

ADEQUATE FUNDING OF LANGUAGE EDUCATION: A KEY TO SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY.

Rufina Chizoba Ebere

Department of Igbo. Federal College of Education Kano

Abstract.

Education is the bedrock of development of any nation. It contributes to the development of individuals and nation at large. Language education is the mother of all disciplines because it is through language that all instruction takes place. In order for instructions to take place effectively, there is need for teachers to acquire basic skills in language. Therefore, adequate funding needs to be made available to provide materials, facilities, equipment and the much needed prerequisites to prepare teachers for the tasks ahead. Unfortunately, the reverse is the case in our country Nigeria. This paper therefore tries to identify the constraints to adequate funding of language education. It suggests that other strategies needs to be explored in funding language education in order to ensure quality assurance. The paper recommends a complete overhaul of the current educational funding system, which is to be replaced by a system that will provide effective instructional materials such as provision of language laboratory and complete laboratory equipment to mention but a few.

Introduction

Funding can be seen as money provided especially by an organization or government for a particular purpose. Funding education is a major challenge to the growth and development of education in Nigeria. In the recent years, education in Nigeria has faced several challenges. Some of the challenges facing the transformation of Nigerian education emanate from lack of adequate funding, resources mobilization and utilization. This has accounted for substandard facilities like classrooms, lecture theater, laboratories, workshops, staff offices, recreational

facilities, hostels, e-learning facilities, studios and so on. More so, there is perennial unattractive remuneration for the community members comprising both academic and non academic staff. All these joined together contribute to the challenges facing education. According to Ndinechi & Obidile, (2013), education has literally been on the floor since the mid-eighties. The progressive decay of education sector is characterized by continual shortage of funds, shortage of equipment as well as frequent closure of schools due to lecturer's strike and unrest by students. The frequent strike by the lecturers is partly attributed to government's inability to keep to the promises made to the educational sector including funding. The funding of education has become so difficult in the recent times, even when education can be said to be the surest way to national development. Education empowers and equip individuals to participate in and benefit from the national economy. It also unlocks the economic potentials of the people, facilitate development and form the basis for the transformation of a nation. Education can be seen as a key factor in social and economic development of a nation. It is the key for development of any nation, it equips individuals with the knowledge and skills with which they need to become productive and contribute to the economy of a nation. It plays a crucial role in building sustainable economy because it foster skilled workforce, promote innovations and creates responsible members of the society. Its funding is therefore necessary to improve educational outcome. Language education is a process of teaching and learning a second or a foreign language using different approaches. The increase in globalization has created a great need for people in the workforce to communicate in different languages. Language education helps to empower individuals to develop and participate in the society, for them to communicate and interact with others in a variety of ways. It equips learners

with the ability to read and write and to communicate effectively. Therefore there is need to fund language education by the government and other private sectors so that the maximum benefits of education can be realized.

Amadi & Nwogu, (2023), described funding as the quantity of money earmarked for a particular project. Generally, It is the financial activities of public authorities in terms of taxing, spending, borrowing and lending. In education, it involves the means of providing for the expenditure involved in the staffing, equipment and maintenance of educational institutions. Unfortunately, the reverse is the case in the Nigerian tertiary institutions. Oluwuo & Nwabueze (2016), rightly noted that no educational program or policy can be executed without adequate financial resources. Tertiary institutions therefore finds it difficult to implement the contents of educational curriculum to its fullness due to inadequate fund. This is because it is difficult to cater for the procurement of tools and equipment, provide materials in a laboratory and as such provide manpower training, despite the fact that the Nigerian Policy on Education (NPE) 2013 acknowledged that education program requires adequate funding for successful implementation.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used for this study is built around Economic Model. This frameworks was pioneered by Hanushek, (1986). He promoted this economic analysis as a means to estimate education output. Levin, (1997), also advocated for the use of economic models to gauge education productivity and concepts of efficiency in the school environment. The theory was first applied in Colorado, among English language learners and it mandated all students to reach an established academic performance when additional resources is provided. Furthermore, the study pointed to an accumulating effect that have deteriorated

over time because of the states limitation on funding language students through the English Language Proficiency Act (ELPA) program. Supporters of this theory applied sophisticated econometric tools to schools in an attempt to overcome the significant shortcomings of regression in estimated parameters. This theory is applied here to examine the academic output and efficient use of resources, capital, labour and other investments when adequate input is made. The variables employed explored the degree of influence funding may have on student's academic proficiency.

Finally, the theory identified states and individuals commitments to achieving academic proficiency for all students regardless of their initial circumstance upon entering school.

Education and Sustainable Economy.

Sustainable economy has become a widely known phenomenon that cannot be over-emphasized. It is a broad term that encompasses economic, social and environmental dimensions. It therefore includes sustainable political, cultural, human and educational development. Vincenta, (2014), described sustainable economy as attaining a balance between environmental protection and human economic development and between the present and future needs. He went further to explain that "The word sustainable economy was first used at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNED) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nations (IUCN) in the 80s. It was used to describe the management of human use of the biosphere that may yield the greatest sustainable benefits to present generations while maintaining its potentials to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations" The role of education in sustainable economy involves the acquiring and application of knowledge of some basic facts of life. The link between education and sustainable economy is understanding and assimilation of

knowledge gathered from education and using it to create skills from which various degrees of competences are derived from to foster developments. Education makes it possible for people to read, and communicate effectively, thereby reducing the level of illiteracy in a country. Therefore, for any country to attain sustainable economy, there is need for skilled manpower. Those skills are the basic ingredients for national development, and it can only be acquired through both formal and non formal education.

Language Education.

The role of language in Education in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. For any nation to achieve greatness and development in education, there must be highly competitive teachers to teach in various fields, and these teachers must be able to communicate effectively with the students. The ability to communicate thoughts, feelings and ideas effectively can only be done through the use of language. According to Abdulkarim, (2008), language is the vehicle of communication and expression used in all human interaction. It is a tool for communication and a means for creative expression. Language uses sounds, gestures, symbols and words to express meaning, thoughts and ideas. Therefore, language education simply means teaching and learning a language. It can also be regarded as an effort made by learners to improve their native language. Musa, (2010), states that the study of language education dates back to the colonial era when the British Advisory Committee on native education recommended the indigenous language as the medium of instruction in the lower primary education. Before then, English language has been the medium of instruction.

Language education is a branch of applied linguistics that deals with proffering solutions to language related problems. It is a process of planning, developing and implementing the language

policies in such a way that one is trained to acquire language skills that will enable him to cope with other life skills. This means that educating someone in language gives the person an edge over others and empowering him with the skills to assimilate information about life. It also implies that one can have a better understanding of life when he is educated in language. Language education is the mother of all disciplines, because it is a channel through which instructions to all discipline takes place. Therefore, there is need to make an adequate preparation in terms of funding in order to provide facilities, equipment, materials and the much needed prerequisites.

Consequences of Poor Funding of Language Education.

Language is the engine room of all human information dissemination. It plays a crucial role in all human life and is needed for national development, because skills are acquired through language. Funding is central to an efficient and effective education. Inadequate funding has caused Nigeria a great deal at all levels of education, leading to inadequate and dilapidated structures, inadequate facilities and equipment for teaching and learning. Boyi, (2014), opined that infrastructure in schools today reveals that some schools do not even have a defined workshop nor laboratory where students can practice what they learned. The machines and equipment needed in schools are outdated and some of them are poorly maintained that one wonders how these machines are used for proper teaching and learning.

Another consequence of poor funding of education is incompetence on the part of the graduates of education. With poor quality output, neither the beneficiary nor society get the maximum benefit from the products. Poor funding in schools, colleges and universities discourages sustainability and national development. Due to inadequate funding, schools find it difficult to employ adequate number of qualified teachers. In addition,

inadequate funding compelled most schools to employ unqualified teachers as an alternative to qualified teachers, who howl and shout on students or ridicule them. This is not good for sustainable education, rather it brings about dwindling quality knowledge of the graduates. Poor funding of language education has also brought about brain drain, leading to the movement of language teachers from classroom to other lucrative sectors where they are seeking for greener pasture. If this be the case, who will impart the knowledge to students/learners in schools?. This has led to continual regression of education generally.

Poor infrastructure is also a result of inadequate funding of education as this can create a negative learning environment leading to poor learning outcome and reduced motivation among students and teachers. Poor funding of education has also limited the monitoring and evaluation of educational system. This has led to ineffective policy decisions and resulted to reduced effectiveness of educational programmes.

Other consequences includes; low productivity, low level of advancement, poverty, high level of unemployment, high level of crime, political and economic instability, over-dependence on foreign nations for materials and human resources, shortage of qualified teachers, insecurity of lives and properties, loss of national reputation amongst others. All of these consequences is geared towards complete absence of quality and sustainability in education, but when there is adequate funding, the reverse will be the case.

Adequate funding of Education in the face of rising inflation

Funding education generally is a global practice. The World Bank through UNESCO asserted that quality education that delivers better learning outcomes requires greater and more efficient spending. In many developing countries, including Nigeria, learning poverty has reached unacceptable level, even

though enrollment is often high. UNESCO, (2021), asserts that Nigeria has the highest number of out of school children, and it ranks 116 out of 141 countries in terms of quality of its educational system. By this report, it seems that the quality of education is poor due to inadequate education financing. It is either the country is spending too little, the spending is inefficient, it is being mismanaged, or a combination of both. Most often, the most impactful way to improve efficiency is to improve and manage human resources effectively. According to UNESCO, (2017), In most countries, salaries of teachers and other principals in academic field exceed 70 percent of educational budget, while in some low income countries, it is around 90 percent. Therefore reforms that can improve effective teaching needs to be deployed to enhance teaching effectiveness in the classroom, reduce teachers absenteeism and make teachers accountable for students learning. In Nigeria, there has been a growing concern regarding the mismatch between the skills acquired by graduates and the needs of the labour market. The reasons for the mismatch is inadequate funding of education, because most schools find it difficult to develop and implement modern relevant curricula to various fields to meet the needs of the labour market. This has created a situation whereby graduates in various fields lack the skill and competence required to succeed in the labour market. Additionally, quality education that can deliver better learning outcomes require greater and more efficient spending. That is why UNESCO, (2017), highlighted some areas needed to improve education. Among them is adopting reforms to strengthen budget planning, financial management, procurement and management capacity. These key areas, if taken care of will greatly improve education.

Strategies to support adequate funding of language education

Some of the items required for successful implementation of language education include installation and maintenance of language laboratories and purchasing of equipment for both teachers and students. Unfortunately, these projects are quite enormous and almost difficult, hence the need for it to be addressed.

In this scenario, the government, private sectors, NGOs and communities needs to be fully involved, because the major challenge in funding education in Nigeria is that the government alone bears the burden.

The Nigerian Government

The Nigerian government comprising state and local government have a big role to play in funding language education. This is because most of the equipment needed for the successful implementation of language education is capital intensive. Therefore, there is need for an increase in budget allocated to education generally. They should also ensure that proper management of the funds is provided. This is because it is not just enough to provide funds, but they should enforce those involved to do the needful.

Private Sectors

The government should review the practices of private sectors and partner with them to provide support for education. The private sector can establish research centers and have them fully equipped, and make funds available to encourage innovations. They should provide scholarship to students and make funds available to encourage those who carry out research. They can also provide laboratory and laboratory equipment such as computers and laptop to help ameliorate the bottlenecks in the funding of education.

The NGOs

The NGOs also have a role to play in support of education. They should partner with various government to provide funds to encourage research and consultancy services. They should support education by also providing scholarships and encourage those who perform extremely well.

The Communities /Corporate Organizations.

These group are not left out, they should also contribute to the growth of education by augmenting the efforts of the government. They should provide grants and endowment funds to help in the funding of education.

Conclusion

Funding is very important in the acquisition and implementation of basic human and material resources that are needed to transform the objectives of the schools into realities. This means that the unavailability of funds can limit the potentials of students generally. Language education is a capital intensive program that needed to be properly funded. This is because for education to be functional in Nigeria, language education needs to be taken seriously in order to bridge the gap in education and this can be possible if funds are made available. Education is an important aspect of development in Nigeria. Inadequate funding has been identified as a major challenge facing the education sector, and has led to a huge decline in the quality of education system in Nigeria. This decline can be clearly noticed in the lack of qualified teachers, limited access to educational resources, and low literacy rates. On the other hand, adequate funding of education can greatly improve educational development, and this can lead to the development of human capital and all the various sectors of the economy. This calls for a collaborative effort of all the stakeholders concerned to ensure that adequate fund is provided in order to promote educational development.

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