

Making Secondary Education Work: Challenges, Prospects and Recommendations by Haruna Godiya



Globally, education is an important tool or instrument for solving social, political, economic, and technological problems. The National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, **Section 5, No 20** defines secondary education as the education children receive after primary education before the tertiary stage. According to the policy document, secondary education's broad goals are to prepare individuals for helpful living within society; and higher education. Consequently, there has been a tremendous increase in the emphasis and investment, especially in secondary education. In the NPE 2004, secondary schools are described as one of the critical agencies for actualizing the stipulated goals. This is because secondary schools serve as incubators for forming and normalizing a child's character, mindset, and development. Secondary education in Nigeria is a six-year programme comprising junior secondary and senior secondary schools. Each level has a three-year duration. The curriculum of secondary schools is comprehensive and diversified, focusing on teaching academic and pre-vocational subjects.

The Importance of Secondary Education in Nigeria

The importance of secondary education in the actualization of the nation's broad objectives cannot be overemphasized, they include the following:

1. Secondary education is a stepping stone to higher education. It provides an opportunity for primary school leavers to acquire more knowledge, develop skills and prepare them to live effectively in our changing society.
2. Another importance of secondary education is that it provides citizens whose greatest pride is in their contribution to the well-being of others and themselves through hard work, sacrificial tolerance, diligence, kindness, consideration, sympathy, and truthfulness.
3. Secondary education inspires young people's desire for achievements and self-improvement at home and abroad.
4. The broad and diversified secondary education curriculum provides a platform for differences in talents and opportunities. Some students graduate after junior secondary school and can pursue vocational training, while those who graduate after senior secondary school explore technical trades and crafts, commercial training, or academia.

Despite the glaring importance of secondary education, funding of secondary schools by the government, and the influx of activities by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) through school interventions in secondary schools, especially public schools, still lack the basic tools and infrastructure for effective teaching and learning. Some evident causes of the depletion of the quality of secondary education are the following:

- **Corruption:** This is one of the significant challenges in making secondary education work because the funds for managing secondary schools are often grossly mismanaged by those responsible for utilizing the funds for proper and effective educational system management.
- **Poor Management:** The educational sector in Nigeria is poorly managed, which has resulted in the diminishing standard of education in the country. This can be seen in the decay of secondary schools.
- **Poorly Paid Educational Workers:** Teachers, especially in public secondary schools, are poorly paid, leading to a lack of enthusiasm and total commitment to work, which has, in turn, negatively affected the educational sector in the country.
- **Poor Infrastructure:** An environment that is not conducive to learning will lead to a deficient outcome, and this applies to the educational sector in Nigeria as most

institutions of learning are in deplorable condition, and students are condemned to such ill conditions, which negatively affects them.

Conclusion

Education, especially secondary education, is very important and cannot be ignored as it is the foundation upon which a nation can build a pool of young, productive workforce for the nation. Therefore, continuous improvement and investment in educational institutions, tools, and infrastructure that will improve the quality of education is imperative.

Recommendations

To make secondary education work, there has to be a collaborative effort that comprises both public and private sector individuals and organizations. A synergy between these parties will help improve Nigeria's education quality. This article seeks to present the following recommendations:

- Hold the government accountable through constant engagements on funding and infrastructure management.
- Invest in secondary education through public and private engagements/collaborations.
- Improve synergy between NGOs on interventions.
- Effective stakeholder management, e.g., Federal Ministry of Education, Secondary Education Board and School Principals/Teachers and Parents
- Partner with the government on curriculum development and review

References

Federal Government of Nigeria (2004). National Policy on Education (4th ed.). Yaba Lagos: NERDC.

<https://education.gov.ng/senior-school-education/> accessed 05 November 2022.