



School Administrators in Basic Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper discussed the challenges Basic school administrators are facing in Nigeria. Secondary data were employed in the presentation. The data were collected from both print and online publications. The paper concluded that inadequate funds, Shortage of professional teachers, inadequate infrastructure facilities, insecurity problems, shortage of instructional materials, poor motivation and a high population of students are some of the challenges Basic school administrators are facing in Nigeria. To solve the challenges, the paper hereby recommended increment in the funding of Basic schools, employment of more teachers, provision of more infrastructure facilities, and instructional materials, motivation of school administrators and provision of adequate security in Basic schools.

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Introduction

Basic Education is the education given to children aged 0-15 years. It encompasses Early Child Care and Development Education (0-4) and 10 years of formal schooling. Early Child Care and Development Education however is segmented into ages 0-4 years, situated in daycare or creches, fully in the hands of the private sector and social development services, whilst ages 5-6 are within the formal education sector. Basic Education, to be provided by Government, shall be compulsory, free, universal and qualitative. It comprises: 1-year of Pre-Primary, 6 years of Primary and 3 years of Junior Secondary Education. Primary school education is one of the components of basic education. The National Policy on Education (2014) defines primary Education as the education given to children aged 6 — 12 years.

Osiesi, (2020), observed that primary education, globally, is the basis of formal education. It is the thread that connects other higher levels of learning, developing in young minds the very skills, experiences and knowledge for a tougher and higher pursuit in academics. Through primary education, the art and act of writing, reading, acquisition of necessary skills, attitudes and the basic information needed for appropriate adjustment into society and the world, in general, is imbibed. This level of education is paramount to the core advancement of many economies, a reason for its inclusion into the Millennium Development Goals of universal primary education. Various problems ranging from insecurity, illiteracy, religious violence, ignorance and political servitude in Nigeria for example, can be curbed or eradicated by the aid of primary education. This has caused most governments (Nigeria included) to make primary education free and declare it universal and compulsory (Kubiat, 2018).

The functions/importance of primary education across Nigeria is: To help learners master the art of Writing, Reading and Arithmetic; To help learners develop and be of good conduct and behaviour, to help learners in acquiring vital skills and appreciate the worth of manual labour (Osiesi, 2020). The objectives of primary education according to the National Policy on Education (2014), are to: Inculcate permanent literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively; lay a sound basis for scientific, critical and reflective thinking; promote patriotism, fairness, understanding and national unity; instill social, moral norms and values in the child; develop in the child the ability to adapt to the changing environment; and Provide opportunities for the child to develop life manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capability. In pursuance of these objectives: Primary education shall be compulsory, free, universal and qualitative; and the curriculum for primary education shall be as follows: primary 1-3 and 4 to 6.

The realization of Basic school education hinges on effective leadership and adequate funding. The school administrator is a major determinant of school success. Ogunode & Yahaya (2021) observed that School administrators are responsible for the failure and success of the schools because he/she is the head in charge of the planning, organizing and ensuring allocation and implementation of human and materials resources. The performance of the school administrators also depends to some extent on the quality and quantity of human and material resources available for him/her to deploy for the administration and management of the school. The school administrators are provided with human and material resources which include teachers and non-teaching staff, funds, instructional resources, ICT facilities, classrooms, administrative blocks, tables etc.

Concept of School Administrator

The school administrator is the head of an educational institution. A school administrator is a person appointed to manage and administer the school affairs to attain the objectives. Ahaotu & Ogunode (2021)

observed that School administrator means different thing to different people. A school administrator according to Ahaotu & Ogunode (2021) is a school leader, school head, head-master, headmistress and school manager. A school leader is a trained and professional person appointed to head the school to execute the following functions: planning, organizing, controlling, coordinating and supervising the human and materials resources to achieve the general objectives of the school. Obemeata (1984) defined a school head as an administrator who is responsible for running a school and also responsible for policy decisions and determining the direction and objectives of the school. Ogunode (2019) defined school administrators as the leaders that lead the school community in the direction of realizing the set goals and objectives of the institutions within a time frame. School administrators are responsible for the promotion of relations between organizational members that were mutually satisfying. This means, that harmony and high staff morale were considered essential for improved institutional activities.

There are many functions of school administrators. For Fadipe (1990) the major functions of the school head included: the interpretation of policy, execution of instructional programmes and the selection, induction and retention of personnel. According to (NOUN, 2008), the function of school administrators could be summarized as follows: (i) production and management of resources (human and materials) needed to support organizations and their programs (ii) supervision of instructional activities in the school system (iii) obtaining and training personnel (iv) providing leadership for curriculum (v) maintaining peaceful co-existence between the school, the community and the external agencies. (vi) influencing staff behaviour (vii) discerning and influencing the development of goals and policies (viii) evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency or otherwise of the school (ix) initiating work activities (x) grouping the tasks into activities (xi) defining the task to be done (xii) taking remedial action if the objectives are not being met (xiii) supplying incentives to stimulate productivity.

National Open University of Nigeria (2011) observed that primary school administration is the process through which all human efforts and materials are appropriately mobilized and harnessed towards the realization of the goals of primary school. It is also the process through which the primary school head teacher (administrator) plans, organizes, coordinates, directs and controls the affairs and activities as well as the human, material and financial resources in the primary school maximally to accomplish the corporate goals of the primary school. NOUN (2009) opined that a school leader should possess some of the attributes listed below.

1. He must be intelligent and knowledgeable.
2. He must be well confident and firm.
3. He must be academically and professionally sound.
4. He must be sociable and possess good communication skills.
5. He must be accessible to his subordinate and people.
6. He must possess good human relations.
7. He must be well disciplined, and morally and ethically upright.
8. He must be humane and modest at all times.
9. He must have a well-developed intuition.
10. He must have a stable character to make sound and rational judgments.
11. He must have consideration for others.

Challenges Facing Administrators of Basic Schools in Nigeria

There are many challenges facing school administrators of Basic schools in Nigeria. Some of the challenges include; inadequate funds, Shortage of professional teachers, inadequate infrastructure facilities, insecurity problems, shortage of instructional materials, poor motivation and a high population of students.

Inadequate Funds

School administrators of Basic schools in Nigeria are faced with problems of shortage of funds to run the schools under their care. This submission is agreed upon by Ogunode (2020a) who noted that inadequate funding is a major challenge facing the administration of primary school education in Nigeria. A major challenge facing primary school education and implementation of the curriculum at this level is funding amid rising demands and the cost of education. Also, Adedeji, Okemakinde & Sempebwa (2008) asserted that finance is one of the problems confronting the education sector owing to a drastic reduction in both the actual and proportion of government funds allocated to the education sector, despite UNESCO's recommendations of allocation of 15-20% of a nation's national income to the sector. Agbowuro & Joseph (2014) and Ogunode (2020b); Ogunode, Ahmed & Ayoko (2023); Ogunode, Jegede, & Ajape (2021) established that Basic schools in Nigeria are underfunded and this has affected the development of Basic schools across the federation. Shortage of funds in the Basic schools accounts for the poor performance of administrators of schools. At all levels of the institution in Nigeria, funds have always been inadequate and consequently, there has been a gap between the expected level and the actual attainment. Funds are necessary for the acquisition, securing and maintenance of other resources; once the supply is insufficient, production suffers (NOUN, 2009). Ogunode, Richard & Musa (2021) concluded that factors mostly responsible for the shortage of funds in public primary schools in Nigeria include, poor implementation of National policy on education funding policy, corruption, insecurity problem, poor planning, poor access to UBE intervention funds and fall in national revenue.

Shortage of Professional Teachers

Teachers are important resources every school administrator needs to deploy to realize the school programme. It is unfortunate that as important as teachers are in the realization of the school many Basic school administrators in Nigeria do not have adequate professional teachers to deploy for the implementation of the teaching programme. This submission is confirmed by a report by independent Newspapers (2019) that disclosed that there was a deficit of 135,319 teachers at the Early Childhood Care Development Education, 139,772 deficit in primary schools and 2,446 shortages in Junior Secondary Schools across the nation. We have identified several challenges as clogs in the realization of good access, equity and quality of education in Nigeria. One of these is the critical issue of teacher shortage at all levels of education. There is a shortage of early childhood education teachers needed to attain the proposed 1:20 teacher-to-pupil ratio. This ratio is far from being met, as the current ratio is 1:47. NEEDS, (2014); Christine & Hayatu (2014); Osiesi (2020); Ogunode (2020) and Ogunode & Paul, (2021) concluded that the shortage of professional teachers is also a problem facing the administration of basic education in Nigeria. Many primary schools in Nigeria do not have adequate professional teachers.

Inadequate Infrastructure Facilities

Many Basic school administrators in Nigeria do not have adequate infrastructure facilities in their respective schools that can guarantee quality education. Ogunode (2020a) stated that inadequate infrastructural facilities are a major problem of Basic Schools in Nigeria. Asodike, Juliana & Ikpitibo, and Clinton (undated) noted that physical facilities play important role in teaching and learning, especially at the primary school age when the sense of imagination is still premature. The availability of adequate school buildings, classrooms, chairs and other facilities is necessary for the attainment of the objectives of an educational system. However, the increase in primary school enrolment does not have a corresponding increase in infrastructural development in primary schools. A common scene in the primary school

environment is that of half-completed or dilapidated and overcrowded classrooms lacking basic equipment and facilities with unsightly and unhygienic toilets. Corruption, poor infrastructural facilities planning, inadequate funding, poor maintenance culture and overpopulation. Etuk (2007) lamented the state of school facilities in some Basic schools across the country as poor and inadequate for both teachers and students. Ogunode, & Agwor, (2021); Ogunode, & Abashi, (2020) identified poor funding of Basic education as responsible for the infrastructural facilities gap in the schools while Ogunode & Madu, (2021) concluded that corruption and mismanagement is a major factors responsible for the shortage of school facilities. Also, Ukozor & Ogunode (2022) identified underfunding, poor facilities planning, corruption, damages from students and teachers, poor school plant management and population increment are the causes of inadequate infrastructural facilities in basic schools and the effects of inadequate infrastructural facilities include poor implementation of the teaching programme, poor learning, bad international image, poor ranking and poor coverage of scheme of work.

Insecurity Problem

Insecurity is one of the major problems facing the administration of primary schools in Nigeria. Effective administration of Basic education in Nigeria is frustrated by the insecurity challenges facing the country, especially in the Northern part of the country (Ogunode, 2020a). Many Basic schools have been closed down. Educational officers cannot travel to areas where they are supposed to travel to for administrative functions because of insecurity challenges. One of the most insecurity challenges facing the country is the Boko Haram group. The militant group, Boko Haram, has carried out violent attacks in the north-eastern parts of Nigeria (Murray-Bruce, (2013); Ndoma-Egba, (2014); Ogunode, & Ahaotu, (2021) and Ogunode, Ahaotu & Obi- (2021). Thousands of Nigerians have been killed, and many more have been forced to flee their homes. Schools have been the primary target of the attacks. Since 2011, Boko Haram, whose name means ‘Western Education is Forbidden, has expanded its attacks to the direct target of schools. It has resulted in the killing and abduction of hundreds of teachers and students and the destruction of school buildings and teaching materials (Ogunode, Ohibime, Okwelogu, & Musa 2021).

Shortage of Instructional Materials

Instructional materials are educational resources assembled by the teachers to implement teaching programmes in the classroom. Instructional materials are special educational resources that aid the teachers to deliver the lesson (Ogunode & Josiah, 2023). World Bank (2017) reported that there are inadequate instructional materials in the 2013 SDI Survey that tracks the availability of minimum teaching and learning materials and equipment in schools (pens, pencils, notebooks, textbooks, blackboards, chalk, and so forth) and minimum infrastructure, including clean, private, and accessible toilets. In terms of teaching equipment, only 55 percent of schools surveyed in the four States had the required minimum. In terms of the availability of textbooks, only 38 percent of pupils had a mathematics and English textbook. This figure is roughly comparable to the figure reported in the 2015 NEDS on the availability of free textbooks in primary schools. Ogunode (2021) also acknowledged that the lack of instructional materials in majorities of Basic education schools is a very big problem facing the development of basic education in Nigeria. Ogunode, Ahmed, Gregory & Abubakar (2020), pointed out that instructional materials are an educational resource that teachers employ to present their lessons to make them simple for the learners. Instructional materials are organized educational resources that make teaching interesting for the learners. Instructional materials are material that makes students comprehend what the teacher is teaching more. Instructional materials are a key component of educational institutions that help to simplify teaching. Instructional materials support for implementation of the teaching programme in the schools. Unfortunately, these instructional materials are in shortage in many public schools in Nigeria. Emechebe,(2012) and Adeleke (2015), reported that inadequate instructional materials are one of the problems facing Nigerian educational institutions because school

administrators are not provided with adequate funds to buy the different instructional materials teachers need to implement the teaching programme. Ogunode et al (2023) concluded that poor funding of basic schools, poor improvisation, high cost of instructional resources, poor storage, poor planning, lack of maintenance, poor capacity building in instructional materials management and corrupt practices are factors that have militated against the deployment of instructional materials in the Nigerian basic schools.

Poor Motivation

Basic school administrators in Nigeria are poorly motivated. Their offices and welfare packages are very poor compare to what their colleagues in the Banking and health sector are getting as welfare packages. Adelabu (2005) found in Nigeria that teacher which also included school administrators' motivation is very poor and they are also dissatisfied with their working environment and salary conditions. The reason behind the poor motivation of teachers and many school administrators is that they are having low salaries as compared to other professionals, have poor work environments, have no decision-making authority, and are also not given the opportunity of developing their careers. Motivation plays an important role in the organization because it increases the productivity of employees and the goals can be achieved efficiently. The behaviour of employees can be changed through motivation in any organization. Teachers are expected to play a pivotal role in the implementation of the UBE programme, yet sufficient attention is not being paid to their motivation for the utter neglect of policy essence.

High Population of Students

According to a report by the Data Centre of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics, of all the 189 countries, Nigeria is among the four nations with the highest number of overcrowded classrooms in its schools. An increase in pupils' enrolment in Nigeria's public schools is a major concern to all stakeholders. Even though governments at various levels seem to be making spirited efforts at getting out-of-school children back into the class, stakeholders argue that there is no commensurate attempt to improve infrastructure and build more schools, and classrooms and recruit more teachers. According to Guardian (2022), overcrowding occurs when the number of students enrolled in the school is larger than the number of students the school is designed to accommodate. When overcrowding occurs, it may contribute to the wear and tear of schools and the intellectual capability of pupils. Ogunode (2020) observed that administrators of basic schools across the country are worried about the high enrolment of pupils in the basic schools causing inadequate infrastructural facilities and teaching of large classes due to inadequate space. The National Policy on Education reported from their major finding that 100% of the teachers agreed that there is high enrolment with inadequate infrastructure. The student-teacher ratio of 10:1 is out of context in the school setting, indicating that this is unachievable. Ogunode & Stephen, (2021); Ogunode & Nasir, (2021); Ogunode, Ohibime, Nasir, & Gregory, (2021) and Ogunode, & Adanna,(2022) identified causes of out-of-school children in Nigeria to include; poor funding of education, corruption, poor implementation of the Child Rights Act, insecurity problems, lack of political will to address the problems, high rate of poverty, and high fertility rate. They also concluded that the social implications of out-of-school children include security challenges, shortage of skilled manpower in future, bad international image, high levels of illiteracy and high socio-economic and dependency issues.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper discussed the challenges Basic school administrators are facing in Nigeria. The paper concluded that inadequate funds, Shortage of professional teachers, inadequate infrastructure facilities, insecurity problems, shortage of instructional materials, poor motivation and a high population of students are some of the challenges Basic school administrators are facing in Nigeria. To address these problems identified in the paper, the paper hereby recommended the following;

1. Adequate funding of Basic schools in Nigeria;

2. Employment of professional teachers in all the basic schools across the Country;
3. Provision of more infrastructural facilities in all the Basic schools across the federation. This will help to solve the problem of over-populations in the classrooms;
4. The government should provide security in all Basic schools. The government should address all issues causing insecurity across the Country;
5. More instructional materials should be provided to all Basic schools.
6. School administrators in Basic schools should be motivated and their salaries and allowances should be increased.

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