

EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

Education is a lifelong process that helps individuals to acquire the basic knowledge, skills, and values needed to become functional members of the society. Thus, it becomes imperative that a nations education is not toiled with but instead be properly managed by professional managers who are vested with the appropriate knowledge to adequately execute planned educational policies and programmes. However, In Nigeria, educational management faces numerous challenges that affect the overall quality of education. Thus, this paper examines educational management in Nigeria: challenges and way forward. The concepts of education, management and educational management were looked into. Also, the roles of educational management were examined. The challenges of the efficacy of educational management were equally elucidated among which are: poor funding, inequality in resource distribution, political consideration in management selection and inadequate professional development programme among others. The paper concludes that educational management is a necessity for the advancement of educational programmes in Nigeria. The paper suggests among other that stakeholders in education should support timely and affordable professional training and retraining programmes for education managers at all levels of education, educational managers should be recruited into educational institutions and agencies and appointed to handle educational programmes by merit rather than connection. Also, there is needs to re-evaluate, re-position the management of educational system n both government and non-government institutions across Nigeria to address to enhance the efficacy of the system.

Keyword: Education, Management, Educational Management, Challenges, Way-Forward

Introduction

Education is universally recognized as a critical driver of societal development, serving as a foundation for economic progress, social cohesion, and political stability. In Nigeria, a country characterized by diverse ethnic composition, growing population, and resource-dependent economy, education plays a pivotal role. Effective management of the education sector is not only essential for individual advancement but also for national prosperity. Education is a lifelong process that aids individuals in acquiring the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become a functional member of the society in which they live, it is an essential tool for national development and also serves as a means of socialization within society, modifying changes in existing ideologies, and fostering reformations. Kavika (2022) ascertained that education is one of the most varied and dynamic sectors, with a dynamic environment that requires decision-makers at all levels to be exceedingly careful, strategic, and well-prepared. Also, according to Abdulganiyu (2014) education is the process of acquiring knowledge and information that leads to a successful future.

Ebirim (2022) explained further that education is the act of teaching knowledge to others and the act of receiving knowledge from someone else. It is a process that is a part of who we are, how we live, and how our bodies function. That is, it is an integral part of our existence. It results in a fresh comprehension or admiration of something changing a person's inherent ability to think and act permanently. According to Kareem (2024) education is not just confined to formal schooling but is a continuous process that influences our daily lives and even our physical well-being. Therefore, it will be incorrect to assume that only those who attended school (formal education) are educated.

Education enlightens individual and dispels ignorance. It influences people's futures and is crucial to the growth of the country. Thus, a person whose mind is free from myths and superstitious beliefs can be said to be educated. This makes education a vital instrument for both individual growth, community growth, national growth and also a basic human right. The value of education cannot be over emphasised as it increases the knowledge therefore it is a cure for ignorance. Acquired knowledge can come from a variety of sources, but in the end, it helps to improve the lives of individuals and make us more civil Nigerian citizens.

However, the education system in Nigeria faces numerous dilemmas, which make achieving educational goals an uphill task. The challenges within Nigeria's education management are deeply rooted in historical, political, and economic factors. Colonial influences shaped the foundation of formal education in Nigeria, prioritizing the production of clerical and administrative personnel rather than fostering critical thinking and innovation. This legacy, as noted by Akinpelu and Oladele (2022), has left the country grappling with an educational framework that often fails to meet the demands of a modern, knowledge-based economy. Furthermore, the Federal Government's inconsistent policies and lack of accountability have perpetuated inefficiencies across all levels of education management (Ejiogu et al, 2023). Thus, this paper examines the challenges facing educational management in Nigeria and suggests way forward to the discussed problems.

The concept of management has become extremely important in the modern era due to the growing size and complexity of contemporary businesses and organizations, whether they are commercial or non-commercial, like hospitals, schools among others. The effective operation of an organization's management is essential to its success and is always necessary whenever human and non-human resources collaborate to achieve defined goal. According to Devasis (2024) the area of management that applies management theories and principles to the field of education is known as educational management. Three resources are crucial to the

organisation of an educational institution: curriculum and co-curricular activities; human resources, including teachers, students, and non-teaching staff; and physical resources, such as land or a school building, equipment, a library, a laboratory, among others. The process of managing these resources to meet the objectives of an educational organisation is known as educational management.

Management refers to the process of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling resources, including people, finances, and materials, to achieve specific goals and objectives efficiently and effectively (Hayab et al 2023). It is the coordination and administration of tasks to achieve a spelt-out goal. According to Herrity (2024) These administrative tasks include establishing the organization's strategy and directing employees' efforts to achieve these goals by using the resources at hand. Also, the seniority structure of employees inside an organisation can also be referred to as management. It covers all aspects of institutions including education. In the field of education. Williams (2017) stated that management entails a systematic approach to thought. It explains in operational terms what needs to be done, how to do it, and how we may determine our progress. Present times, with an increase in the size and complexities of modern organisations.

Educational Management

Educational management is the branch of management which applies the theories and principles of management in the field of education. It implies the practical measures for ensuring the system to work for achieving the goals or objectives of an educational institution. It is an intentional and methodical process of planning to source, gather, distribute, and employ resources in order to accomplish the goals and objectives of the educational system. Educational management further involves the administration and organization of educational institutions to ensure effective teaching and learning.

According to Soliman (2024) educational management focuses on running of educational organization. It is the process of organizing, planning, and leading educational activities while making efficient use of both material and human resources to meet the goals of the institution. Kela (2024) also defined educational management as the administration of the educational system with the assistance of experts and physical resources. Its objective is to oversee, organize, plan, and carry out the structures necessary to achieve educational goals within the educational system. It should therefore be of note that educational management is not restricted to schools; instead, it encompasses all educational institutions, both higher education institutes, public schools, and private schools. In the same line, Ibrahim and Mazin (2017) equally defined educational management as the practical implementation of management principles in the education sector.

Historical Perspective of Education Management in Nigeria

The management of education in Nigeria has evolved through various stages, shaped by both indigenous and foreign influences. Before the advent of Western education, traditional education systems in Nigeria were community-based and focused on vocational, moral, and cultural training. Indigenous education emphasized practical skills for farming, hunting, and weaving, as well as the transmission of cultural values and societal norms. These systems were managed collectively by community leaders and elders, ensuring relevance and sustainability (Fafunwa, 2023).

The advent of Christian missionaries in the mid-19th century marked the emergence of western educational system which significantly disrupted traditional systems. Missionaries established schools to spread Christianity, with curriculum content centred on religious

studies, basic literacy, and arithmetic. The British colonial government later supported these efforts, formalizing education structures to meet colonial administrative needs. However, the colonial education system was largely elitist, benefiting only a small fraction of the population. This created disparities in access to education, particularly between the North and South of Nigeria, where Islamic education dominated in the North and Western education was more prevalent in the South (Akinpelu et al, 2022).

During the colonial period, education management was heavily centralized, with most decisions made by the British authorities. This approach neglected the diverse needs of Nigeria's various regions, resulting in uneven development. For instance, while Southern Nigeria experienced significant growth in educational facilities and enrolment, Northern Nigeria lagged behind due to cultural resistance to Western education and a preference for Islamic schooling. This disparity became a significant issue during Nigeria's independence movement and remains a challenge to date (Ejiogu et al, 2023). After gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria faced the daunting task of overhauling its inherited education system to meet the aspirations of a sovereign nation. The First National Development Plan (1962–1968) prioritized education as a tool for national development, emphasizing the expansion of primary and secondary education.

However, these plans were disrupted by the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970), which devastated infrastructure and created a humanitarian crisis that impacted education management. The introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme in 1976 was a bold attempt to provide free and compulsory education for all Nigerian children. While the programme achieved significant enrolment increases, it was plagued by insufficient funding, a lack of trained teachers, and inadequate facilities. Similarly, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program, launched in 1999, aimed to address the shortcomings of UPE by incorporating junior secondary education into its framework. However, challenges such as corruption, political interference, and poor implementation strategies limited its success (Ogunsola & Adeyeye, 2022). The adoption of the 6-3-3-4 education system in 1983 marked a shift towards a more diversified curriculum that combined academic and vocational training. This system divided education into six years of primary education, three years of junior secondary, three years of senior secondary, and four years of tertiary education. While the model was designed to equip students with practical skills and reduce unemployment, its implementation faced several hurdles. Schools lacked the necessary workshops, laboratories, and teaching aids to support technical education (Ibrahim & Dada, 2023).

The military era (1966–1999) introduced additional complexities to education management. During this period, frequent changes in leadership led to policy instability and underfunding of the education sector. Teachers' strikes became a common occurrence, reflecting dissatisfaction with poor remuneration and working conditions. The military government's focus on consolidating political power often overshadowed efforts to improve education. However, some notable achievements were recorded, such as the establishment of federal universities and the expansion of polytechnics and colleges of education (Okonjo & Bello, 2022). With the return to democracy in 1999, the government introduced reforms aimed at revitalizing the education sector. Initiatives such as the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) and the Education Sector Support Program in Nigeria (ESSPIN) sought to address systemic inefficiencies.

Roles of Educational Management

The roles of educational management include but not limited to the following:

Human Capital Development: Education management is pivotal in developing a skilled and knowledgeable workforce. By ensuring the effective allocation of resources, curriculum implementation, and teacher training, education managers help equip students with the competencies needed to meet the demands of a globalized economy. According to Oyesola (2022), nations that prioritize sound education management experience faster economic growth and reduced unemployment rates.

Social Equity and Inclusion: Effective education management promotes equity by ensuring access to quality education for all, regardless of socio-economic background, gender, or geography. In Nigeria, where disparities between rural and urban areas, as well as between the North and South, persist, sound management can help bridge these gaps. Udo and Ibrahim (2023) argue that well-managed education systems foster social cohesion by reducing inequalities and creating opportunities for marginalized groups.

National Development and Stability: Education management contributes to national development by producing informed citizens capable of participating in democratic governance and driving innovation. Furthermore, Okoro and Musa (2023) point out that poorly managed education systems often lead to high dropout rates and a lack of skilled workers, which can fuel social unrest and economic stagnation. A well-managed system, on the other hand, helps build a stable and prosperous nation.

Economic Competitiveness: In an increasingly knowledge-driven global economy, nations with robust education management systems are better positioned to compete. Nigerian education managers play a crucial role in integrating science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) into the curriculum, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. Reports by UNESCO (2023) emphasize that countries investing in strong education management achieve higher productivity and technological advancement.

Adaptation to Change: Education management is essential for adapting to changing societal needs and global trends. In Nigeria, where challenges such as population growth, technological advancements, and climate change demand rapid adjustments, education managers must design systems that are flexible and forward-looking. Okon and Bello (2022) highlight the importance of strategic planning in enabling education systems to respond effectively to these dynamic changes.

Policy Implementation and Accountability: Education management ensures that policies and programs are effectively implemented and monitored. In Nigeria, where policy inconsistencies and corruption often undermine progress, efficient management serves as a safeguard for accountability and transparency. As Adeyemi and Adu (2023) note, the success of education reforms depends heavily on the capacity of education managers to translate policy goals into measurable outcomes.

Challenges Facing Educational Management in Nigeria

Nigeria educational sector especially the area of educational management is faced with series of challenges often arise from conflicting priorities, limited resources, and diverse stakeholder interests. These include:

Poor Funding: The fund made available to education sector sometimes is insufficient for proper management of schools and execution of educational programmes (Ololube,2023). These in more ways than one, have been the problem stifling effective planning and management of education in Nigeria as limited financial resources mean that not all educational needs can be met simultaneously. According to Musa (2021) adequate funding it is a major setback that prevents effective implementation of educational goals and has made it impossible for economically disadvantaged parents to meet the financial needs of their

children's education. The problem of poor funding often leads to conflicts over which areas should receive funding first, such as infrastructure, staff' salaries, or student support services and most times after staffs' salaries have been paid there may be little or no fund left to run the educational institutions again.

Inequality in resource distribution: In educational management, inequality is a major concern, particularly in a region as diverse and economically different as Nigeria. The allocation of resources across educational institutions is influenced by variables including geographic location and socioeconomic status. Compared to educational institutions in less affluent or rural areas, those located in urban areas typically have better facilities, more qualified teachers, and more extracurricular possibilities. This unequal distribution of resources makes educational disparities worse and may have an impact on how education is managed in rural regions since educational managers there may not have enough resources to carry out their duties effectively (Retnawati 2023).

Political consideration in management selection: Political considerations in management selection pose the greatest threat to Nigerian educational administration. Merit is to a larger extent pushed neglected, while a variety of transient factors are used to choose school heads. Some ephemeral variables force the finest managers and, implicitly, the best minds to be excluded. This implies that those who lack the necessary skills are promoted to managers while those who possess them are dismissed. Both educational progress and the provision of educational services are adversely affected by this (Musa 2021).

Inadequate professional training and development programmes: This is a problem that is impeding efficient management of education in Nigeria. As some educational managers lacks current professional training and skills to effectively oversee educational activities and programmes. Hence, they are not exposed to the current, modern, and proficient strategies for planning and management. While some managers believe it is unnecessary, others who want to develop themselves lack the resources to do so (Mensah 2023).

Meagreness of management tools: The tools necessary for effective planning and management of education in Nigeria are often either unavailable or in dumpy supply. Some of these tools include computers, calculating machines, statistical soft wares, planning/management charts and metrics; and other facilities and materials for effective planning and management concerns. These tools are essential for proper data management, assessing performance, making informed decision, monitor and evaluate educational programs and initiatives and carrying out other administrative tasks. The shortage or unavailability of these resources affects the ability to implement and manage educational programs effectively Mensah (2023).

Strategies for Advancing Education Management in Nigeria

In order to ameliorate the challenges facing educational management in Nigeria, Oyesola (2022) proposed actionable strategies or the way forward for enhancing educational management in Nigeria. These include:

Increasing Funding for Education: The Nigerian government must prioritize education by allocating at least 15–20% of the national budget to the sector, as recommended by UNESCO. Additional funding can be sourced through partnerships with private organizations, international donors, and non-governmental organizations. Adequate funding will ensure improved infrastructure, instructional materials, and teacher salaries, creating a more conducive learning environment (World Bank, 2023).

Improving Infrastructure: Education managers should adopt strategic planning to refurbish existing school facilities and build new ones where needed. Public-private partnerships can also play a critical role in addressing infrastructural gaps. For instance, corporate organizations can be encouraged to adopt schools or provide resources under corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Additionally, modern technologies like modular classrooms and solar-powered facilities can provide cost-effective solutions for schools in underserved areas (Udo & Ibrahim, 2023).

Ensuring Policy Consistency and Effective Implementation: The government should establish a centralized monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of education policies. Policy formulation must involve all stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and students, to ensure inclusivity and relevance. Furthermore, education managers need training in policy implementation and strategic planning to reduce inconsistencies (Ogunsola & Adeyeye, 2022).

Combating Corruption and Mismanagement: Strengthening accountability mechanisms is critical to reducing corruption in the education sector. This includes creating transparent procurement processes, implementing audits, and ensuring that funds allocated to education are utilized for their intended purposes. The establishment of anti-corruption committees within educational institutions can also serve as a deterrent. Leveraging technology for financial management and monitoring will enhance transparency and accountability (Adeyemi et al, 2023).

Capacity Building for Education Managers: Education managers require ongoing training in leadership, strategic planning, and resource management. Workshops and certification programs can improve their capacity to handle complex challenges. International collaborations and exchange programs can also expose managers to best practices in education management (Oyesola, 2022).

Conclusion

Education is fundamental for human capital and national development of any nation. The advancement of educational programmes and policies hinged on effective and efficient utilization of human, material, financial and physical resources in the sector. Stakeholders in education therefore needs to re-evaluate, re-position and assist education planners and managers in both government and non-government institutions and organizations across Nigeria to address the numerous challenges that faces effective educational management in Nigeria. These challenges if properly addressed can lead to improve quality of education, efficient resource utilization, enhanced accountability, global competitiveness among others. It can create a more efficient and equitable educational system that meets the needs of all its students and prepares them for a brighter future and build a more educated and skilled workforce, which is essential for national economic growth and development.

Suggestions

Arising from the discourse presented in the study, the following suggestions were made:

1. The government must heavily invest in education and prioritize education management as a strategic tool for building a prosperous future,

2. Stakeholders in education should periodically organize professional training and retraining programmes for education managers at all levels of education to enhance their efficacy.
3. Educational managers should be recruited into educational institutions and agencies and appointed to handle educational programmes by merit rather than connections.
4. Planning and management departments/units across all educational institution, agencies and ministries should be strengthened with necessary resources needed to function effectively
5. Equitable access to education at all level should not be jettisoned
6. Synergy should be established and sustained among relevant stakeholders in the management of educational industry.

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