

## ISSUES AND CRISES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF NIGERIA'S EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: THE WAY FORWARD

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### Abstract

*This paper discussed on the issues and crises involved in the management of the Nigeria's education system. There is no doubt that the paper acknowledged the presence of crisis in the management of education in Nigeria and have identified among other things inadequate funding, inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor patronage by parents and pupils as key as issues of crisis in the management of education in Nigeria. The paper noted that the onus for the efficient and effective management of education to address the crisis in education in Nigeria lie with the entire stakeholders in the management of education in Nigeria. The paper identified education policy makers, education managers and administrators, parents and community leaders among others as very critical to the management of the observed crises in the Nigeria's education system. Furthermore, the paper stressed the need for a merit based appointments of education managers and administrators, effective use of reliable statistical data in planning, autonomy for education managers to function effectively without interference and strict adherence to operational guidelines as provided by all education regulatory and supervisory agencies in the management of education system in Nigeria. Similarly, the need for concerted efforts to be made to address squarely the demand of the education system should be intensified for productivity and result.*

**Keywords:** *Issues, Crises, Management of Education*

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### Introduction

There is no gain saying the fact that, the Nigeria's educational system is in crisis. The manifestations of these crises are visible in every facet of the country's education service delivery. These crises are especially in the areas of teacher quantity and quality, infrastructural deficits, inadequacy of learning materials and parental support among others. The reasons for these crises are not far-fetched because from the time modern education was introduced in the country in the 1840's up to the emergence of the Nigeria's independence in the 1960's, education remained a priority of every government. Prioritizing the provision of education services smoothly continued with the activities of the governments after independence. For instance, with all the political upheavals the country witnessed in the first decade of its independence, education continued to feature as a priority of governments up to 1980. Essentially, the Nigeria's educational system was able to witness growth and development at

all levels in the first two decades of the country's independence. Within the period, Nigeria ushered its national curriculum and policy on education through the famous Nigeria's National Curriculum Conference of 1969, witnessed expansion in the number of primary and secondary schools as well as having the establishment of its first- and second-generation universities among others within the same period. This is in addition to development of many positive policies in education such as the Universal Primary Education scheme of 1976 which opened many doors of opportunities for citizens to access education and employment in the country's civil, public and private sectors. In fact, stakeholders in the management of education today called that period as the good olden days of education where education leads and other sectors follow. But, unfortunately years later into the country's independence, the same cannot be said of the educational system of Nigeria. There is virtually a collapse or near collapse educational system in operation in Nigeria which is being attributed to the series of

crises rocking the system in recent times. On comparative basis, the early provision of education in Nigeria has everything that would be required and sometimes in surplus quantity. This is evident in areas of policy formulation and implementation, parents' participation-enrolment of pupils and wards, teacher quantity and quality, infrastructural facilities, adequate funding, monitoring and evaluation, school discipline, curriculum effectiveness, quality of learning outcomes, prudent management of educational resources, adequate use of statistics in educational planning etc. Apparently, according to these papers, the same cannot be said of the provision of education in Nigeria today hence, the crystal lack of these provisions constitute a crisis in the management of education in Nigeria. Over the years, this has been responsible for the deterioration of the quality of Nigeria's educational system significantly such that the system is either seen as collapsing or on the brink of collapse. Thus, the paper examines the core issues, crises and the role of various stakeholders in tackling the management challenges facing the education sector in Nigeria today.

### **The Concept of Crisis**

A crisis is a difficult or dangerous situation or time which requires a quick and effective solution that will avert its negative consequences on a phenomenon. A crisis situation may be one that arose due to unforeseen social, economic, political or psychological developments that seriously affect the normal process and pattern of growth and development of a phenomena. It is also described as a situation where the existing problems lacks solutions and or the existing solutions are inadequate in addressing the problems (<https://www.igi.global.com>, 2024). It also sometimes takes the form of a state of feeling on psychological sphere with an internal experience of confusion and anxiety and being unable to arrive at a solution to a problem. In specific terms, a crisis situation can be said to have happened the moment when the formal mechanisms that are in place to cope with the difficult situation failed or became ineffective. In Nigeria, it is a truism that the management of the education system is bisected with myriads of problems which are in strong terms causing a full-blown crises situation affecting the management of the system towards achieving its growth and development.

### **Management of Education in Nigeria**

The management of education in Nigeria is referred to as the planning, organization, coordination and controlling of the provision of human, material and financial resources in the administration of the Nigerian education system. It involves all processes of designing and effecting organizational objectives and resources for the achievement of educational organizational goals. Management of education is also an act of ensuring the cooperation, participation and intervention of others in the effective achievement of the pre-determined educational objectives (Yabo, 2007). Meanwhile, for the purpose of this discussion, management of education in Nigeria is seen as the effective organization and utilization of the human, material, financial and time resources in the administration of educational system in Nigeria.

### **Issues in the Management of Education in Nigeria**

As a system, education comprised many units that are interwoven, intertwine and interrelated. Thus, for efficiency and effectiveness of the system all the units must come together and rub each other's shoulders to operate in unison. Until this is done, the operation of the system will be fragmented, compartmentalized and thus lead to disarray and the evolution of a crisis situation. For instance, education managers work with personnel-teachers, finance-funding, infrastructures-facilities, participation-pupils' enrolment, discipline-service, planning of education, policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation and many other services in education delivery. Each of these units have a role to play in supporting the effective management of the education system. In other words, there must be patronage of the education system ie enrolment of students before we can have an education system. By implication, there will be school without pupils or pupils without teachers, and also there will be no school with teachers but without infrastructures or funding or adequate monitoring. Lack of any of these the presence of others amount to nothing in the management of education. It is therefore, without any dispute that lack of any or all of these units in the management of an education system posed a serious threat to the entire management of the system. A brief examination of these issues and

their implication on the management of education in Nigeria is hereby discussed.

- a) Patronage: patronage of an education system here refers to the parents, enrolment of their children across the levels of the Nigerian education system. It is common knowledge that, enrolment of pupils into the basic education, students into the secondary and post-secondary institutions have dwindled so much so that, there is today an outcry of the growing number of Out-of-School Children (OoSC) in Nigeria. A particular report by UNICEF, described as mind-numbing the awareness that about 10.5 million Nigerian children of school age are not enrolled in schools. Out of this number, the report explained that about nine million are children of beggars, fishermen and other less privileged people in society (<https://www.unicef.org>). Again, in 2018, a survey showed that the population of out-of-school children in Nigeria had risen from 10.5 million to 13.2 million, the highest in the world (UNICEF, 2024). In fact, in another report UNESCO, (2020) put Nigeria's out-of-school children population at 20 million attributing it to insecurity issues in the North-East, North-West and South-East zones of Nigeria. These surveys/reports further stated that, there is still a huge number of those who are in school, but are learning nothing, noting that schooling does not always lead to learning. Furthermore, available statistics have shown that by 2019 only 8.6m children attend the Early Child Care Education (ECCE) otherwise known as Pre-primary education in Nigeria which account for less than 40% of those eligible to be in that level (Wikipedia, 2024). Similarly, only 12.6m students attends the secondary schools level with 7.4m at the Junior Secondary School (JSS) level and 5.2m at the Senior Secondary School (SSS) level which is far less by 40% of eligible students at this level in Nigeria. This matter is compounded by the fact that it was found out that about 35% of those who attends primary school do not transit to secondary schools and thus, as concluded by the report, half of all Nigerian children did not attend secondary school in 2021 (Wikipedia, 2024). In the case of the nation's tertiary education, available

statistics have shown that in the last 5 years no less than 1.8-2m children apply for admission into the nations universities annually but only a maximum of 700 applicants will gain admission per annum, leaving behind half or more than half not gaining admission in any of the nation's university. Specifically, in the year 2019 over 1.8m children applied through the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB), but only less than 700 children secured admission into the nations universities that year (<https://www.statista.com>, 2024). This is by all means an issue challenging the management of education in Nigeria because, any education system without patronage, the managers may end up losing their jobs for imminent closure of schools to avoid wastage of human, materials and financial resources.

- b) Infrastructural Facilities: This is an area where the current education system at all levels is experiencing serious deficits. According to Musa, Ekwukoma & Osagiobare, (2023) educational infrastructures are classified into buildings (classrooms, staff rooms, toilets, libraries etc) equipment/utilities (water, electricity etc) furniture (office tables and chairs, desks, black and white boards etc); Information and Communication Technology (Computers, projectors, printers, laptops etc); laboratory (Physics, Biology, ICT, Geography etc); Medical (Sickbay nurses, medical facilities etc); sports (football field, basketball court, table tennis etc) and security (School fence, gate, security men etc). Today it is a common knowledge that many primary, secondary and tertiary institutions are without classrooms, staff offices, hostel accommodation, teachers' houses, clinics, recreational fields and where some of these are available, all are in a dilapidated condition. For instance, available records have shown that the ECCE level of education in Nigeria has only about 100,000 public classrooms requiring over 146,000 classrooms as at 2019, the primary schools have a deficit of over 230,000 classrooms and the JSS level was found to have more facilities in the private schools than in the public schools in Nigeria (<https://www.linkedin.com>, 2024). In the

- case of universities and other tertiary institutions in the country, students are always seen sitting on the floor of their dilapidated structures with some receiving lectures in open theaters for lack of lecture halls. This crisis is putting the management of education in appalling direction and which remains a task in the management of education in Nigeria.
- c) **Funding:** This is another issue which is well connected with all other issues in the management of education in Nigeria. Virtually, by ranking it can be said to be the chief because without it you cannot get it right with all other aspects of the management of education in Nigeria including the provision for the recruitment and employment of the education managers. Over the years, the funding of education in Nigeria has been a very contentious one on the surface as well as in the cupboard. For instance, on the face of it looking at the annual budgetary allocations to education sector, it has always been nothing to write home about especially against the background of the recommendations of UNESCO on the funding of education by countries. This has been attested severally through citing examples of shortage of teachers in both quantity and quality, teachers still badly paid, instructional materials being in short supply, schools without libraries, laboratories, classrooms and no textbooks for children in any schools. Similarly, in the cupboard, in seeking explanation to these 'lacks' and 'inadequacies' available reports posit that there is mismanagement of funds meant for the provision of education across all levels of education in the country where to a large extent education managers are seen as liable. This makes it contentious because those who are providing the funds insist that even though the funds are miserably allocated, if utilized judiciously can make a difference in the management of education more than what is seen today and this paper belongs to this school of thought. This was the reason why Balarabe, (2018) cited a FGN/UNICEF report asserted that the complete picture of expenditure for education is not known, but is almost certainly inadequate at the classroom level. He added that it remains unclear, what level of total public resources are allocated to the education sector; what proportion of the allocation is actually spent; how expended funds are used; and the extent to which these funds do or do not reach schools and other intended beneficiaries.
- d) **Insecurity:** This is a chief crisis area in the management of education in Nigeria. Since the emergence of insurgency activities in Nigeria basically in 2009 in the North-Eastern part of the country notably by the Boko Haram insurgents, the Nigeria's education system has been the most affected in Nigeria. To say the least, the Nigeria's education system has witnessed series of abduction of school children, killing and maiming of school administrators and, staff and teachers, destruction of basic school infrastructural facilities as well as kidnapping and holding hostages for ransom of lecturers and students of tertiary institutions of learning. This has resulted into low enrolment of children in to primary and secondary schools, disruptions of academic activities and programmes, closure of schools and a reduction in investment in human and material resources in the higher education level in the country. Available records have shown that in 2021, no fewer than 618 schools were closed down in six Northern states (Sokoto, Zamfara, Kano, Katsina, Niger and Yobe) over the fear of attacks, abduction of pupils and members of staff which led to a learning loss of between 2-12 calendar months and even beyond depending on the severity of the situation e.g. Zamfara state (<https://www.statista.com>>, 2024). This was believed to be responsible for low transition of pupils from primary to secondary schools in Nigeria, whereas it was estimated that 35% of Nigerian children who attend primary schools do not go on to attend secondary schools (UNICEF, 2024). The report concluded that in 2021, half of all Nigerian children did not attend secondary school, a full 1/3 of Nigeria's children are not in school and one in five out-of-school children in the world is a Nigerian. This is very soaring and a disaster on the Nigerian education system and which must be taken seriously by the stakeholders to save the education system from total collapse.
- e) **Human resource:** In the context of human resource, this paper is specifically making

reference to provision of teachers in quantity, quality and their related needs. There is no doubt that teachers remain the backbone of any education system which there is no any equipment or tool that can replace their services. No matter how a school is well built, furnished, provided with instructional or teaching materials with all categories of school managers and administrators as well as with adequate enrolment of children, if there are no teachers, the school will never translate into a learning environment and all what was provided amount to waste of funds and resources. In Nigeria today it is not even a subject of argument that the country's educational system across all levels is in dire need of teachers, instructors, tutors and lecturers. It is common to visit any primary or secondary school in Nigeria especially at the semi-urban and rural areas and find out that there are only one or two teachers in these schools who teach all students and subjects. These teachers double as head teachers/principals, assistant head teachers/principals, class masters, games masters and teachers of all subjects and all classes in the school. Available data have shown that there were 354,651 teachers for 7.2 million children in pre-primary schools, 915,593 teachers for 32 million pupils in primary schools and 416,291 teachers for 8 million students in junior secondary schools (UNESCO, 2020). Similarly, the number of registered teachers on the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria Database in 2023 was 2.3 million (FRN, 2023). studies have also showed that shortage of teachers is caused by poor salaries, poor work conditions, high student-teacher ratios which put undue pressure on pedagogy and stress on the teachers couple with the refusal of states to replace hundreds of teachers retiring every time. For instance, the UBEC report revealed that in Ogun state about 1,500 teachers retired recently without being replaced. In 2021 also the government of Muhammadu Buhari raised the retirement age of teachers from 60 to 65 years but that effort was seen as counterproductive by many analysts because instead of doing that, the government would have employ, trained and motivate an over-large army of unemployed youth which are about 52% to fill the teacher inadequacy gap (Odia,

&Omofonmwan, 2024). This is a great challenge to the basic education system especially which is the foundation rung of the country's education system. Meanwhile, in the case higher education level, virtually all tertiary institutions in the country especially the Universities which are the ivory tower of education are faced with inadequate manpower in their academic staff needs. This explains why many lecturers have to be engaged by other Universities to support their academic activities for lack of adequate professionals in their respective faculties and departments by way of part-time, visiting lecturers and sabbaticals which unfortunately was misunderstood by education stakeholders as to mean working in different places at the same time. This is precisely what caused a stand up between the Federal Government and the ASUU in the recent IPPIS impasse.

### **The Role of Stakeholders**

There is no doubt that it is the responsibility of the education stakeholders to attend to all the crisis that are bedeviling the education system. In specific terms education stakeholders consists of all persons that are in one way or the other saddled with the responsibilities of coordinating, organizing, controlling, directing, planning, monitoring, supervision of the entire process of quality education delivery in the country. These categories include policy makers at the federal and the state levels such as the ministers and the commissioners of education, all education managers at the federal and state education establishments, all education administrators at the federal and states basic, secondary and tertiary institutions of learning, all academic and non-academic staff of all educational institutions, all parents and community leaders as well as all students and children of school age in the society. Essentially, this paper is of the firm view that all of these categories of stakeholders must come together to contribute their own part in line with their stipulated responsibilities to address these crises in the education sector. They represent the managers of the country's education system and hence must collaborate to achieve the desired objectives of education in the country. In principle, they are the representative of governments at all levels, they design the policies of education, appoint personnel for

education, develop the budget for education, outline rules and regulations guiding the implementation of policies and budgets, develop the entire education curriculum, implement the provisions of the curriculum, ensure the provision of infrastructural facilities in schools, ensure enrolments and retention of their children in the schools and provide constant monitoring and quality assurance of the quality education service delivery. A careful study of the issues will reveal the precarious situation the management of the Nigerian education is coping with and also the most urgent need for a total rescue of the situation. The overall statistics have shown that none of the education levels is adequately serving its purpose and notably the dearth of everything in the system including pupils and children is putting the system in an imminent danger of collapse. It needs to be stressed that no educational system can strive without teachers, infrastructural facilities, learning materials, utilities, community support and most importantly pupils who are the most crucial input of the education system. In the view of this paper, the tasks lie on the managers of the education system to see to it that all these 'lacking's and 'inadequacies' in the management of education are confronted urgently to save the system from deteriorating to the most undesirable state of comatose.

### **The Way Forward**

Having discussed the realities in the need for the management of education to be taken seriously to stem the tide of the tasks in the provision of all management and administrative elements, it is pertinent not to mince words to identify some key recommendations for the way forward.

1. Appointment of key education managers should be guided by merit, relevant qualifications, experience and the capacity of the officer to deliver in the tasks of management of educational establishments, agencies and institutions. Incidences of basing appointments to education establishments on political affiliations should be discouraged to protect the polarization of the management of the education system.
2. The use of accurate statistical data is very crucial to the provision of infrastructural facilities for the service of educational

institutions and thus must be taken seriously.

3. All regulatory and supervisory agencies of educational establishments should stem their tide in ensuring strict adherence to the operational guidelines of the management of education in Nigeria
4. Education managers should be allowed to work without due interference by higher authorities, so that they exercise a reasonable part of autonomy as provided by the laws that establish their respective institutions
5. Education agencies should operate in unison as a system to guarantee cooperation, collaboration and interdependence for the achievement of the overall goals of the management of the education system in Nigeria.

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