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MANAGEMENT OF NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN TIMES OF CRISES FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria as a nation in the recent times is undergoing series of challenging situations, especially from the Covid-19 pandemic attack, two times industrial action by the university lecturers between 2020 and 2022, to the high cost of living due to hike in petrol price. All these seem to have direct effect on education especially at the tertiary level. The author therefore seeks to address the place of effective management strategies in education so as to foster national development. The paper is a descriptive research, and the data collection is based on the secondary sources of existing literatures. It addressed some of the perceived crisis in education sector which includes shortage of fund, rise in the growth rate of out-of-school children, overcrowded school calendar and high cost of living. The indicators for effective management were outlined as follows: clear vision and goals, collaborative leadership, responsive to change, and student centered leadership. The paper proposed emotional leadership style and transformation leadership style as most expedient in the management of education in the crisis times. It concluded with the following suggestions among others: educational institution should promote critical thinking, problem solving skills and socio- emotional development through learner centered approach, and a review and update of the curriculum.

Keywords: Effective Management, Education, Times of Crises, National Development, Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

Education can be seen as the act of transmitting information, skills, beliefs, and attitudes from one generation to the next in order to create a peaceful state or nation. According to Pavlova (2015), education is a technique to change people's behavior and compel them to participate in social activities that would help the society advance. It has been determined that education is a real tool for advancing economic, social, cultural, and political growth. Any country that disregards its proper execution does so at risk. Both the federal and state governments in Nigeria have legal and constitutional obligations to address issues related to education, to resolve disputes and carry out the intended educational objectives. In the recent times, Nigeria as a nation is undergoing some challenging times ranging from Covid-19 pandemic, incessant strike by Academic staff of universities, insecurity, high cost of living due hike in the price of petrol to more than 200%, and increase in tuition fee of public universities among others. All these have so much bearing on education at all levels, which invariably are capable of dwindling the education in particular and national development at large. Research has shown that no country can attain any meaningful height in its developmental strides without adequate attention to education. Therefore the onus lies with the educational managers at different levels to re-strategize so as to cushion the effect of the present economic and social quagmire on the educational institutions. This paper is therefore designed to seek for strategies for effective management of education for national development. It is a descriptive research, the data were based on secondary collection from existing literatures.

Concept of Education

Education is the act, practice, or application of discipline to the intellect or a process of character training. It is a flexible tool for transformation. It is believed that education influences or shapes a person's social behavior. As described by Bamisaiye (1989) it is "a cumulative process of development of intellectual abilities, skills and attitudes, all of which form our various outlooks and dispositions to action in life generally" (p. 9). Education is the purest kind of learning that imbues us with a lifelong capacity and disposition to apply what we learn for the good of ourselves and other members of the society.

Education can be regarded as the society's cultural reproductive system. Through education, society reproduces itself, passing on its main characteristics to the next generation, though the process becomes complicated as time goes on due to the influence of philosophical, economical, political and social forces acting on the mechanism.

In addition, Udeozor (2018) affirms that education "is a sure way for self-actualization, dream realization, ambition fulfilment, and economic achievement" The right type of education produces great result, hence education transforms, reproduces, enhances and creates an environment for expansion as well as sustainability. It can be in form of formal, non-formal and informal.

Goals of Education in Nigeria

The goals of education in Nigeria are outlined in the National Policy on Education, which serves as a guiding document for the country's educational system. The policy defines the broad objectives and principles of education in Nigeria. The key goals of education in Nigeria include:

- **Provision of Quality Education:** The primary goal of education in Nigeria is to provide quality education that meets international standards. This includes equipping students with knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for personal development, employment, and nation-building.
- **Universal Access to Education:** Ensure that every Nigerian child has access to education without discrimination. This goal emphasizes the importance of providing equal opportunities for education to all, irrespective of gender, socio-economic background, or physical ability.
- **Development of a Skilled Workforce:** Education in Nigeria aims to develop a competent and skilled workforce that can contribute to the socio-economic development of the nation. This involves equipping students with relevant vocational and technical skills that are in line with the needs of the labor market.
- **Promotion of Moral and Ethical Values:** Education in Nigeria aims to foster moral and ethical values in students. It seeks to instill discipline, integrity, respect for cultural diversity, and a sense of national identity and citizenship. This goal emphasizes the importance of character development and inculcating good values in students.
- **Fostering Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills:** Education in Nigeria aims to promote critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities among students. It encourages active learning, analytical thinking, and the ability to apply knowledge to real-life situations.
- **Enhancement of Social Integration:** Education in Nigeria aims to foster social integration by promoting unity, understanding, and respect among diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural groups in the country. It seeks to build a harmonious society where individuals appreciate and celebrate diversity.
- **Promotion of Science, Technology, and Innovation:** Education in Nigeria recognizes the importance of science, technology, and innovation in national development. It aims to promote scientific inquiry, technological literacy, and innovation among students, encouraging them to contribute to advancements in these fields.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Education in Nigeria emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning. It encourages individuals to continue acquiring knowledge and skills throughout their lives, fostering a culture of continuous learning and personal development.

These goals reflect the aspirations of the Nigerian government to provide inclusive, quality education that prepares students to be active and responsible citizens, contributing to the progress and development of the nation.

Crises and the Education Sector

The education sector is bedeviled with various crises and challenges that can significantly impact the quality, accessibility, and effectiveness of education. Some likely crises and challenges in the education sector include:

Inadequate Funding: Insufficient funding is no longer considered as a new thing, it is perennial issue in Nigeria. At the international day of education 2022, UNICEF raised a concern on the need to step up budgetary allocation to education to meet the recommended benchmark of 15-

20% of nations' public expenditure, which countries spend on education. For instance, according to the presentation of Premium times (2023) education to education from 2016-2023 (2016: 7.9%; 2017: 7.4%; 2018: 7.04%; 2019: 7.05%; 2020: 6.7%; 2021: 5.68%; 2022: 7.2%; and 2023: 8.8%) have not improved in anyway though 2023 seems to be higher, yet it is still low.

Many educational institutions struggle to secure adequate financial resources to provide quality education, improve infrastructure, attractive learning environment, train teachers, and update learning materials. This has led to series of industrial actions in the institutions of higher learning; the most recent one in 2022 lasted for eight months. This invariably generated more problems than what it tends to solve. Some of the problems include but not limited to these: wastage of manpower, psychological stress, low morale of staff, brain drain, wastage of resources, and increase in crime rate and students loss of confidence in formal education.

The challenge of out-of-school children: The population of out-of-school children is increasing rapidly in the recent times. UNICEF (2022) notes that about 18.5 million children between the ages of six to eighteen which amounts to 20% of the population are out of school in Nigeria being the highest in the world. The numerous attacks by the jihadists, herdsmen, and unknown gun men, and the skyrocketed cost of living among others are the causative factors. The effect of this challenge is traumatic as the crime rate increase on daily basis, alongside with teenage marriage as parents are unable to cater for their children and wards.

The crises of overcrowded school calendar: there is so much pressure on both the staff and students especially at the university since after the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 followed by strike which took two sessions. In Egwu (2018) opined that incessant strike action dwindle the academic performance of the students while Osuafor and Okoli (2010) stated that it reduces students mental ability and for Obi (2004) strike leads to loss of qualified and experienced lecturers to lucrative jobs. In the bid to cover up the wasted period, staff and students are overloaded. In view of this, learner-centered instruction is sacrificed whereas emphasis is on the course content. The students at the long run only learn very little, only to resort to malpractice during examination. Nowadays, various kinds of examination malpractice have been devised as presented by Ololube (2012, 2017), Mbarawii (2023), and Mbarawii and Maclean (2023) as follows: impersonation, collusion, leakages, mass cheating, smuggling of answer script, dubbing, procurement of answer booklet, enrolling syndicate and self, inscription, personality connection.

Curriculum Relevance: The relevance of the curriculum is crucial to preparing students for the demands of the modern world. Developing a curriculum that is aligned with current and future needs, including critical thinking skills, digital literacy, and socio-emotional development, is an ongoing challenge. Balancing traditional subjects with emerging fields and ensuring cultural diversity in the curriculum are additional considerations. The gap between classroom experiences and society seems to be getting wider. This has led to frustrations on the part of the students and even parents, who have been tempted to question the need for school and schooling, since at the end of the exercise the recipient is unemployed, under employed or unemployable. Oko-Jaja (2020) citing Egwuasi and Mfon (2009) maintains that the problem of Nigeria is not lack of education per se rather it is education without integration. Education without integration is an education that distanced the learner or graduate from the realities that exist in the society (Oko-Jaja, 2020).

Policy and Governance: Effective education policies and governance are crucial for the successful functioning of the education sector. Challenges usually arise from inconsistent policies, lack of coordination among stakeholders, weak governance structures, corruption, and policy implementation gaps. Appointments in educational sector most times are politicized which has resulted in putting a round peg in a square hole. This undesirable action has led to formulation of reckless and unplanned policies. Unfortunately, some of these policies are pursued to the logical end. As noted by Uche (2002) this is a serious challenge to the educational manager who keeps adjusting in order to deliver. In addition to this, is the wastage arising from these policies whereas, the real need is not given attention. This, as a matter of fact breeds frustration to the educational manager.

High cost of living: The inflationary rate in the country currently is alarming following the hike in the price of petrol to more than 200% due to removal of subsidy. According to Premium times (July, 2023) Nigeria's annual inflation rate rose to 22.79% in June from 22.41% in May. Every aspect of human life was affected; food, transport, healthcare, rent and general commodities and services. Unfortunately there was no increase in salary and allowances of workers. The recent increase of tuition fee of the public universities is raising concern as students from the low income family would find it difficult to cope.

Effective Management

Management is the exploration, allocation, utilization and evaluation of both human and material resources with the view to achieving organizational goal (Jumare, 2015) management is a responsibility place on the manager to ensure the provision, distribution, use, and maintenance of human and material resources geared towards goal attainment. It is providing leadership to an organization in such a way that staff and all the personnel of the organization as well as other resources are properly combined to achieve the set goal of the organization.

Effective management on the other hand is ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness in the use of the available resources with the intention to combat the challenges that might hinder the achievement of the set goal. Lawal (2018:391) stresses that effective management "is a process which requires managers who succeed in carrying out the organizational goals of their schools by engage in utilizing the following leadership skills: planning (deciding how to accomplish the organizational goal) organizing (doing the necessary preparation), staffing (filling people with the right people), directing (motivating staff so that goals are achieved), controlling (guiding the organization in the proper direction), and decision making (which underlines everything the manager accomplishes)" By and large the major focus of organizational management lies in the discovering, harnessing, and maintenance of human and material resources in such a consistent manner that organizational goal does not suffer at any time.

Effective management of education in times of crises requires an in depth understanding of education, goal of education at various levels and the ability to motivate, support, and develop staff and students, and directing them towards goal attainment. It focuses on providing leadership to the staff, students and stakeholders (parents, philanthropists, host community etc.). Leadership according to Ward (2017) in Mbu (2018) is an art of motivating a group of people to act towards achieving a common goal. He went further to emphasize that it is winning a combination of personal traits and the ability to think and act as a leader, becoming a person who

directs other people's actions for the good of all. In other words, a leader's ability to understand his or her strength and weaknesses, and being able to maximize his potential and opportunities, by consistently improving on him/herself and at the same time helping others do the same with the aim of achieving the set goal. The indicators for effective management in education are as follows:

Clear Vision and Goals: An effective management in education requires a clear vision and goals at all levels of education. Hattie (2009) says that "having and sharing challenging goals and intentions with students is a major condition of successful learning" "The power of goals come from their ability to direct attention to defined targets, focus strategy development, mobilize effort, and provide benchmarks for evaluating progress" (Latham and Locke, 2007). Research has shown that both staff and students are increasingly motivated and they achieve significantly when achievable goals are set. This includes defining the educational mission and goals of the institution, developing a strategic plan, and communicating these goals to staff and students. It is important for educational managers to note that education is a builder and a fortifier, it fortifies the individual with abilities, capabilities, attitudes and skills that enables one to adapt, change, and manage the surrounding/ environment so as to live sustainably.

Collaborative Leadership: collaborative leadership is where a leader explores the expertise of those within the organization to bring forth change in a very efficient and effective manner. It is a management practice where everyone is involved in making and shaping decisions that promote the wellbeing of an enterprise. This can be achieved by ensuring that everyone has a space through meaningful and open conversation; through a show of vulnerability, which implies being transparent on the part of the leader to request for assistance and partnering of the members of staff; creating an atmosphere of trust where the leaders behavior does not betray his words and intention; advancing a self-management structure (where employees are given the privilege to work without strict supervision such that they can function maximally made up of five traits as purported by Fullan (2001 in Vitale (n.d) which includes moral purpose, understanding change, relationship building, knowledge creation and sharing, and coherence making. Effective management in education involves collaborative leadership that engages staff and students in decision-making processes and running the affairs of educational enterprise as it will promote teamwork, and build a sense of community in the educational institution.

Effective Communication: Effective management in education requires effective communication skills that facilitate collaboration, transparency, and accountability. It gives the staff and students the opportunity to express their feelings and serve as channel through which divergent opinions are sought, effective decision taken, conflicts resolved and direction given. Effective communication involves active listening, clear and concise messaging, and timely feedback.

Responsive to Change: Change is an inevitable aspect of life. It showcases from time to time whether planned or not planned. Sometimes some planned change give rise to undesirable changes; which, if not carefully managed will have tremendous adverse effects. As rightly pointed out by Ukeje (1992) in Agabi and Okorie (2002) the societal is always in a state of continual change with one change leading to another or even generating another. These changes introduce new way of life, new skills, new methods, new attitudes, and new beliefs. Educational

manager must accept these realities and adapt to these changes by responding to them in such a way to maintain the relevance of education.

Fair and Consistent: Effective management in education imbibes and promotes fairness and consistency in decision-making and application of policies and procedures. It involves treating all staff and students with respect, ensuring equal access to opportunities, and maintaining consistency in disciplinary actions and evaluations.

Professional Development: Professional development is the process where people's professionalism may be considered to be enhanced with a degree of permanence than exceeds transitoriness (Evans, 2011.867 in Mitchel, 2013). It is an ongoing learning activities aimed at improving proficiency, capabilities, expertise, and work attitudes. Effective management in education requires a continuous exposure and training of education managers, as well as supporting the professional development of staff and. This includes providing opportunities for professional growth and training, coaching and mentoring, and recognizing and rewarding excellence in performance.

Student-Centered: Effective management places students at the center of all decision-making. This involves developing student-centered policies and practices that prioritize the needs, interests, and welfare of students.

Strategies to Manage Crises for National Development

Development is the continuous discovery, harnessing and promotion of individual and societal wellbeing. It is meeting the needs of the society with regards to economic, political and social wellbeing. National development according to Ayama and Adama (2003) is the ability of the nation to provide a conducive atmosphere for the realization of individual potentials the existence of buoyant economy and availability of social infrastructural facilities for the populace. It is the provision and creation of the conditions by which the citizens of a nation attain the fulfilment of their basic human needs (NYSC, 1986).

Crises are trying moments that demand serious attention in order not to add salt to the injury. Managing crises in the education sector requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach. This paper shall consider two management or leadership styles that are considered very crucial in managing educational institution. This is applicable to all levels of education managers: government, administrators, principals, and teachers.

Transformational leadership style (TL): The transformational leadership is a process where b the leader and follower help each other advance to a higher level of morality and motivation (Burns, 1978 in Okonkwo and Okonkwo (2018). It is the leadership style where the leader engages the subordinates by identifying needed changes, creating a vision or a road map to guide the change through inspiration and executing the change appropriately. Almohtaseb et al (2021) maintain that “transformational leadership can be a helpful tool for dealing with organizational crisis and management because it ensures job satisfaction and motivates employees to work well and effectively to achieve organizational goals” Similarly, Popli and Rizvi (2015) stated that it has a strong ability to create a favorable work environment for higher engagement and service orientation.

Four components of transformational leadership are as follows:

Idealized influence: The leader serves as an ideal role model to his followers which earned him admiration from followers. It is leadership by example in simple term.

Inspirational motivation (IM): The leader has the ability to inspire and motivate subordinates. He possessed the skill of motivation and the use it appropriately.

Individualized consideration: The leader gives personal attention to the followers, shows genuine concern for the needs and feelings of his team members. This enables them to be on the same page with him.

Intellectual stimulation: The leader stretches the followers from time to time. This result in change through creativity and innovation.

By and large, it is obvious that students will be enthusiastic in their studies however rough the times might be, if teachers imbibe TLS; the same applies to head teachers, and principals/ administrators who have other staff under them. Teaching, learning and work become adventurous where a leader is transformational.

Emotional leadership style is a type of leadership where the leader act like a mentor to the subordinate in such a way that there is an emotional connection. This can be possible by a show of empathy, compassion and care for their wellbeing. In doing so, the leaders must be manager of their emotions by first of all identifying their emotion especially the grey areas; and as well manage same in such a way that their feelings will not interfere with team members or staff.

Secondly the leader should appropriate the attitude of friendliness so as to be approachable. This enables the employee/staff or students to share their internal troubles which are capable of distorting work/school environment and eventually heat up the system.

To handle crisis in education, emotional leadership style is a major prerequisite. It builds trust in a relationship, such that exists between mentor and mentee. This type of leadership tends to build strong relationship with the staff, students and even the parents. Thirdly it helps the leader to personally connect with just staff members, trying to understand what they go through and make effort to give them guidance and direction

In addition, Morgan (2020) outlined five ways to actively engage this leadership style. (a) Be authentic, that is being genuine and transparent in words and actions. (b) Put yourself in someone else's shoes. That is, ability to see someone from his or her own perspectives. (c) Avoid making impulsive decision. (d) Stay in tune with your own emotion, being able to study and master your emotion so as to help others. (e) Talk to people. Effective communication promotes good relationship. When education manager combines transformational and emotional leadership styles the effects of the crises in the system will not be minimized.

CONCLUSION

Societal change is inevitable, while some changes are planned, some are abrupt whereas others are changes that resulted as an aftermath of a given change. Be that as it may, the education manager should always acquaint himself with the goal of education, explore the expertise of

those working with him, be responsive to change and constantly engage in activities that will develop him professionally.

Above all, the need to engage and equip on self with the transformational and emotional leadership tools cannot be overemphasized as these tools have ways of making leadership, work, teaching and learning lively and interesting.

Suggestions

The following suggestions were made:

- Educational planners, Curriculum developers and the agencies in charge should continuously review and update the curriculum to make it relevant, inclusive, and responsive to changing societal needs.
- Education institutions should foster critical thinking, problem-solving skills, creativity, and socio-emotional development through learner-centered approaches.
- The government should enhance policy frameworks and governance structures to ensure effective implementation of education reforms.
- Education managers should endeavor to explore the benefits of collaboration for greater effectiveness.
- Leaders at various levels of education should imbibe the transformational and emotional styles of leadership.
- Advocate for increased investment in education, address social prejudices, and promote inclusive and equitable education systems. Engage communities, parents, and students in decision-making processes to ensure their voices are heard and considered.

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