

Financing Primary Education for Sustainable National Development in Nigeria: A Review of Challenges and Way Forward

¹BELLO IBRAHIM, ²BASHAR SA'ADU ISA & ³ZAINAB USMAN SAAD

¹Department of Educational Foundation, School of General Education, Shehu shagari College of Education, Sokoto, Nigeria. Email: bbibrahimb2@gmail.com

²Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, Sokoto State University, Sokoto, Nigeria. Email: mmbashar1984@gmail.com

³Department of Business Education, Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto, Nigeria. Email: xynabusmans@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper examines the need for proper funding of primary education in Nigeria for achieving sustainable national development. The paper illustrates that if adequate funding is provided towards primary schools, quality primary education would be derived thereby promoting human capital development, social equality, social cohesion, health well-being and environmental Sustainability. However, the paper explores some key challenges that serve as a stumbling block to achieving proper funding process and these include inadequate government allocation to education, corruption and mismanagement, socio-economic factors, infrastructural deficiencies, as well as teacher shortages and training. These would continue to deter the actualization of the desired development until they are fully overcome. Due to this, the paper recommends that the government should increase its budgetary allocation to education, combat corruption, enhance community involvement, enhance public-private partnerships, address the infrastructural needs, and also improve teacher training and retention. If these are done, primary education in Nigeria will gear towards achieving the sustainable development goals in the country.

Keywords: Funding, Primary, Education, Sustainable, Development

Introduction

The fact is undeniable that education is a key to the development of any nation. Based on this, United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) advocated the need for the developing countries to dedicate at least 26% of its national budget to maintain, sustain and develop education (UNESCO, 2020). In spite of this provision, funding primary education in this country is not something to write home about such that even the nation herself lacks confidence in the basic education leading to the secondary and

tertiary level education. Owoye, (2010) observed that the objectives of education in this country represent country's statement of intension regarding what aspect of social, economic and political needs and aspiration should be addressed by the education system. A review of the country's past revealed that the role of the basic education has always not been appreciated in spite of loud articulation of the desired objectives and that all the initiatives introduced have been poorly implemented due to several factors including unsustainable funding.

The financing of education is at the heart of the educational crisis in many countries. In Nigeria, it appears to be a perennial crisis of funding and lack of definite structures and mechanisms in funding education, especially basic education manifestations of poor funding that is manifested in unpaid teachers' salaries, inadequate school infrastructure and equipment, dilapidated buildings and lots more (Falalu, 2020). This makes the effective management of the basic education system a herculean task for the administrators and when things get to a head, the teachers revolt leading to strikes and demonstrations.

Conceptual Clarifications

Primary education typically refers to the first stage of formal education for children, usually starting at around the age of five or six and lasting for six to eight years (UNESCO, 2021). It focuses on foundational skills such as literacy, numeracy, and basic science, and aims to provide children with a strong educational base for their future learning and development.

Munasinghe (2004) viewed sustainable national development as a process of improving the range of opportunities that will enable human societies and communities to achieve their aspirations and full potentials over a sustained period of time while maintaining the resilience of economic, social and environmental systems. This presupposes that the fulfillment of hopes of present generations through human activities without compromising the aspirations of future generations.

Age (2005), identified some objectives which sustainable national development is expected to realize as increasing per capital income and employment, promoting human welfare and wellbeing satisfying basic needs and protecting the environment. Considering the uncertainty that surrounds the welfare and wellbeing, and the future generations, achieving equity between and the future in participating

on a broad basis in decision making for development of the present is important.

Primary Education and Sustainable National Development

Primary education plays a crucial role towards the attainment of sustainable national development in different ways. These include:

1. **Fostering Human Capital.** Primary education lays the foundation for knowledge acquisition and skill development, which are essential for individual and national growth. It equips children with basic literacy and numeracy skills, which are crucial for subsequent educational attainment and employability. In other words, Primary education helps in building human capital by equipping individuals with basic literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking skills. This enables individuals to participate in the labour market, which in turn contributes to economic growth and development. As noted by UNESCO (2014), investment in primary education generates significant returns in productivity and earning potential, which contributes to national economic development.
2. **Promoting Equality.** Access to quality primary education can reduce inequalities in society. Education empowers marginalized groups, including girls and rural populations, thereby promoting gender equality and social inclusion. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2016), equitable access to education is linked to sustained economic growth and improved social outcomes. Education can break the cycle of poverty, enabling disadvantaged individuals to improve their socio-economic status.
3. **Enhancing Social Cohesion.** Primary education cultivates a sense of community and social responsibility. It promotes values such as tolerance, respect, and cooperation among students from diverse backgrounds, which is vital for social cohesion. The World Bank (2018) emphasizes that education fosters social stability and peace, reducing conflict and promoting nation-building.
4. **Supporting Environmental Sustainability.** Education at the primary level can instill a sense of environmental stewardship in children. By integrating environmental education into the

curriculum, schools can raise awareness about sustainability and the importance of conserving natural resources. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2017), education plays a key role in promoting sustainable lifestyles, which is crucial for addressing global environmental challenges.

5. **Contributing to Health and Well-being.** Primary education is linked to improved health outcomes. Educated individuals tend to have better health knowledge, leading to healthier lifestyles and reduced healthcare costs. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2015) states that education, particularly for women, leads to better health and nutrition practices, thereby contributing to overall national development.

Primary education is therefore a fundamental building block for sustainable national development for its ability to provide individuals with necessary skills and knowledge to contribute to economic growth, social well-being, and environmental sustainability.

Financing Primary Education in Nigeria

According to Global Partnership for Education (2021), primary education is supposed to be funded through a combination of government funding, private sector contributions, and international aid. Buttressing this assertion, the organization expressed that the government, as the primary provider of education in most countries, is expected to allocate a significant portion of its budget towards funding primary education. This funding covers expenses such as teacher salaries, school infrastructure development, educational materials, and training programmes.

UNESCO (2021) viewed that in addition to government funding, the private sector, including businesses, non-profit organizations, and individuals, can also contribute to funding primary education through donations, partnerships with schools, and funding specific projects or programs. International organizations and donor agencies may provide financial support to primary education in developing countries through grants, loans, and technical assistance. Thus, primary education funding should be a shared responsibility among various stakeholders, with the goal of ensuring equitable access to quality education for all children.

In considering the sources of financing education in Nigeria, Ajeyalemi (2009) said that, sourcing finance for education can be derived from money paid by parents and government, loans, gifts and grants. Agreeing with this argument, UNESCO (2013) remarked that in developed countries, education is entirely financed by taxation, but in developing countries other sources could be explored. Therefore, educational expenditure as an aspect of educational finance deals with how the amount allocated to education is spent (Wales, 2015). This may be used not only as an instrument for analyzing financial aspects of education, but also as a parameter for projecting the trends of the development of the educational system (Wales, 2015).

Supporting this point, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN, 2012) reported that expenditure on education in Nigeria is through budgetary allocations. The sad story about founding primary education in Nigeria however is that no budgetary allocations are exclusively made running the schools. They are left at the mercy of local government administrator.

Challenges Facing Primary Education and it's Funding in Nigeria

Primary education and its funding in Nigeria face several significant challenges, including inadequate government allocation, corruption, and socio-economic factors. These include:

1. **Inadequate Government Allocation.** Nigeria allocates a disproportionately low percentage of its national budget to education. As of 2021, it was approximately 6-7%, which falls below the recommended 15% by the African Union (Mansaray, 2015).
2. **Corruption and Mismanagement.** Financial mismanagement and corruption at various levels of government hinder the effective allocation and use of funds. Reports have shown that a significant portion of educational budgets is misappropriated (OECD, 2019).
3. **Socio-Economic Barriers.** Many families can't afford the costs associated with primary education, including uniforms, books, and transportation. This is exacerbated in rural areas where poverty rates are higher (UNICEF, 2020).

4. **Infrastructural Deficiencies.** Most primary schools lack basic facilities like classrooms, toilets, and teaching materials. The dilapidated infrastructure reduces the quality of education and discourages enrollment (World Bank, 2021).
5. **Teacher Shortages and Training.** There is a shortage of qualified teachers in Nigeria. Many teachers lack proper training, impacting the quality of education delivered (Education Commission, 2021).

Conclusion

The paper established that primary education plays a crucial role towards the attainment of sustainable national development in different ways as it promotes human capital development, social equality, social cohesion, health well-being and environmental Sustainability. These necessitate the need to fully finance the primary education sector in the country. However, some challenges stand to affect this funding process which include inadequate government allocation to education, corruption and mismanagement, socio-economic factors, infrastructural deficiencies, as well as teacher shortages and training. The paper posits that these challenges would continue to deter the actualization of the desired development until they are fully overcome. Based on this, the following recommendations are highlighted as the way forward.

The Way Forward

In order to get rid of the identified challenges for achieving the sustainable national development, the following recommendations are sacrosanct for consideration:

1. There is need to increase Budget Allocation. The Nigerian government should commit to increasing budgetary allocations for education to at least meet or exceed the 15% target set by the African Union or reach to the 26% recommendation of the UNESCO.
2. There is need to combat corruption by strengthening governance frameworks and accountability mechanisms in the education sector so as to help ensure that funds are well-managed.

3. There is need for community involvement. Engaging local communities in school management can enhance accountability and encourage parents to support educational initiatives.
4. There is need for enhancing public-private partnerships. The government can leverage private sector resources through partnerships to improve funding and infrastructure development.
5. There is need to address the infrastructural needs. This is by prioritizing the rebuilding and maintenance of school infrastructure so as to create an environment conducive for learning.
6. There is need to improve teacher training and retention. This could be by investing in teacher training programmes and creating incentives for teachers to work in rural areas can help improve education quality.

Reference

- Age, E. (2005). *Objectives of Teaching Education in Nigeria*. London: British Council.
- Ajeyalemi, D. A. (2009), Issues, problems and prospects in Nigerian education. Lagos; Josa press Ltd.
- Central Bank of Nigeria, CBN (2012) Annual Report and Statement of Accounts
- Education Commission. (2021). Teacher Shortages in Nigeria: Challenges and Opportunities. Education Commission Report.
- Falalu, (2020). *Memorandum submitted to the panel on alternative sources of funding education*. Lagos: Federal Ministry of Education, 1-5.
- Global Partnership for Education. (2021). Financing education. <https://www.globalpartnership.org/education-financing>
- Mansaray, A. (2015). Public Expenditure in Education: Evidence from Nigeria. *International Journal of Educational Research*.
- Munasinghe, S. (2004). Effective Instructions through Dynamic Discipline Ohio: Charles E. Merrill.
- OECD. (2019). *Education in Nigeria: Analysis of the System and Future Directions*. OECD Publishing.
- Owoye. O A. (2010). M2 Targeting, Money Demand and Real GDP Growth in Nigeria: Do Rules Apply? *Journal of Business and Public Affairs*, 1 (2), 131-147.

- UNESCO (2013). Proposal for a Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development as follow-up to the United Nations decade of education for sustainable development after 2014. UNESCO General Conference, 37th Session, Paris, 4 November 2013.
- UNESCO. (2014). Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All. EFA Global Monitoring Report.
- UNESCO. (2017). Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning Objectives.
- UNICEF. (2020). The State of Education in Nigeria: A Report on Primary Education. UNICEF Nigeria.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2016). Human Development Report 2016: Human Development for Everyone.
- UNESCO, (2021). Primary education.
- Wales, H (2015). *Towards sustainable development of Nigeria*. Lagos J Nigeria CSS Book shops
- World Bank. (2018). Education and Development: Integrating knowledge and skills for a changing world.
- World Bank. (2021). Nigeria: Education Sector Analysis. World Bank Publications.
- World Health Organization (WHO). (2015). Health Education and Promotion.