



Upsurge of Declining Standards of Secondary Education in Rural Communities in Niger State, Nigeria: Implication on Administration and Management of Education

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ABSTRACT

Education cannot be neglected in Nigeria due to its relative impact on societal growth and development. This is because of its relevance to national peace and unity. Ignoring education may lead to the total collapse of a nation. Little wonder country that strives in this global era is those with a high level of educational advancement. To this end, when education is allowed to play, there is room for growth and development to strive. The study was concerned in examine the upsurge of declining standards of secondary education in rural communities in Niger State, Nigeria: Implication on administration and management of education. The study was conducted due to the persistent attack on the fallen standard of education in Nigeria especially in secondary schools. The study was concerned with issues relating to education and how they affect the educational system possible ways of harassing this problem were outlined.

Keywords: Upsurge, Declining standards, Secondary Education and Rural Communities

INTRODUCTION

In the hierarchy of education in Nigeria, secondary education occupies the second tier of education. This underscores its importance and relevance in the educational sector. As the midway between primary and tertiary schools, is the center point of education. This implies that secondary education is the form of education that students receive after their primary education and or before their tertiary education. Without secondary education, knowledge gained during primary school would go to waste and without it, one will not have the prerequisite knowledge to go further into any tertiary institutions. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) National Policy on Education, section 5, No 20, defined education as the education children receive after primary school and before tertiary education. In the current educational system, secondary education comprises the junior and senior secondary levels. It was formerly adopted as a six-year programme that covered a three-year duration at each level of junior secondary and senior secondary schools but under UBE, junior secondary is a continuation of primary education. This is so because, on September 30th, 1999, ex-president Olusegun Obasanjo adopted the 9-3-4 educational system as opposed to the 6-3-3-4 educational system. However, the 9-3-4 educational system is not in practice, Nigeria still maintains the 6-3-3-4 educational system.

At the junior secondary level, students are taught both academic and pre-vocational subjects while the curriculum for senior secondary is comprehensive and diversified in nature because it is at this stage, students are prepared to face the next level in their educational pursuit. The goal of secondary education by the National Policy on Education, is to prepare individuals for useful living within the society and higher education. According to Adesina (1984, p.2), secondary education stands as a transition zone as it receives primary school leavers and prepares them for postsecondary education. This, therefore, suggests that secondary education has both consumer and producer status. Cornell (2010) presented a related opinion by saying that, a person must have secondary education because it is a part of the process of gaining the right education. According to Cornell, secondary education is vital because it does not ordinarily serve as the link between what children imbibed in primary and secondary school, but also allows them to acquire knowledge that assists in the development of critical and analytical thinking as well as an understanding of the world around.

In a similar perspective, Moja (2000) explains that the education that is offered at this level has two purposes; the first is to prepare students to exit school with the necessary skills to find employment and the second is to prepare them to continue with their academic careers in higher education. Moja states that the Junior Secondary School prepares the children to take from the options of senior secondary education, technical education, training at vocational training centers, or apprenticeship schemes out of the formal school system while the senior secondary takes charge of the preparation for higher education. Schedule 3, Education Reform Act of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2007 states that "the curricular activities of the junior secondary school are designed as both pre-vocational and academic with basic subjects whose learning contents are capable of enabling students to acquire further knowledge and develop skills; while the senior secondary is comprehensive and has a core curriculum designed to broaden students' knowledge and outlook". All the foregoing therefore suggest that secondary education is an instrument par excellence for development in the Federal, State and Local Government level of Nigeria, as it is on its own, "a basic human need, an integral part of the quality of life, a support for moral and social values, and an instrument

for economic productivity” (Adams,2002.p.11). Based on the backdrop explained above. This study seeks to upsurge of declining standards of secondary education in rural communities in Niger state, Nigeria: implication on administration and management of education.

Role of Secondary Education

The place of secondary education in Nigeria cannot be undermined. Thus, Ogboma (2003) highlighted some importance of secondary education, which includes:

1. Secondary education is a stepping stone to higher education. It provides an opportunity for primary school leavers to acquire more knowledge, develop skills and prepare them to live effectively in our changing society.
2. Secondary education inspires in young adults the desire for further achievements and self-improvement both at home and elsewhere.
3. The broad and diversified curriculum of secondary education provides for differences in talents and opportunities. This means that those from junior secondary can go into commercial trade and craftsmanship while those from senior secondary can go into academics.

The upsurge of the Declining Standard of Secondary Education in Rural Communities in Niger State, Nigeria

Understanding the declining standards of secondary education in rural communities of Niger state, Nigeria, this paper has outlined and explained the role of a group of five, which the researcher believes are responsible. They include:

1. Government:

- i. Inadequate funding: government funding is one of the major sources of finance in education, where it is lacking, the educational system suffers. The government has not provided enough funding for secondary education in rural communities. This has led to a lack of resources, inadequate facilities and a shortage of qualified teachers.
- ii. Poor policy implementation: the government has not effectively implemented policies aimed at improving the quality of education in rural communities. This has led to a lack of accountability and poor performance among teachers and students.
- iii. Lack of teacher training, remuneration and welfare package for teachers: The government has not provided adequate training for teachers, and their take-home salary is quite small compared to the hike in the cost of living in the nation. More often than naught, it is delayed and there is no welfare package to add a little icing on the cake. This has resulted in the loss of professional teachers, a lack of expertise in subject areas and poor teaching practices. “The most predominant factor affecting teachers’ productivity and their attitude to work in our schools today, is the inability of the government to evolve an enduring remuneration and motivational strategy that will create a conducive atmosphere which will encourage teachers to be committed to work (Mbipom, 2000).
- iv. Corruption: corruption in education leads to mismanagement of funds and resources, which greatly impacts the quality of education in rural communities. corruption threatens the well-being of society because it erodes social trust, worsens inequality and exposes children to unethical behavior. It sabotages development by undermining the formation of educated, competent and ethical individuals who would join Nigeria’s labour force and leadership in the future.
- v. Unsustainable education policies due to change in government: oftentimes, when a government changes, the policies of the previous government are swept under the carpets and a new one is birthed. This can bring about a lack of focus on education and a lack of commitment to improving the quality of education which is already in decline.

2. Parents:

- i. Some parents in rural communities are not interested in their children’s education, as they are not educated. They place little or no value on the need for their wards to be educated. This has led to a lack of understanding of the importance of education, the lack of knowledge about how to support their wards and the lack of motivation for their children to succeed academically.
- ii. Poverty: many parents in rural communities struggle to provide for their families, as such, priority is given to other basic needs over education as they believe education is too expensive. Some parents are farmers and would rather have their children help out on the farms than be schooled. Poverty has caused a lack of resources and support for children’s education in rural communities.
- iii. Parents brutality towards teachers: many teachers have suffered terrible injuries, inflicted on them by parents of students for trying to or correcting their wards. This has resulted in children’s unethical behavior and fears on the part of teachers to instill discipline.
- iv. Parents in urban cities, encourage their wards to write external Examinations in secondary schools in rural communities. In their bid to ensure their wards write and pass the exams in one sitting, pay for special centers and foster examination misconduct deliberately. Examination misconduct has become a standing tradition in the educational system in rural communities. It is heartbreaking to know how examination misconduct has infiltrated the system so much so that students at the junior secondary

level are already familiar with such an unhealthy practice. This has resulted in a lack of discipline to study hard as both parents and students (their children) are dependent on external forces to pass.

- v. Lack of parental involvement: some parents and guardians do not give adequate support to their wards in terms of monitoring their study habits and homework or assignments, they also fail to attend parents' teachers association (PTA) meetings to abreast themselves with what is going on in their children's academic life. This has brought about a loss of interest in personal study time and academic prowess in the students.

3. Teachers:

- i. Inadequate training: some teachers in rural communities have not received adequate training to effectively teach certain subjects or use modern teaching methods. They lack the prerequisite skills to impart knowledge in these subject areas and often, lack classroom management skills. This has led to a lack of expertise in certain subject areas and lack of teaching practices, a lack of discipline and a lack of understanding or grasp of some subjects.
- ii. Lack of motivation: most teachers in rural communities lack motivation to teach due to the government's negligence of their welfare. Some teachers have not been promoted for over ten years, they have remained on the same salary level even though the cost of living in Nigeria has increased greatly over the years. This has informed the lack of interest, engagement and poor performance among teachers.
- iii. Lack of supervision and accountability: some secondary schools in rural communities do not know what supervision entails due to the location of the school. The only route to some of these schools is on water while the roads to some are inaccessible except through bush tracks. Most supervisors would not want to risk his/her lives going to these areas as a result, teachers are not held accountable for their job performance. This has led to the poor performance of teachers and has greatly declined the standard of education in rural communities.

4. Students:

- i. Lack of motivation: some students in rural communities lack the motivation to learn due to some factors which include but are not restricted to;
- ii. Lack of resources, and infrastructures: Many village schools which were built by the government and missionary efforts have been damaged due to long neglect, especially blown roof-tops, damaged floors, destroyed windows, doors and desks, and have been occupied by reptiles, while the children take lessons under the trees or shades. The buildings are old and dilapidated, with broken classroom furniture, no libraries, laboratories and other facilities such as computers and projectors (audio/visuals/audio-visual aids) to foster learning. This is one of the worst problems facing secondary education in rural areas. Arisi (2002), stressed that "inadequate classroom spaces have resulted in over-crowding in schools. Many secondary schools were built a long time ago by both government and church missionaries hence, most of the buildings, roof-tops, desks, chairs, tables, floors, etc., have become extremely bad".
- iii. Lack of financial and moral support from their families due to poverty: some families resident in these areas are quite poor, they lack the full capacity to provide the basic needs of the home, let alone provide for their children's educational needs. Rather than encourage their wards to study, they encourage them to farm, get into an apprenticeship or become a sales representative to support the family financially. This contributes to the lack of motivation to study; and having to travel to another community every day due to no secondary school in their hometown: the fact that there is no secondary school in some villages is one of the factors that has led to the decline in secondary education in rural areas as most students find it difficult to walk long distances every day, just to get to school. These factors have led to a lack of motivation or interest in the subject being taught and poor academic performance on the part of the students.
- iv. Indiscipline: Indiscipline is like a cankerworm that has eaten deep into society, it breeds lawlessness and lawlessness brings crime and consequently, self-destruction. According to Soya, 2006, "Indiscipline in schools contributes to lack of success in one's life if it is allowed to linger on for a long time".

In this seminar, the researcher looked at indiscipline from the following angles;

- i. Lateness to school: this is one of the factors that has contributed to the declining standard of education in rural communities because some students have become habitual late-goers to school. Upon their arrival, most times, the first period is already over. They often resort to copying notes from their classmates which may or may not be correct.
- ii. Poor study habits: most of the students have not developed effective study habits such as time management, they would rather spend their spare time hanging out with friends; and
- iii. Proper note-taking: some students in these areas have imbibed a proper note-taking habit, such that nobody, not even themselves can refer to their notes and have an understanding of the subject matter in focus.

- iv. Membership of confraternity: it is quite heartbreaking to note that, children at the secondary school level are members of confraternities. Some join willfully because they consider themselves tough, some join for protection, while others are lured into it (Jalingo, 2010).

5. The society:

- i. Pretending to be unaware: society seems to be unaware of the important role they play in ensuring a sustainable quality standard of secondary education in their locality, they seem to have forgotten the crucial role they play in forming and reforming a child's life and character. Gone are the days when society finds a child roaming the streets in uniform and takes the child back to the school authority. In those days, when a child wants to play truancy from school, they carry an extra outfit that is not the school uniform but these days, nobody pays attention to what goes on outside the school in uniforms. Everybody is mining his or her own business. This has led to a lack of involvement and support for their local schools and the betterment of the students.
- ii. Cultural belief system: some cultural beliefs in rural communities prioritize other activities over education. Though this act may not be deliberate, activities such as farming and other traditional practices have taken the lead over education thereby resulting in the lack of academic achievements.

Position of Stakeholders in the persistent upsurge in Secondary Education in Niger State, Nigeria

From the causes above, the researcher is of the view that the following stakeholder may have contributed directly or indirectly to the persistent upsurge in secondary education in Kaduna state, Nigeria:

1. The Government: The government shoulders most of the financial responsibilities of education
2. Parents: This entity carries part of the failure in society as they are to play a critical role in the education of their children who are to become leaders of tomorrow because all other variables (stakeholders) are dependent on parental influence in educating the citizens.
3. Teachers: Teachers also have their share of the blame for their job performance and negligence.
4. Students: Students who do not abide by school rules and regulations nor pay attention to their studies and those who participate in cult activities also contribute to the declining standard of secondary education and derail academic progress.
5. The community: This group is not left out as it plays a crucial role in a child's life. It is the way society sees and respects the products (graduands) of these schools that recycle back into society either good or bad.

Summary and Conclusion

In conclusion, secondary education is the level where a child is formed both academically and in character to face tertiary education and life in general. If the above-mentioned causes are allowed to linger on, what will be the fate of the communities, the Local Government Area, the State and Nigeria at large?

No gain saying that the declining standard of secondary education may not be of great concern to the relevant stakeholders in the education sector (government, parents, teachers, administrators, educational planners and students), but there is a need for a positive change.

Given reflection on a change that will become sustainable development in the education sector, this paper has examined and highlighted some of the causes of the declining standard of education in rural communities of Cross River State, Nigeria.

In addition, resolutions were suggested with the hope that the educational system would surely be improved.

Possible Solutions to the Upsurge of Failure of secondary education in Nigeria

Based on the causes identified above, the following resolutions are suggested:

1. Government should provide adequate funding for secondary education and renovate dilapidated classroom structures, build some more classrooms to accommodate more students and provide the required amenities and equipment.; implement all educational policies; train and retrain teachers; put some more effort into increasing teachers' salaries, pay them when due, ensure they receive adequate welfare packages from time to time and promote them when they are due for promotion; set a monitoring team to monitor and ensure effective usage of disbursed funds for education and ensure continuity in government policies.
2. Parents should be interested and involved in their children's education because the government cannot shoulder the responsibilities alone. Therefore parents need to augment government efforts in the payment of fees. Through poverty, parents need to encourage their wards to study hard, so that it will not be a never-ending cycle of poverty in the family. They should discipline their wards from the home front and allow them to be disciplined when they misbehave, it is for their good. Parents who do not agree with the method of discipline meted out on their wards, should report the matter to the school authority without the child knowing any action was taken to that effect. This is where the

Parents Teachers Association (PTA) comes into play. Finally, parents should stop encouraging their wards to indulge in examination misconduct.

Parents are the first teachers hence, there is a need for parents to examine their wards at home. Check their notebooks, assignments given and the ones done, instill the habit of reading and discipline their wards right from the home front. This goes a long way in shaping the child's life and character both at home and in society.

3. Teachers should inculcate the habit of self-training and self-improvement; they should encourage themselves rather than give up on the students, they should devise other means such as extra morale classes to impart knowledge as this goes a long way in determining the student's output and in turn help the teacher to make a little income to make ends meet; school supervision should be taken seriously and teachers should be held accountable for students output as well as their job performance; and only trained and certified teachers should be employed.
4. Students should learn to encourage themselves and press harder towards achieving a better life for themselves; they must be disciplined and be willing to accept discipline when they behave in an unethical manner; they must imbibe the habit of punctuality as this comes to play later in life; they must build a good study habit, take correct notes for study purposes; and desist from being members of the confraternity, for it is a destroyer of life and destiny.
5. society should get involved in their local educational system by bringing to the school authority any child caught roaming the streets before closing hour, and education should be regarded as highly as other cultural beliefs.

IMPLICATION ON ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATION

Educational management is the sole responsibility of educational administrators especially those in the educational field. The numerous role played by educational administrators and managers includes public administrators arranging, managing and supervising the organizations that regulate and control the aims and objectives of the school. To achieve these aims and objectives, public administrators act as special advisors to satisfy the public's interests and need for repairing, organising and storing information in paper and digital form. The critical role played by administrators includes managing diaries, scheduling meetings and booking rooms. To effectively perform their responsibilities, administrators must fill the roles of leader, mentor, manager, decider, and builder. Thus maintaining the standard of education cannot be achieved without the role of educational managers/administrators.

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