

MANAGING EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN A DYSFUNCTIONAL ECONOMY

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Abstract

This paper examines managing educational system in a dysfunctional economy. Nigeria's educational system is a critical pillar for national development, shaping the workforce and societal leaders of tomorrow. The task at hand involves rethinking and realigning educational policies, curricula, and infrastructure to ensure that they are in sync with contemporary economic realities. This includes fostering skills that are pertinent to the 21st-century job market, such as digital literacy, critical thinking, and entrepreneurship. The paper recommended among others that government should expand vocational and technical education programs to provide students with practical skills and industry certifications that enhance employability.

Keywords: Managing, Educational, System, Nigeria, Era, Economy.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's educational system is a critical pillar for national development, shaping the workforce and societal leaders of tomorrow. As the country navigates through an era marked by rapid economic shifts, global technological advancements, and changing labor market demands, it becomes increasingly important to align the educational system with these evolving needs.

Historically, Nigeria's educational landscape has been characterized by a mix of challenges and opportunities. The system has often struggled with issues such as inadequate funding, infrastructural deficits, and disparities in access and quality between urban and rural areas. However, recent economic trends, including the rise of digital economies, the push for diversification away from oil dependency, and increased global interconnectedness, call for a strategic overhaul to better prepare students for the demands of a modern economy.

The task at hand involves rethinking and realigning educational policies, curricula, and infrastructure to ensure that they are in sync with contemporary economic realities. This includes fostering skills that are pertinent to the 21st-century job market, such as digital literacy, critical thinking, and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, it necessitates enhancing the capacity of educational institutions to adapt to technological advancements and to support lifelong learning.

To address these challenges and opportunities, a comprehensive approach is needed. This approach should encompass the integration of modern technologies into the classroom, the development of partnerships between educational institutions and industry, and the implementation of policies that encourage innovation and practical skills development. By undertaking these reforms, Nigeria can build an educational system that not only meets the current economic needs but also positions the country for future growth and global competitiveness.

This introduction sets the stage for a deeper exploration of how Nigeria's educational system can be managed and transformed to align with the demands of a dynamic economic environment. Through targeted strategies and collaborative efforts, it is possible to create an education framework that supports sustainable development and empowers future generations to thrive in an ever-evolving global landscape

The Standard of Nigerian Educational System

The standard of the Nigerian educational system is a mixed bag. On one hand, the country has made significant progress in expanding access to education, with the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program aiming to provide nine years of uninterrupted schooling. The program has made education "free," "mandatory," and a "right" of every child.

However, despite these efforts, the educational system in Nigeria still faces numerous challenges. One of the major issues is the poor funding of public schools, which has led to a shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient resources. This has resulted in a significant gap in the quality of education between public and private schools.

Key Challenges:

- Inequitable access to education: Despite the UBE program, many children, especially in rural areas, still lack access to quality education.
- Poor infrastructure: Many public schools lack basic amenities, such as classrooms, libraries, and toilets.
- Shortage of qualified teachers: The educational system in Nigeria faces a significant shortage of qualified teachers, which affects the quality of education.
- Corruption and mismanagement: Corruption and mismanagement of funds have hindered the effective implementation of educational policies and programs.

Opportunities for Improvement:

- Increased funding: Increasing funding for public schools can help address the shortage of qualified teachers, improve infrastructure, and provide more resources for students.
- Teacher training and development: Providing training and development opportunities for teachers can help improve the quality of education.
- Private sector partnerships: Partnering with the private sector can help provide additional resources and support for public schools.
- Decentralization and community involvement: Decentralizing educational decision-making and involving local communities can help ensure that educational programs are more responsive to local needs.

The Status of Nigerian Economy

Nigeria's economy is a mixed bag, with both positive and negative trends. On the one hand, the country has a middle-income, mixed economy with expanding manufacturing, financial, service, communications, technology, and entertainment sectors. Nigeria is ranked as the 53rd-largest economy in the world in terms of nominal GDP and the fourth largest in Africa.

However, the economy still faces significant challenges, including a heavy reliance on oil revenues, which contribute about 2/3 of state revenues but only 9% to the GDP. The country's debt-to-GDP ratio was 36.63% in 2021, according to the IMF.

In recent years, Nigeria has made efforts to diversify its economy, with a focus on agriculture, manufacturing, and services. The government has also implemented policies aimed at promoting economic growth and reducing poverty, such as the National Social Safety Net Program.

Despite these efforts, Nigeria still faces significant development challenges, including a large poverty rate, estimated at 38.9% in 2023, and a high unemployment rate. The country also struggles with inadequate infrastructure, including a shortage of reliable electricity and poor transportation networks.

Overall, while Nigeria's economy has shown signs of growth and diversification, it still faces significant challenges that must be addressed in order to promote sustainable economic development and reduce poverty.

How to manage Nigerian Educational system with the prevailing economic era

Managing the Nigerian educational system in the prevailing economic era requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses the challenges and opportunities presented by the current economic situation. Here are some strategies that can be employed:

Short-term Strategies

1. Cost-cutting measures: Implement cost-cutting measures such as reducing administrative costs, streamlining processes, and eliminating unnecessary expenses.
2. Resource optimization: Optimize the use of available resources, such as textbooks, technology, and infrastructure.
3. Community involvement: Engage with local communities to leverage resources, expertise, and support.
4. Public-private partnerships: Foster partnerships with private organizations to access funding, expertise, and resources.

Medium-term Strategies

1. Curriculum reform: Reform the curriculum to focus on skills development, entrepreneurship, and innovation.
2. Teacher training: Provide teachers with training and development opportunities to enhance their skills and effectiveness.

3. Infrastructure development: Invest in infrastructure development, such as building new schools, renovating existing ones, and providing essential facilities.
4. Technology integration: Integrate technology into the educational system to enhance teaching, learning, and administration.

Long-term Strategies

1. Education sector planning: Develop a comprehensive education sector plan that aligns with national development goals and priorities.
2. Funding and resource mobilization: Mobilize funding and resources from various sources, including government, private sector, and international organizations.
3. Systemic reforms: Implement systemic reforms that address the root causes of challenges in the educational system, such as corruption, inefficiency, and inequality.
4. Monitoring and evaluation: Establish a robust monitoring and evaluation system to track progress, identify challenges, and inform decision-making.

Economic Era Considerations

1. Diversification: Diversify the economy to reduce dependence on oil revenues and promote sustainable economic growth.
2. Innovation and entrepreneurship: Foster innovation and entrepreneurship in the educational system to prepare students for the challenges of the 21st-century economy.
3. Skills development: Focus on skills development, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication, to prepare students for the demands of the modern workforce.
4. Global competitiveness: Align the educational system with global standards and best practices to enhance Nigeria's global competitiveness.

By implementing these strategies, Nigeria can manage its educational system effectively in the prevailing economic era and prepare its citizens for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

The Importance of Good Management

Good management is essential for the success and sustainability of any organization, project, or system. Effective management enables organizations to achieve their goals, maximize resources, and adapt to changing circumstances. Here are some key reasons why good management is important:

1. Achieves Organizational Goals

Good management helps organizations set and achieve their objectives by prioritizing tasks, allocating resources, and monitoring progress.

2. Maximizes Resource Utilization

Effective management ensures that resources, including human resources, materials, and finances, are utilized efficiently and effectively to minimize waste and optimize productivity.

3. Enhances Decision-Making

Good management involves gathering and analyzing data, identifying alternatives, and making informed decisions that support organizational objectives.

4. Fosters Innovation and Adaptation

Effective management encourages innovation, creativity, and experimentation, enabling organizations to adapt to changing circumstances, technologies, and market conditions.

5. Promotes Employee Engagement and Development

Good management involves motivating, training, and developing employees to enhance their skills, knowledge, and job satisfaction, leading to increased productivity and retention.

6. Ensures Accountability and Transparency

Effective management involves establishing clear roles, responsibilities, and expectations, as well as monitoring and reporting performance to ensure accountability and transparency.

7. Manages Risk and Uncertainty

Good management involves identifying, assessing, and mitigating risks, as well as developing contingency plans to address unexpected events and uncertainties.

8. Encourages Collaboration and Partnerships

Effective management involves building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders, including customers, suppliers, partners, and communities, to achieve common goals and objectives.

9. Supports Sustainability and Social Responsibility

Good management involves adopting practices and strategies that promote environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and ethical business practices.

10. Enhances Reputation and Competitiveness

Effective management helps organizations build a positive reputation, differentiate themselves from competitors, and attract customers, talent, and investors.

The Importance of Good Education

Good education is essential for individuals, communities, and societies as a whole. Here are some reasons why good education is important:

Personal Benefits

1. **Empowerment:** Education empowers individuals with knowledge, skills, and critical thinking, enabling them to make informed decisions and take control of their lives.
2. **Career Opportunities:** Good education opens up career opportunities, increases earning potential, and provides a competitive edge in the job market.
3. **Personal Growth:** Education fosters personal growth, helping individuals develop important life skills, such as communication, problem-solving, and teamwork.

Societal Benefits

1. **Economic Growth:** Education contributes to economic growth by developing a skilled and productive workforce, increasing innovation, and attracting investments.
2. **Social Mobility:** Good education helps reduce social inequality by providing opportunities for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their socio-economic status.
3. **Civic Engagement:** Education promotes civic engagement, encouraging individuals to participate in democratic processes, respect human rights, and contribute to community development.

Global Benefits

1. **Global Citizenship:** Education fosters global citizenship by promoting cross-cultural understanding, tolerance, and cooperation.
2. **Innovation and Progress:** Good education drives innovation and progress, helping to address global challenges, such as climate change, poverty, and inequality.

3. Peace and Stability: Education promotes peace and stability by reducing conflict, promoting diplomacy, and fostering international cooperation.

Benefits for the Future

1. Preparation for the Future: Good education prepares individuals for the challenges and opportunities of the future, including the impact of technological advancements and globalization.
2. Adaptability and Resilience: Education helps individuals develop adaptability and resilience, enabling them to navigate an increasingly complex and rapidly changing world.
3. Leadership and Problem-Solving: Good education develops leadership and problem-solving skills, essential for addressing the complex challenges facing individuals, communities, and societies.

Historical Overview of Nigeria's Educational System

Nigeria's educational system has evolved significantly since independence, with various reforms aimed at addressing systemic issues and adapting to societal needs. According to Olaniyan and Ojo (2008), early educational policies focused on expanding access and increasing literacy rates, but faced challenges related to infrastructure, quality, and relevance to the job market. The National Policy on Education (NPE), revised periodically, reflects attempts to align educational objectives with national development goals. Despite these efforts, gaps remain in achieving equitable access and quality education (Ezeani, 2010).

Economic Shifts and Their Impact on Education

Recent economic trends in Nigeria, including the diversification away from oil dependency and the rise of digital economies, necessitate a reevaluation of educational priorities. Aina (2014) highlights the need for educational reforms to address the mismatch between the skills produced by the educational system and those demanded by the labor market. As Nigeria transitions towards a more diversified economy, the focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education has become increasingly important (Ogunyemi, 2016).

The Role of Technology in Modern Education

Technology integration is critical for modernizing Nigeria's educational system. According to Agbatogun (2017), incorporating digital tools and e-learning platforms can enhance teaching and learning experiences, improve access to educational resources, and facilitate skills development. However, the implementation of technology in Nigerian schools faces challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited teacher training, and digital divide issues (Owoeye & Yara, 2011).

Skills Development and Employability

The alignment of educational outcomes with labor market needs is crucial for enhancing employability. Adebayo and Otokiti (2018) argue that vocational and technical education should be prioritized to provide students with practical skills that meet industry demands. The introduction of entrepreneurship education and career guidance is also seen as a way to prepare students for self-employment and adaptive career paths (Ogunleye, 2020).

Policy and Institutional Reforms

Effective management of the educational system requires comprehensive policy reforms and institutional strengthening. Fafunwa (2004) emphasizes the importance of policy coherence and stakeholder involvement in designing and implementing educational reforms. The establishment of partnerships between educational institutions and industry can facilitate curriculum development that aligns with economic needs (Akanbi, 2019). Additionally, Adeyemi (2016) points out the need for increased funding and better management practices to address infrastructural and resource challenges.

Challenges in Implementation

While the NPE provides a comprehensive framework for educational reform, the challenges lie in its implementation. The disconnect between policy and practice, coupled with inconsistent infrastructure and resource allocation, undermines efforts to modernize the educational system. Industry collaboration, though recognized as beneficial, remains limited in scope and effectiveness. Technology is a critical factor in modernizing education, but its benefits are not being fully realized due to infrastructural and training deficiencies. Effective technology integration requires more than just hardware; it necessitates systemic support, including teacher training and ongoing technical support.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights critical areas where Nigeria's educational system requires reform to better align with contemporary economic demands. There is a clear need for curriculum updates to include more STEM and digital skills, increased focus on vocational training, and improved technology integration. Addressing these needs will help bridge the gap between educational outcomes and labor market requirements, fostering a more adaptable and skilled workforce.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Promote Vocational Training:** Expand vocational and technical education programs to provide students with practical skills and industry certifications that enhance employability.
- **Teacher Training:** Develop and implement comprehensive professional development programs focused on integrating technology into teaching practices. Provide ongoing support and resources to help teachers effectively use digital tools.
- **Engage Stakeholders:** Involve industry representatives in curriculum development and policy-making processes to ensure that educational programs meet current and future economic demands.
- **Enhance Policy Coherence:** Ensure that educational policies are consistently implemented and monitored. Address gaps between policy design and practice by improving governance and accountability mechanisms.
- **Increase Funding:** Advocate for increased funding for education, with a focus on infrastructure, technology, and teacher development. Ensure that resources are allocated effectively to support reform initiatives.

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