If all contract values meant for the schools' system given from 20th centuries to date are not misappropriated, no parent would have thought of taken his or her own child outside Nigeria or schools of high standard in Nigeria for the purpose of acquiring western education because the schools would have been on the same mean standard. This in a way would have even cut down the cost of education in Nigeria. Another way out again is the review of the educational budget allocation in Nigeria. Seen the statistics given by Sub-Sahara Africa, (2022) and comparing the indices, Nigeria is still below some African Countries. For Nigerians to keep the school system standardized, let it not be in the hands of the government alone, individuals should equally carry out their contracts with the mind set led by conscience, so that it will not judge us throughout our life time, if it is wrongly done (Fyodor, 2022).

Audit report

Audit report discloses significant matters in a company's financial reporting and its audit as a way of providing information to the public to examine the jurisdictions and why they become mandatory and whether the evidence from their implementation fulfilled the expectation of the regulators and other stakeholders. (Miguel, 2021).

The question that comes to mind is, do our school system audit reports disclose these significant matters that provide the needed information to the public and as well fulfills the expectation of the regulators and other stakeholders?

The response to the question is no on the side of the article. This is because some of our audit reports are watered down to the desire of the schools' authorities' interest in collaborations with the Auditors. For example, things that are not supplied are being supplied on papers but going to the schools, they are not there. The reports do not fulfill the expectations of the regulators and other stakeholders. *So where is conscience, playing its role in our school system? (J Med Life, 2014).*

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Research Article

Way Forward

Truth is the reality and the actions without any filter or edit (Times of India, 2021). The auditors in the schools' system are guilty of this perception (Diligent, 2023). What is expected of the auditors in the school system is truthfulness in their reports by not filtering or editing the reality found in their audit reports. This is the only way Head Teachers can stand bold to resist whatever negativity that will come from the contractor angle. This will equally surface quality assurance in our school system, and stop supplying one item over and over in different contract quotations.

School Safety

In the school system the expectation of any parent or guardian is the safety of the school environment, particularly the children and wards. But sad enough these expectations are being jeopardized. We rather heard stories of kidnapping school children and wards on daily basis; like the Chibok schoolgirls in 2014, 17 teachers with students in Zamfara state; and other cases of kidnappings in Kebbi state, Katsina State, Kaduna, to mention a few. So far, 1,436 school children have been abducted in Nigerian Schools (UNESCO, 2022). This inhuman act is still ongoing as at the period med 2023.

Way Forward

Any man-made problem has a solution (Zeo & Thomson 2023). And these kidnappings that are happening are man-made and we need to proffer solutions to avert this menace in our school system. Therefore, one of the steps Nigerian governments should take is the introduction of safety measures in our schools' curriculum; as a long term plan. In short term, the learner should be encouraged to read safety books online or in their school libraries. Another way is the schools (both government and private owned) that are not fenced should provide perimeter fencing. Other ways of arresting the situation include Provision of CCTV and other security gargets at strategic locations in the schools' environments; permanent combined security forces should be posted to the school; Provision of Intra and inter schools' security networks (with modern ICT devices) in our schools for proper regulation of the security system in the school system; Drones and Police trained Dogs should as well be sent to the schools to beef up the security.

Conclusion

The Nigerian school system need to be updated or revamped in line with the issues highlighted above; reason being that, workers, particularly the teachers, they are not ready to be in the classroom; they go about doing other jobs to the detriment of the learner with the school time. To sanitize the system, the issues discussed, as minute as they are, if properly implemented, will go a long way in normalizing the school system in the country. The paper pleads with the relevant authorities to take the issues on the way Forwards serious and implement them for a change in the school system. There is an adage that says, little things are little things but faithfulness in little

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Research Article

things the greatest often grow. Let us spend our time and money meat for the school system meaningfully to avert the menace in our school system and put the system in a better and competitive footing globally.

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