Revitalizing Secondary Education for Sustainable Development and Economic Growth in Nigeria

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Abstract

Education remains a vital tool for promoting social change and stimulating economic development within a country. This study examines the importance of revitalizing secondary education in Nigeria as a key factor in achieving sustainable development and economic growth. Secondary data were used to support the points raised in the article. The data were sourced from print materials and online publications by different authors. This article explores the implications of revitalizing secondary education in Nigeria for sustainable development and economic growth. It examines the current state of secondary education, identifies key challenges, and proposes strategic interventions to enhance the quality of education. The current state of secondary education in Nigeria faces significant challenges which are inadequate facilities, limited financial resources, insufficient teacher training, and outdated curricula, leading to poor academic outcomes and high dropout rates. The study recommends comprehensive reforms in educational management, teacher training, curriculum improvements, provision of security and infrastructure upgrades. The study concludes that revitalizing secondary education is imperative for Nigeria's sustainable development and economic progress, providing a roadmap for government, stakeholders to enable invest in education so as to promote innovation and creativity among students. These efforts will help to the prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century and empower them to drive economic growth and innovation in the country.

Keywords: Revitalization, Secondary Education, Sustainable Development, Economic Growth, Nigeria.

Introduction

Revitalization of education means efforts and initiatives aimed at renewing, improving and transforming educational systems to make them more relevant, effective and accessible. The progress of any society is tied to the quality of education it offers. This quality depends on the effectiveness of teachers, the involvement of students, and the active engagement of parents in the educational process (Paschal and Mkulu, 2020). One of the main purposes of teaching and learning is to promote professional growth and academic success among students, which can, in turn, lead to broader social and economic progress (Paschal and Mkulu, 2020). Education has been a crucial foundation for national economic development, encompassing various skills,

competencies, and attributes that boost productivity (World Economic Forum, 2016). The importance of secondary education in Nigeria cannot be overstated, as it serves as a foundational element in the broader educational landscape. This stage of education is vital for equipping young individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute effectively to the economy and society. To realize the aspirations outlined in Vision 2020 and to align with the global Sustainable Development Goals, it is crucial to invest in and improve the standards of secondary education across the country.

According to Olorunda (2022), revitalization of secondary education refers to efforts aimed at renewing, improving, and modernizing secondary education systems to make them more effective, relevant, and capable of meeting the current and future needs of students and society. This process often involves comprehensive reforms in curriculum, teaching methods, infrastructure, governance, and policy frameworks. The goal is to ensure that secondary education not only provides academic knowledge but also equips students with the skills, values, and competencies necessary to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Revitalizing secondary education involves addressing challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, insecurity, S insufficient funding, and a lack of qualified teachers. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), improving the quality of education is essential for promoting economic growth and reducing poverty (UNESCO, 2021). The World Bank (2018) highlights that secondary education is a key driver of economic development, noting that countries with higher levels of secondary education attainment experience faster economic growth.

In Nigeria, secondary education has faced numerous obstacles, including overcrowded classrooms, outdated curricula, and limited access to educational resources. These issues have hindered the ability of the educational system to produce graduates who are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in a competitive global economy. Revitalizing secondary education requires a multifaceted approach that includes policy reforms, increased investment in education, and the adoption of innovative teaching methodologies.

The role of educational administrators in this revitalization process cannot be overstated. Effective leadership and management are crucial for implementing changes that will enhance the quality of education. As noted by Adedeji and Olaniyan (2011), strong educational leadership is associated with improved school performance and student outcomes. Educational

administrators must be empowered with the skills and resources needed to lead this transformation.

Education

Education thus, succinctly put in the National policy on education (2014), is the greatest force that can be used to bring out redress as well the greatest investment that the nation can make for the quick development of its economic, political, social, and human resources. It also connotes the process of helping an individual learn and develop intellectual faculty to the full though the acquisition of skills needed to make him/he useful to humanity in general. This is done by transmitting knowledge through teaching, training, conditioning, indoctrination, and drilling. Ariguzo and Nwaneri (2018) noted that education is the fulcrum for the realization, full promotion, and improvement of a nation. It empowers people to harness their potentials and fulfill their roles as members of the society. Obunadike (2013) opined that education is the transmission of what is desirable to individuals to make them knowledgeable and contributing members of the society. Asaju and Sunday (2014) posited that education is a process of teaching and training in schools for the development of knowledge and skills, preparing the individual for functional living in the society. Okojie (2013) assert that education is a process for manpower development which is necessary for the achievement of rapid growth and development in any country. Ofojebe (2014) emphasized that at any given time, education is important for any country's socio-economic, cultural, and political development. Education includes equipping human resources with the rightful skills, understanding, qualities and competences that will enable them to participate effectively in the development of their environment for wholesome development. Ofogbor and Emekedou (2017) quoted UNESCO''s definition of education as the total process of developing human ability and behaviour. They maintained that education is an organized and sustained instruction designed to communicate a combination of knowledge, skill and understanding values for all activities of life. Todaro and Smith (2019), Education can be conceived as the development of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains and the abilities of an individual for optimal function and performance in the society. The individual has to be helped to develop his mental, emotional and psychological abilities that will be a benefit to him and the society in which he lives. Education enhances the quality of an individual and enables him to build up his personality in such a way that he is able to play an effective role in the development of the society in which he lives (Okeke, 2018).

Secondary Education

Secondary education is a critical phase that prepares students for higher education, vocational training, and the labor market. It provides a broad curriculum that includes core subjects such as mathematics, sciences, languages, and social studies, as well as technical and vocational subjects that enhance employability skills. According to the Nigerian National Policy on Education, the objectives of secondary education include preparing individuals for useful living within society and higher education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2013). Secondary education is a crucial period in a child's learning journey during which a learner's character, career, aspirations and readiness to take on responsibilities are shaped. Hence quality secondary education is vital for creating a bright future for individual and the nation. Secondary Education is the foundational education that is available to everyone within the stipulated age limits, and also not restricted to any particular gender, place and time and upon which all other educational strata rests. Secondary education is a type of schooling which comprises six years in the primary school and three years of junior secondary and three years of senior secondary level of education. According to the National Policy on Education (2016) secondary education shall be free and compulsory. It shall include adult and non – formal education program at primary, junior and senior secondary and out of school children.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable national development is a complex concept comprising two key components: sustainable development and national development. According to (Abraham, 2012), "Sustainable" refers to the ability to maintain performance over time, ensuring the long-term viability of programs and initiatives. Brundtland Commission Report (1987), describes sustainable development as a form of growth that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs This agrees with Oyeshola (2012) posited that sustainable development is a form of development perspectives, which integrates production process with resources conservation and environmental enhancement to tackle the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs.

According to Nayar (2013), sustainable development is defined by its continuous and evolving nature, aiming to leverage the advantages of positive economic, social, and ecological changes to meet the essential needs of both present and future generations. This strategy highlights the necessity of balancing growth with resource conservation to ensure that everyone can prosper.

The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (2012) describes sustainable development as a framework that allows for current progress without undermining the developmental needs of both current and future populations. This principle emphasizes the importance of improving the quality of life for all individuals while ensuring that the well-being of future generations is not compromised. Aliwa (2016) submitted that sustainable development as lasting socio-economic, political technological advancement capable of bringing qualitative education, gainful employment, maximum security, free, fair, credible transparent elections, provision of social amenities, good governance, rule of law, and respect for gender equality. Onyido and Odum (2014) were of the view that sustainable development implies a new concept of economic growth, one that provides fairness and opportunities for the entire world finite natural resources. To them sustainable implies improvement in the quality of human lives that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations. Akintoye and Opeyemi (2014) rightly put it that sustainable development is a process of responding to global environmental issues in terms of equity, fairness, biophysical and equal distribution.

The progress of a nation can be classified as either sustainable or unsustainable, as noted by Ajibola and Okafor (2017). Unsustainable development is evident in societies marked by significant poverty levels, food insecurity, inadequate healthcare services, gender disparities, poor sanitation practices, inefficient energy utilization, lack of water conservation efforts, insufficient infrastructure, heightened environmental pollution, human rights violations, injustice, and a high prevalence of both unemployable and unemployed graduates. Additionally, issues such as climate change and environmental degradation further exacerbate the unsustainable nature of development. The pursuit of sustainable development in Nigeria necessitates a collaborative effort among various stakeholders, including school administrators, government entities at all levels, and citizens from diverse backgrounds. It is imperative that individuals, regardless of their religion, age, gender, educational qualifications, or social status, actively participate in this collective endeavor. Only through unified action and commitment can Nigeria hope to overcome its developmental challenges and achieve a sustainable future for all its citizens.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Sustainable development is encapsulated in a framework of 17 goals that nations are urged to accomplish by the year 2030. It serves as guide for achieving sustainable development globally.

These goals, known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), encompass a wide range of social, economic, and environmental objectives aimed at fostering a more equitable and sustainable world. The goals also address issues such as poverty, hunger, health, education, gender equality, clean water, and climate action (United Nations, 2015). Sustainable Development Goals are: No poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-being, Quality Education. Gender Equality, Clean Water, Sanitation, Affordable and Clean Energy, Decent Work and Economic Growth, Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, Reduced Inequality. Sustainable Cities and Communities, Responsible Consumption and Production, Climate Action. Life Below Water, Life on Land, Peace and Justice Strong Institutions (United Nations, 2015). In Nigeria, the way to realize these goals begins with engaging the populace in the vision of these goals. This process necessitates effective reforms in the educational curriculum and the implementation of relevant policies, supported by appropriate tools and machinery, alongside the active involvement of all citizens (Ajibola & Okafor, 2017). For Nigeria to make significant strides towards the sustainable development goals, it is imperative to focus on the development and empowerment of its citizens through education.

Secondary 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. Secondary education plays a fundamental role in fostering sustainable development by equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to address contemporary global challenges, According to Tilak (2019), secondary education prepare students to engage in higher-order thinking, problem-solving, and innovation, which are essential for sustainable development. According to United Nation (2015), secondary education contributes to the formation of a skilled workforce that can drive economic progress and support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

How to Revitalize Secondary Education to Achieve Sustainable Development and Economic Growth in Nigeria

Policy Reforms

Policy reforms are essential for creating an enabling environment for the improvement of secondary education in Nigeria. The government should prioritize education in its national development agenda and allocate sufficient resources to the education sector (World Bank, 2018). Additionally, policies that promote equity, addressing gender disparities and supporting

marginalized communities, should be implemented to ensure that all students have access to quality education (UNICEF, 2020).

Curriculum Reform

The curriculum should be updated to include education on sustainable development, focusing on environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic growth. Subjects like environmental science, renewable energy, and sustainable agriculture can be introduced (UNESCO, 2017);

Increased Investment in Education

Increased investment in education is crucial for improving the quality of secondary education in Nigeria. This investment should be directed towards building and renovating school infrastructure, providing learning materials, and supporting teacher training and professional development (Obanya, 2010). Public-private partnerships can also play a significant role in mobilizing resources for education and enhancing the quality of education provision (Adedeji, 2011).

Adoption of Innovative Teaching Methodologies

The adoption of innovative teaching methodologies is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of secondary education in Nigeria. This includes the use of technology in education, such as e-learning platforms and digital resources, to support teaching and learning (Ogunyemi, 2011). Additionally, learner-centered pedagogies that promote critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills should be encouraged (Aina, 2017).

The Role of Educational Administrators

Educational administrators play a crucial role in the revitalization of secondary education in Nigeria. Effective leadership and management are essential for implementing the necessary changes and ensuring that schools provide quality education (Adedeji & Olaniyan, 2011). Educational administrators should be empowered with the skills and resources needed to lead this transformation, including training in educational leadership and management (Obanya, 2010).

Challenges Facing Secondary Education in Nigeria

The following are some of the challenges faced while trying to revitalize secondary education for sustainable development and economic growth in Nigeria:

Inadequate Infrastructure and Funding

One of the major obstacles to effective secondary education in Nigeria is the inadequate infrastructure and funding. Many schools lack basic facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, and libraries, which are essential for providing quality education (Obanya, 2010). The Nigerian government's expenditure on education has consistently been below the recommended benchmark of 26% of the national budget as suggested by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2015). This underfunding has resulted in a decline in the quality of education and has hindered efforts to improve school infrastructure and resources.

Teacher Shortage and Professional Development

The shortage of qualified teachers is another significant challenge facing secondary education in Nigeria. According to Akinyemi (2014), there is a high pupil-teacher ratio in many secondary schools, which affects the quality of teaching and learning. Furthermore, many teachers lack access to professional development opportunities that would enable them to improve their teaching skills and stay updated with current educational practices (Ogunyemi, 2011). The need for continuous professional development for teachers is critical in ensuring that they are well-equipped to deliver effective instruction and support student learning.

Insecurity and Conflict

Insecurity, particularly in the northern regions of Nigeria, poses a significant challenge to the revitalization of secondary education. Boko Haram's attacks on schools, kidnappings, and general instability have led to the closure of many schools and created a climate of fear that discourages attendance. Insecurity and the ongoing conflicts have displaced large numbers of students and teachers, disrupting education and creating additional barriers to access and quality. (Shehu, 2020).

Outdated Curricula

The curricula used in many Nigerian secondary schools are outdated and do not adequately prepare students for the demands of the modern economy and society (Aina, 2017). There is a need for curriculum reform to ensure that it is aligned with the skills and competencies required for sustainable development. The incorporation of vocational and technical education, as well as a focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), is essential for preparing students for future challenges (Federal Ministry of Education, 2013).

Conclusion

In conclusion, revitalizing secondary education in Nigeria is not merely a policy initiative but a transformative process that requires a commitment to continuous improvement and innovation. Secondary education in Nigeria plays a crucial role in developing the skills and competencies necessary for sustainable development in the 21st century. Secondary education is an important phase that prepares students for higher education, vocational training, and the labor market. It has shown that for secondary education in Nigeria to be revitalized to achieve sustainable development and economic growth in the country, there need to be provision of infrastructural facilities, funding, policy reform, increased investment in education, adoption of innovative teaching methodologies, entrepreneurship education, e-learning, provision of adequate facilities and much more. The challenges facing the implementation of the revitalization of secondary education for sustainable development and economic growth in Nigeria were discussed. As a way forward, it has suggested some strategies towards the revitalization of secondary education for sustainable development and economic growth in Nigeria,

Recommendations

Based on the issues discussed, the following recommendations are made as a way forward:

1. Adequate planning and effective implementation is essential for achieving broader educational goals. It serves as the foundation for successful educational initiatives. Therefore, adequate planning is the most effective managerial tool to be adopted in ensuring the maximum co-operation of school personnel to accomplish the educational objective thereby promoting sustainable development and economic growth.

2. Ensuring Sufficient Teaching and Learning Resources: The challenges in education can only be effectively addressed if the nation embraces its own solutions to its emerging issues. It is also recommended that an agency be established in each senatorial zone of the Federation to produce high-quality and affordable educational materials, as well as to provide training for teachers in the development of improvised instructional resources.

3. Strengthen Security Protocols in All Secondary Schools: To effectively tackle insecurity, it is crucial to create an environment that promotes sustainable development. This can be accomplished through government policies that require the installation of perimeter fencing around all schools, along with one or two designated entry and exit

points. Furthermore, it is vital to hire and deploy additional trained security personnel at each school to ensure the safety of both staff and property.

4. Implement Smaller Class Sizes : It is crucial for both government bodies and private school administrators to recruit more qualified teachers and improve or expand existing facilities to support the increasing number of students in secondary education. Additionally, it is vital for school inspectors to regularly assess secondary institutions to ensure that class sizes remain manageable. This strategy enables teachers to offer individualized attention to students, which is a more effective method for promoting strong academic achievement. The teacher-student ratio of 1:40, as outlined in the National Policy on Education (2014), must be strictly upheld in both public and private secondary schools.

5. Regular supervision, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programs, and activities of teachers and students are essential to enhance innovative ideas and promote sustainable development.

6. Strengthen Financial Support for Secondary Education: The government, stakeholders and individuals must work together to fund education and implement effective management strategies for timely and responsible resource allocation. Serious action should be taken against embezzlement or misappropriation of funds to deter corruption.

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