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CAUSES, EFFECTS AND PROBABLE SOLUTIONS TO THE DECLINING QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA.

 Education is a catalyst for sustainable development and transformation, meant to deliver skills and knowledge base required for growth and economic survival. If it lacks these qualities, then has it has low value. Quality education can then be referred to as one which imparts functional skills and knowledge required to be productive in the market place. In Nigeria of today, that seems not to be the case. Hence, we see very often the associated consequences of many unemployable youths even in few instances where the jobs are available.

 The causes of low quality education in Nigeria can be attributed to several factors. Firstly the

Inadequate funding of the educational sector. Consistently, government priorities have been misguided. The educational sector in Nigeria has been suffering from poor budgetary allocation. For instance, the budgetary provision for the education sector for the 2019 fiscal year provides no indication that the government realizes the central role of education in national development. The N620 billion provided for represents 7.02% of the entire budget of N8.83 trillion. The average provision in the last two and half decades had been about 8%; which is far lower than the UNESCO range of 15% - 20% provision. Of the E9 countries to which Nigeria belongs, the annual budgetary allocation to the education sector is 20% except for Nigeria. The effect of poor funding has multifaceted effects on the sector and lead to a, provision of inadequate studying materials, laboratory materials, poor remuneration of staff which cause low morale, employment of good quality academic personnel, infrastructural upgrade to meet the growing number of students and frequent strikes and shutdown of schools due to delay in salary payment.

Secondly, weak regulation and supervision by education regulating bodies. No institution runs well without adequate regulation and supervision. In Nigeria however, weak administration, inspection and supervision characterize all the regulating bodies at all levels of education. Corruption amongst their officials are endemic, resulting in various kind of misconduct such as diverting funds meant for academic matters to personal use, misrepresenting results of periodic inspection, which otherwise, would have ensured that quality is maintained in the schools.

Thirdly, the frequent changes in the academic curriculum. Inconsistencies in educational programs and systems, without proper execution results in the frequent changes in textbooks used by students, hence, creating confusion and distortions in their learning pattern. Further, the knowledge of Teachers who are professionally trained and equipped to guide the act of instruction are not updated as the programs change. When teachers are ill-equipped, the quality of what they impart to students is affected along the same line and may sometimes lead to skipping of unfamiliar content areas in combination with ineffective interpretation of the changes mare student performance.

 Fourthly, provision of inadequate instructional materials in schools. These materials are things that help to enhance and aid the learning process. For example adequate audio-visuals such as maps, charts, projectors, and so on; when they are not provided, it reduces the rate of understanding of the students. Items of school equipment are teachers’ trade tools, and any school lacking them, either not having the equipments at all or not having them in adequate amounts cannot expect to achieve its main goals. This instructional materials, for example help assist practical and give balance to the theoretical aspect of what is being taught. Most of all the children abilities depend solely and directly on the availability of facilities and a favorable environment.

Fifthly, lack of sufficient library facilities. As students, research work should be encouraged but if the facilities required in promoting the growth and development of their knowledge is insufficient, it leads to a decline in the quality of education. The library is an integral part of the school which compensates for inherent textbooks and other valuable teaching materials; hence, it is an indispensible and very essential part of a school.

Lastly, the poor remuneration of teachers. This is one of the factors contributing to our debilitating standard of education. Teachers are to be highly rewarded for their services in other to keep their motivations alive. Unmotivated teachers are inclined to selling grades for a fee which result in production of half-baked graduates who cannot defend their degrees. If teachers are not rewarded properly, it lowers their zeal to put in all the required effort needed to teach and their love for the profession.

 Though several factors contribute to the declining quality of education in Nigeria, many of them have common solutions. Provision of adequate funding for the educational sector is like a common thread that runs through all the other challenges faced by it. Adequate funding coupled with strengthening of regulations, inspection and supervision will significantly help in correcting the decline that has occurred over the years. If they are in place, the question of unqualified teachers, poor remuneration of teachers, students poor attitude towards learning and so on would not exist or would be reduced drastically at the very least.

When the rate of school inspection and supervision is increased and put into the hands of men and women of proven integrity a lot of the noticeable misconducts seen in that area will decline. Further, there is a need to institutionalize a process of reorienting the all the staff of academic institution to ensure that they are in tune with the best standards and practices obtained globally in more advanced societies. Of course, all these can only happen, if there a deliberate change in government policy that will give the much needed priority in the funding of education.