

Functional Leadership in Secondary Education and Sustainable National Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between functional leadership in secondary education and sustainable national development in Nigeria. The study was specifically designed to find out the relationship between curriculum delivery, facilities management, resource accountability and sustainable national development. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all the principals in the 233 public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. The 233 principals were purposively used as sample for the study. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Functional Leadership in Secondary Education and Sustainable Development Questionnaire (FLSESDQ). The instrument was subjected to face validity and reliability test using Test-Retest method and was found reliable at 0.82 r-value. Descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard deviation) was used to answer the research questions. Result obtained showed that curriculum delivery, facilities management, resource accountability has influence on sustainable national development. Based on this result, it was recommended, among others, that the 21st century global best practices in curriculum delivery and facilities management should be adopted in the secondary education system, for progressive and sustainable national development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Education, Functional, Leadership, sustainable, national, development.

Introduction

Education is the bedrock of any national development. It is the only constructive instrument generally accepted by the global community as the key to a sustained national progress and advancement. No country can attain any meaningful progress without recourse to functional education. Education is seen as the route to continuous evolution in knowledge, societal orientation, technology and social re-construction in any developing nation. However, the effectiveness of any educational system is subsumed in its leadership. Educational leadership has taken a key and central position in the world's drive to effectuate functional educational systems to fast track global development. It becomes obvious that functional educational leadership is a necessary

condition for functional education, which is sine-qua-non for sustainable national development in any growing society.

The need for functional leadership in the education system of Nigeria is quite glaring, especially now that the country is aspiring to become one of the leading economies in the world. According to Asuquo (2009:4) “the expectation of the school in delivering this task is very high especially in this 21st century which is characterized by development of ‘knowledge economies’ whereby nations’ social prosperity and economic viability are premised upon skilled and knowledgeable citizens”. The above expression presupposes the fact that no nation can progress in this era without effective school system. Functional leadership is the key to an effective school system. Akpan, Okon and Ebuara (2015) opined that the need for the study of leadership in education has become imperative now more than ever because demands are being made on schools for higher levels of students’ and teachers’ performance, improvement and reforms, change, accountability and transparency. According to them, educational leadership is expected to convey dynamism and productivity in this era.

From the foregoing, the linkage between educational leadership and sustainable national development becomes very clear. Educational leadership is seen as the process of enlisting and guiding the talents and energies of teachers, students/pupils and parents toward achieving common educational goals (Akpan, Okon & Ebuara, 2015). Agi, Kalagbor and Anthony (2016) submitted that it is the ability in creating situations or circumstances in which goals are achieved with integrity of conviction and cooperation and which reduces to the barest minimum, the need for conflicts and dissipation of group energies and waste of scarce resources in the school. Yukl in Hoy and Miskel (2005) defined leadership broadly as “a social process in which a member or members of a group or organization influence the interpretation of internal and external events, the choice of goals or desired outcomes, organization of work activities, individual motivation and abilities, power relations and shared orientations. This definition sees educational leadership as a term applied to school administrations that strive to create positive change in educational policy, process and management (Agi, Kalagbor & Anthony, 2016).

Accordingly, Olomola, in Joseph, David and Kikelomo (2016) describes national development as the advancement made through progressive and qualitative alterations in social, economic, cultural, technological as well as political conditions of a society, leading to an enhancement in the welfare of citizens. Sustainable development is that development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs (Akpan, Okon & Ebuara, 2014). Lichman and Markovitz in Kingdom and Maekae (2013) stressed that a developed society is the one that has succeeded in providing a source of living for the majority of its inhabitants

and that in such society, premium is attached to elimination of poverty, provision of food, shelter and clothing to its members. This argument agrees with the definition of development by Todaro and Smith (2006) from the modernization paradigm, which sees development as a multidimensional process which involves the sustained elevation of the entire society and social system towards a better or humane life.

Secondary education occupies a strategic position in the educational sector. It bridges the gap between the primary and tertiary levels of education in Nigeria. The broad goals of secondary education are to prepare individuals for useful living and for higher education, which is designed to produce high level manpower for the development of the country (FRN, 2004). It is clear from here that secondary education holds the key to the effective functioning and the wellbeing of individuals in the society, as well as ensures the success and prosperity of higher education, which is the hub of manpower or human capital production. There is no doubt that secondary education in Nigeria has not achieved the stated goals. Gbenu (2012) declared that the state of secondary education in Nigeria largely explains the high level of underdevelopment or low rate of development in the country.

However, there is all indication that the poor performance of secondary schools in Nigeria is occasioned by ill-functioning school leadership. As pointed out by Akpan, Okon and Ebuara (2015), educational leadership as practiced in Nigeria appears unable to meet the ever increasing challenges of the 21st century, some of which are the factors of urbanization, increase in students' enrolment, change, technological advancement, state of the economy, demand for high quality education and accountability, among others. This espouses the fact that the inability of the Nigerian society to maximize its development potentials hinges on the poor leadership of secondary education in the country. Hence, there is an urgent need to put in place functional school leadership at the secondary school level, to meet the challenges of the 21st century, as well as drive the nation towards sustainable national development and global competitiveness.

The areas of educational leadership that needs urgent attention in Nigeria are the aspects of curriculum delivery, facilities management and resource accountability. Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) maintained that the core of educational leadership remains the improvement in teaching and learning. They further explained that the implementation of the right curriculum in the school and innovations in materials (textbooks and others) for accomplishment of curriculum tasks demand the attention of educational or school leaders. Curriculum has been defined by Denga (2008), as the learning experiences and teaching strategies organized by the school to bring about desired outcomes in the learner. It means that the learning experiences offered to students should have practical bearing with what is needed to solve the problems of the society. It is no more news that the secondary school system in Nigeria

is trapped by bulky curriculum whereby students are made to offer too many unnecessary subjects that have no practical relevance to the problems of the society. This accounts for the production of graduates without practical skills and hence unfit in the labour market.

According to Osalor (2013), “the Nigerian state operates in a 21st century economy with a 19th century education system.” Stating further, he explained that the Nigerian education system is a system whereby much emphasis is still placed on the conventional classroom environment with much reverence for certificate for graduates, who in most cases are trained to be job seekers, as evidenced in the present high unemployment rate in the country. Muoghalu (2013) posited that Nigeria’s education system, while improving, is not fit for the demands of competitive global markets, as the system does not provide Nigerians with the skills they need to get jobs. Olunloyo (2002) noted that one of the issues confronting the design of appropriate curriculum for technical education is preparing students for the shift from the fordist to ICT paradigm in technology practice.

Ololube (2009) decrying the educational system of Nigeria, argued that despite the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 system of education to cater for both vocational and academic aspects of education at the secondary school level, little has actually been achieved in vocational skill development. One reason for this, according to Okorosaye-Orubite (as cited in Uriah & Wosu, 2012), stems from the fact that while the 6-3-3-4 system is supposed to be all inclusive in the development of all talents, it has been implemented largely as a grammar school system. In a study conducted by Uriah and Wosu (2012) on “Formal Education as a Panacea for Sustainable National Development: A Theoretical Discussion,” they observed that the present system of education in sub-Saharan Africa and its implementation cannot bring about the much talked about national development. It follows from here that for sustainable national development to be achieved in Nigeria, the curriculum delivered in schools should be skill-based.

School facilities management is another critical area of school leadership that requires urgent attention in Nigeria. Amachukwu and Ololube (2015) maintained that functional school plant enhances good delivery of educational services required to promote education of learners, a key aspect of the school goal. Ajayi (2007) asserted that high level of students’ performance role will be defective where school plants are not properly managed. According to Asiabaka (2008), physical environment of any school is a major determinant factor that enhances attainment of school goal. Aloga (2013) asserted from her study that when the school physical plant is well planned, it will not only enhance good teaching practice but will also facilitate and stimulate learning. Boyi (2013), in his investigation on “Education and sustainable national

development in Nigeria: challenges and way forward,” found out that challenges confronting education in Nigeria vis-à-vis national development are inadequate infrastructures, dearth of teachers and overcrowded classrooms, among others.

Resource accountability is the trendiest problem confronting educational leadership in Nigeria and which has significant impact on the progress of the country. Omemu (2015) posited that recent observations by both stakeholders and even the Nigerian government over contemporary school development clearly indicate dissatisfaction. According to him, the system is unable to produce results that justify huge chunk of resource supplied to education. It could be estimated that lack of systemic accountability costs education in Nigeria tens of billions of naira annually in terms of funds diversion, misappropriation, embezzlement, graduate unemployment, efficiency, labour conflict and misunderstanding and so on (Okeke, 2004; Igwe, 2002). Omemu (2015), conducted a study on “Accountability: a formidable basis for achieving sustainable development in Nigerian secondary schools” and found out that the most pressing problem hindering national development in Nigeria is lack of resource accountability in schools. In a survey, conducted by Sunday and Lawal (2016), on Fiscal Accountability, Resource Management and Sustainable Development in Nigeria, they found out that lack of fiscal accountability and resource management were basically responsible for poor governance in Nigeria. They recommended that effective management and financial accountability be encouraged in public service to enable the country achieve a reasonable level of development.

Statement of the problem

The struggle for sustainable national development has been at the forefront of governments’ efforts over the years in Nigeria. It is a well-established fact that no country can rise above its level of education, and that the level of development of any society is directly proportional to the quality of education acquired by the citizens. It follows that the quality of education of a country is determined by the quality of her school leadership. It means that for any society to attain a sustainable level of development, educational leadership must be well practiced, to drive the national goals of the nation to maximum attainment. However, secondary education is very cardinal to the attainment of the national goals of Nigeria because it bridges the gap between primary and tertiary education, and prepares individuals for useful living in the society and for higher education, which is designed to produce high level manpower to man the economy.

Nevertheless, this level of education in Nigeria has continued to suffer setback which has over time resulted in its low performance and poor attainment of the pre-determined goals of the system. Prominent among the problems confronting secondary education in Nigeria is poor leadership. Many researchers have recommended several

leadership approaches such as transformational, participatory and transactional leadership approaches, which have been practiced in the system. Despite these, the standard of secondary education in the country has continued to fall. It means the problem is not leadership approach but the poor practices of the real functions of school leadership, which has undermined the capacity of the system to boost national development. It is against this backdrop that the question is raised “How does functional leadership in secondary education influence sustainable national development?”

Purpose of the study

The general purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of functional leadership in secondary education on sustainable national development in Nigeria. Specifically, the study was designed to ascertain the influence of:

1. Curriculum delivery on sustainable national development.
2. Facilities management on sustainable national development.
3. Resource accountability on sustainable national development.

Research questions

The following questions were posed to direct the study:

1. To what extent does curriculum delivery influence sustainable national development?
2. To what extent does facilities management influence sustainable national development?
3. To what extent does resource accountability influence sustainable national development?

Methodology

The research design adopted for the study was the survey research design. The population of the study comprised all the principals in the 233 public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. The 233 principals were purposively used as sample for the study. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Functional Leadership in Secondary Education and Sustainable National Development Questionnaire (FLSESNDQ).” The questionnaire had one section which consisted of 18 items designed to measure functional leadership in secondary school and sustainable national development. 6 items were designed to measure the influence of each of the sub-variables on sustainable national development. The response options were Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD) and were scored 4, 3, 2, 1, respectively. The instrument was subjected to face validity and reliability test using Test-Retest method and was found reliable at 0.82 r-value. Descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) was used to analyze the generated data.

Presentation of results

Research question one: To what extent does curriculum delivery influence sustainable national development?

The answer to the question is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of the responses on the extent at which curriculum delivery influences sustainable national development

S/N	Items	X	SD	Decision
1	Learning experiences in my school have more of practical exercises that help students to live functional life in the society	3.01	0.99	Agreed
2	Students in my school do have functional skills to engage in useful ventures in the society	2.86	0.99	Agreed
3	Contents delivered in my school have direct links with skills needed in the society	3.12	0.76	Agreed
4	Adequate time is allotted to vocational courses that help student to acquire practical knowledge in my school	3.06	0.90	Agreed
5	My school delivers skilled-based curriculum in all subject areas	3.07	0.94	Agreed
6	More emphasis is placed on teaching practical skill than general education in my school	3.05	0.78	Agreed
	Average	3.02	0.89	

The result of the analysis in table 1 shows that all the items have mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, showing that there is high degree of acceptance that curriculum delivery has a influence on sustainable national development. It is also seen from the table that the average mean score is 3.02 and the highest and lowest mean scores are 3.06 and 2.86 respectively, which shows that the responses cluster around the average mean, affirming a high degree of acceptance between the variables. Accordingly, it is also shown from the table that the average standard deviation is 0.89 which explains that the respondents did vary significantly in their responses.

Research question two: To what extent does facilities management influence sustainable national development?

The answer to the question is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of the responses on the extent at which facilities management influences sustainable national development

S/N	Items	X	SD	Decision
1	My school is well equipped with modern facilities that promote the delivery of functional education for sustainable development	2.97	0.96	Agreed
2	Laboratories in my school are very functional in enhancing inquiry-based learning among students for national development	3.00	1.02	Agreed
3	My school has digital library to support the delivery of global-based education to students	2.89	0.99	Agreed
4	Facilities in my school are regularly modernized to enhance the teaching of modern skill-based contents	2.56	1.27	Agreed
5	In my school, there is constant power supply to boost practical learning through laboratory experiment	3.03	2.33	Agreed
6	Quality education is delivered in my school because facilities are very functional	3.09	1.02	Agreed
Average		2.87	1.12	

The result of the analysis in table 2 indicates that there is high degree of acceptance of the influence of facilities management on sustainable national development with all the items having mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50. Given the average mean of 2.87 and high and low mean scores of 3.09 and 2.89, the table shows that almost all the responses are close to the centre, showing a high degree of acceptance by the respondents on the relationship between the variables.

Research question three: To what extent does resource accountability influence sustainable national development?

The answer to the question is presented in table 3.

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of the responses on the extent at which resource accountability influences sustainable national development

S/N	Items	X	SD	Decision
1	Resources needed for quality education are always delivered to my school on time	3.19	0.95	Agreed
2	The way school resources are allocated to schools has effect on the type of education delivered to students	3.43	0.68	Agreed
3	Internally generated funds can help in delivering functional education in secondary schools	3.44	0.68	Agreed
4	Proper accountability of all resources spent in the school can enhance effective implementation of secondary education	2.54	1.34	Agreed
5	Accounting for internally generated funds fosters effective administration of schools for effective teaching and learning	3.33	0.83	Agreed
6	Transparency in the management of school resources can influence the level of educational delivery in schools	3.19	0.94	Agreed
Average		3.18	0.90	

The result of the analysis in table 3 shows that all the items have mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 which means that there is high degree of acceptance by the respondents on the influence of facilities management on sustainable national development. Accordingly, given the average mean score of 3.05 and average standard deviation of 0.90, the table shows that the responses are close to the centre, indicating that almost all the respondents have the same view on the extent of the relationship between the variables.

Discussion of findings

The result of the first research question revealed that school curriculum delivery has influence on sustainable national development. This result is in line with the opinion of Muoghalu (2013), who posits that Nigeria's education system, while improving, is not fit for the demands of competitive global markets, as the system does not provide Nigerians with the skills they need to get jobs. The finding further agrees with the result of the study conducted by Uriah and Wosu (2012). They observed that the present system of education in sub-Saharan Africa and its implementation cannot bring about the much talked about national development. This result may be occasioned by the fact that the respondents are aware of the relevance of school curriculum to

development of the society and are also aware of the type of skills acquired by students in secondary schools.

The result of the second research question revealed that facilities management has influence on sustainable national development. The result is in agreement with the result of Aloga (2013) who asserted that when the school physical plant is well planned, it will not only enhance good teaching practice but will also facilitate and stimulate learning. Boyi (2013) found out that challenges confronting education and national development in Nigeria are inadequate infrastructures, dearth of teachers and overcrowded classrooms, among others. This may be probably because effective teaching and learning is heightened in schools that have adequate facilities and respondents are aware of the type of facilities available in schools in the study area and can also explain the linkage between the management of those facilities and delivery of effective education.

The result of the third research question revealed that resource accountability has influence on sustainable national development. This result agrees with the opinion of Omemu (2015). He posited that, not only that the system is unable to produce results that justify huge chunk of resources (money, men, materials, time, etc) supplied to education, but also that the relationship between performance and goal achievement is unequal. Omemu (2015) found out that the most pressing problem hindering national development in Nigeria is lack of resource accountability in schools. All these are in support of the result that resource accountability has influence on sustainable national development. This result may be hinged on the fact that respondents have a perfect knowledge of the accountability process in schools within the study area.

Conclusion

The effective attainment of a sustainable future in any society is the pre-occupation of the education system. It is also obvious that the capacity of any education system in delivering this task is determined by the quality of educational leadership practiced in the country. Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that curriculum delivery, facilities management and resource accountability have influence on sustainable national development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The curriculum experiences and contents delivered in secondary schools should be concise, practical-oriented and relate the skills needed for societal development in the 21st century.
2. Facilities should be effectively managed in secondary schools to boost effective teaching and learning at this level of education.

3. There should be a strict policy of accountability in secondary schools so as to ensure that resource meant for school development are properly utilized in the system, to boost effective goal attainment, which would in turn lead to a sustainable national development.

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