

## **EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR POVERTY REDUCTION IN NIGERIA: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION**

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### **Abstract**

Poverty has persisted despite several interventions to ameliorate poverty Index in Nigeria, even in periods of economic growth. In all its forms, poverty continues to be a concern and a challenge to humanity. It manifests itself in all spheres of human existence economic, social, political, and environmental and is intricate, multifarious, and multidimensional. Considering that education is a tool of the society in engendering development and raising the standard of living of the society, the high poverty rate of Nigerians may not be unconnected to the deplorable state of the Nigerian educational system. In its broadest meaning, education is one of the key components of progress. A nation cannot attain sustainable economic growth without making significant investments in its human resources. People's perceptions of the world and themselves are enhanced by education. Their lives are made better, society and individuals gain greatly from it. Education encourages entrepreneurship, technical advancements, and increases people's productivity and creativity. Furthermore, it is essential for maintaining social, economic advancement and also for enhancing income distribution. Various indicators suggest that poverty is a major obstacle to Nigeria's socio-economic development. Flaws and shortcomings were noticed in the Nigerian educational system shortly after Nigeria gained her independence in 1960 which had its structure from the colonial/British administration. The paper therefore explores the relationship between education and poverty reduction, the state of poverty and education in Nigeria, employment opportunities for the educated, challenges in obtaining quality education in Nigeria and challenges facing the implementation of educational policies in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Education, poverty reduction, employment, economic development, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

Poverty is a significant issue in Nigeria despite government efforts to eradicate it through national development plans, sessional papers, and campaigns. It is also widely acknowledged as posing a serious threat to Nigeria's very existence. Because education teaches information and skills that support greater wages, the population with

higher levels of education will have fewer poor people (Adeoti, 2014; Sennuga et al., 2023a). When it comes to "human poverty," education has a significant indirect impact since it boosts living standards and makes it easier to meet basic needs, both of which contribute to a decrease in overall poverty. Nigeria presently maintains the record for having most number of young people not attending school worldwide, with about 10.5 million youngsters not attending school (UNESCO, 2016). Nigeria is at the top of the list of 12 other nations, with 47% of all out-of-school children worldwide. A dangerous cancer worm that has seeped deeply into Nigerian culture is illiteracy. Growth and progress have been stalled, while poverty has increased. Investment in human capital, which eradicates poverty, and economic progress are positively correlated when it comes to education. Because education increases earnings, income, or wages, it immediately aids in the eradication of poverty (Queiro, 2021; Ajah et al., 2023).

Underdevelopment, corruption, shifts in the job market, unemployment, underemployment, and population are all blamed for documented cases of poverty. Every country, no matter how big or little, wants to fight poverty by creating jobs and promoting sustainable development. The goal is to guarantee self-sufficiency, raise living standards, and minimize poverty among the populace. Using education as a weapon is one of the simplest methods to fight poverty (Bullem et al., 2021). According to Jeffery (2015), a good society is not only an economically prosperous society (with high per Capita income) but also one that is socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable and well governed. The actualization of socially inclusive economic development however, strongly impacts the Earth's bio-system and its carrying capacity. It is clear that poverty, insecurity and poor education contributes inextricably to ecological crisis which in turn creates an unbalanced in the socioeconomic ecosystems. This brings to the fore our challenges as over 40% of Nigerians live below the poverty line, the level of unemployment towering at 33.3%, over 10 million out of school children and the grappling after effects of covid-19 is still a huge scare, the risk of further exacerbating insecurity challenges becomes increasingly alarming (UNESCO, 2016).

Nigeria, sometimes known as the "poverty capital of the world," is still struggling with a chronic poverty rate. Numerous interrelated aspects can be linked to the numerous root causes of this persistent dilemma. Income inequality is a major element that contributes to Nigeria's high percentage of poverty. Nigeria is the sixth-largest crude oil exporter in the world and is endowed with an abundance of natural and human resources, yet despite this, wealth disparity and poverty have been steadily rising, creating a vicious cycle of poverty (Adebayo, 2018; Sennuga et al., 2023b).

### **Education and poverty in Nigeria**

Educational renaissance has usually come before significant shifts in a society's intellectual and social attitude (Onwioduokit, 2020). Pre-primary, primary, secondary, and post-primary education are all part of Nigeria's educational system. In addition, Nigeria's current poverty situation is evident in the government's failure to use education as a tool for development. For instance, "over 10.5 million Nigerian children were not in school, with

a significant share originating from the Northern region." With notable regional variations, 60.1% of Nigerians live below the poverty line (1,300 Naira, or less than \$1 a day). More and more empirical research, in particular, has confirmed that education has a favorable impact on people's ability to accumulate wealth and on the advancement of equitable and efficient economic development (Global Education Monitoring Report, 2019; Walker et al., 2019). Currently, 150 million Nigerians are considered to be extremely poor. (UNESCO, 2023). The impoverished and those who live disproportionately in rural areas are among the most susceptible (Schmale, 2022). Poor budgetary allocation/underfunding, ill-equipped libraries and labs, Nigeria's flexible curriculum and educational system, low student interest in teacher education, low teacher welfare, non-utilization of educational research findings, a lack of dependable infrastructure and amenities, student population growth, inadequate management of education, and more are among the issues plaguing our educational system (Abdulahi et al., 2023).

### **State of Education and Poverty in Nigeria**

More than any other social service, education in Nigeria has garnered a lot of public attention lately. Because a country's entire development is closely linked to its educational system, society and the government are concerned about the quality of education. The 'seemingly' declining quality of education in Nigeria is at the top of the list. The reasons given for this state of affairs include the following: parents' lack of concern for their children's schoolwork and extracurricular activities, students' lack of interest and seriousness, which resulted in all forms of examination malpractice, teachers' declining competence and commitment, inadequate facility provision; nonmaintenance of available facilities, outdated and largely irrelevant curricula coupled with poor implementation, and the pursuit of the cankerworm of the "get-rich-quick" mentality that plagues today's Nigerian youth and the lost benefits of conventional schooling, which instills in people a strong work ethic, diligence, integrity, and high productivity. describes the government's decision to switch up its educational system in an effort to produce goods of the highest caliber (Jaiyeoba, 2015; Sennuga et al., 2023).

Petrakis and Stamatakis, (2017) argued that this system produced the "well-baked" Nigerian scholars of the past, whose contribution to the country's development seems to be diminishing rather than increasing due to the products of modern education. As a result, there is a widespread outcry that Nigeria's educational standards are declining across the board and that solutions are needed. People, academics, and researchers have noticed that graduates of the educational system are performing worse than those who graduated in the past, particularly in terms of reading, writing, and practical abilities that could be the reason Nigeria's system didn't work. It is regrettable to observe that current Nigerian governments have refused to acknowledge the critical role educators play in meeting high standards for education. They come to and break agreements with teacher unions to enhance their working conditions and resources. Teachers in Nigeria were on a protracted nationwide strike at the time of this study, demanding their salaries and rights, while the government was not only standing by quietly but even threatening to fire the striking educators (Ameh et al., 2023).

### **Poverty Statistics and Trend in Nigeria**

Studying the patterns of poverty across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones—especially the northern ones, which are crucial for comprehending the country's complex poverty situation—is vital. Furthermore, to ascertain whether national poverty was successfully decreased by government initiatives. However, Jaiyeoba (2015) observed that although economic growth has been documented, poverty is still rising in Nigeria, with the North-West and North-East geopolitical zones dominating the poverty indices. This indicates that Nigeria's pattern of poverty differs from that of many other countries. The North West has the greatest poverty rate, at 77.7%, while the South West has the lowest, at 49.8%, according to an analysis of poverty rates throughout the geopolitical zones (Jaiyeola and Bayat, 2019; Iliyasu et al., 2023). Massive mineral resources, including coal, iron ore, barite, zinc, limestone, columbite, tin, kaolin, lead, and gypsum, are abundant in Nigeria. The northern region of Nigeria is home to the majority of these resources. According to Asoegwu (2018), Nigeria's northern regions are endowed with rich agricultural production, including vegetables, fruits, livestock, fish, dairy products, groundnuts, beans, cotton, yam, cassava, cereal, and many other items. Nigeria is known as the poverty capital of the world, with around 100 million people living in extreme poverty, despite the country's abundance of natural resources and human capital (Jaiyeola and Bayat, 2019). It is extremely unsettling that a sizable portion of the populace lives in poverty in a nation with an abundance of natural resources, a thriving oil industry, and a robust agricultural sector (Simon-Oke, 2016).

As a result, Nigeria's status as the continent's largest economy does not automatically translate into a lower rate of poverty. Two thirds of Nigerians live in extreme poverty despite the country's economic growth, which has led to an absurdity in the country's poverty situation (Faloyo and Bakare, 2015). Studying the patterns of poverty in Nigeria's six geopolitical zones—and, most crucially, in the country's northern regions—is essential to comprehending the country's complex poverty predicament. Nigeria's poverty is most pronounced in the north, with Sokoto state having the highest percentage at 86.4% (Jaiyeola and Bayat, 2019). The North Central zone of Nigeria has a poverty rate of 67.5%, whereas the North East and North West zones have poverty rates of 77.7% and 76.3%, respectively. The majority of Northern Nigerians are subsistence farmers using traditional farming methods and implements. For the purpose of replenishing the soil, they mostly rely on ruminants, household trash, and animal manure. Thus, a high percentage of unemployment, a rise in crime, a high rate of illiteracy, a high rate of maternal mortality, and more lately, various terrorist and insurgent groups like Boko Haram and herdsmen clashes (Ojeleye, 2018).

In addition, the number of children dropping out of school and the lack of access to basic education have increased the rate of poverty in the northern zones. Added to these elements is the incapacity of the economy to support and give the youth population the essential resources for job prospects, skill development, and soft skills grants or loans to support business Startups and entrepreneurial development in order in order to lower the Northern Zones' poverty rate (Jaiyeola and Bayat, 2019). This results from the nation's inability to attain economic development, particularly in the north where there are few chances for economic empowerment, a high rate of

youth unemployment, and a high prevalence of violent crimes that are committed as a form of retaliation against oppressors (Akinyoade and Gewald, 2015). Of Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, the northeastern region has the greatest death rate and the second-highest percentage of males without an education, followed by the North West zone with the highest proportion of females without an education (Khan and Cheri, 2016). A sizable portion of the populace lives in poverty despite the flourishing oil sector. This discrepancy has been largely attributed to political instability and pervasive corruption that are impeding economic advancement expanding the nation's inequality gap (Olohunlana and Dauda, 2019; Ajah et al., 2023).

### **Theoretical framework for understanding the relationship**

System theory was first put forth by biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the 1940s. All systems in nature and society, including educational institutions, are covered under the multidisciplinary theory of systems. The five elements of the fundamental system theory of an organization are inputs, process, outputs, feedback, and the environment. It provides a structure for conducting a thorough investigation of occurrences. The purpose of the educational system is to accomplish a specific goal. These objectives are periodically determined by the demands on the system or the existence of an issue that has to be fixed. The notion that no single component of the larger system can function alone; rather, each component is interrelated with other components and does not exist in isolation can be properly comprehended without considering the overall system's functioning, is already implicit. Because they all, in one way or another have an impact on how authoritative decisions are made in a community, these interconnected activities are connected or systematized. Education policy makers must set clear and specific goals, as well as strategies and inputs that will be converted into a qualified product during the production process: having specific competencies in the form of skills, abilities, and knowledge that may be transferred to the productive sector of the economy, resulting in a reduction of poverty, in order to guarantee that poverty in society is appropriately addressed. Regarding the 1600s Jesuit missions in South America, Valencia Caicedo (2019) emphasizes the result of educational interventions. He discovers that places where there used to be a Jesuit presence had better educational attainment back then, and they continue to have higher wages today. The author offers proof that the mechanism at play is in line with ideas of industry specialization, human capital accumulation, and technology adoption.

The mechanism at work is demonstrated by the author to be consistent with theories of industrial specialization, human capital accumulation, and technology adoption. As stated by Restuccia and Rogerson, (2017), when it comes to human capital, misallocation can result in a loss of welfare if it keeps educated people out of positions where their economic contribution is fully recognized. Undoubtedly, the quality of education of a nation is a major factor in determining the kind and rate of growth of that nation's output and exports. It also plays a significant role in a system's ability to successfully absorb foreign technologies. For instance, primary and secondary education, health, and nutrition all increase worker productivity, both in rural and urban areas; secondary education, including vocational education, makes it easier to acquire skills and managerial capacity;

tertiary education supports the advancement of basic science, wise import policy, and domestic technology adaptation and development; secondary and tertiary education also play a crucial role in the development of important institutions, including the legal system, the financial system, and the government, all of which are necessary for economic growth (Valencia Caicedo, 2019).

These linkages are further illuminated at the macro and micro levels by empirical findings. Numerous studies suggest that, on a micro level, higher incomes are correlated with gaining more years of education, with the rate of return changing as education level increases. Technological capability and industrial technical change are also significantly influenced by education finds that companies with more highly educated top-level managers have better growth performance using matched employer-employee data from Portugal. It suggests that the mechanism for this is that educated managers are more likely to introduce new technologies or management practices. In other models, an analogous externality arises when people's education levels improve because it boosts not only their own output but also the productivity of people they contact with, resulting in an increase in total productivity as education levels rise on average. Another way that human development affects macro performance is through its effect on the character and growth of exports, which in turn affect the rate of aggregate growth. A developing nation's factor endowment and, by extension, the makeup of its commerce are influenced by the level of education and skill of its labor force (Queiro, 2021).

### **Education as a pathway to poverty reduction**

Undoubtedly, the quality of education in a nation is a major factor in determining the kind and rate of growth of that nation's output and exports. It also plays a crucial role in a system's ability to successfully advance technology. For instance, primary and secondary education, health, and nutrition all increase worker productivity, both in rural and urban areas; secondary education, including vocational training, helps people acquire skills and managerial abilities; tertiary education promotes the advancement of basic science; and all of these factors are crucial for the development of important institutions, such as the government, the legal system, and the financial system, which are all necessary for economic growth and have the potential to impact people's standard of living (Zhang, 2020). Since it is acknowledged as the most dangerous issue "jeopardising balanced society socio-economic development," eliminating poverty has been the main goal for many countries (Balvociute, 2020). One of the main characteristics of unsustainable socio-economic growth is poverty, which is also a recurring issue that can negatively impact people's life (Bossert et al., 2022; Ameh et al., 2023).

According to a research note published by the European Commission (2015), those with only a primary education continue to be the most vulnerable in all EU member states, with rates of poverty ranging from 13% in the Netherlands to 56% in Romania. Improving education can lower economic inequality and poverty, as evidenced by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) that the World Bank supports, and the "Education for All" programme.

According to Arafat and Khan (2022), families with higher levels of education have better mental, social, and emotional well-being than those with lower levels of education. This is in addition to helping to lessen the degree of poverty. Education is the most effective means of preventing poverty. An individual with higher levels of education is less likely to experience poverty. Through education, people can become aware of their own potential and be given the chance to put it to use. Education increases productivity and creativity, enhances self-awareness, and enhances life quality all of which support entrepreneurship and technical advancements (Arafat and Khan, 2022).

Furthermore, it is essential for maintaining social and economic advancement, which enhances income distribution and lowers poverty. First, education could increase the output of the nation. Simultaneously, technological aptitude and technological change in industry are significantly influenced by education. Second, more broadly based education could lead to increased income equality by improving the ability of low-income individuals to pursue economic opportunities while also influencing the growth of per capita income (Chegini et al., 2021).

#### **i. The role of education in economic development**

A nation's overall productivity, intellectual adaptability, and competitiveness in the global market which is today marked by quickly evolving manufacturing and technological processes all increase with education. Numerous forms of human capital development, including training, research, aptitude development, and basic education, have been demonstrated to produce notable benefits by researchers. Unequal education has a negative impact on per capita income and exacerbates poverty in many countries. One of the main ways to combat poverty is through education. The World Bank claims that education is essential to development. It fosters social cohesiveness and democratic principles in addition to economic prosperity, national productivity, and creativity. The human capital idea states that educational investments are made with the expectation of higher returns or value in the future. Some previous research has suggested that the longer you study or the more training you receive, the more benefits you will receive in the future since knowledge is subject to growing returns because these are non-rival products (Bowen, 2018).

How successfully a nation integrates into the global market for manufactured goods and competes in these markets, as well as the increasingly globalising service markets, depends on the caliber of its human capital. It will be beneficial to make sure that every resident is intelligent and literate, that many possess a wide variety of problem-solving abilities beyond the foundation, and that some possess exceptional professional abilities. According to Robbin (2016), knowledge not only fosters growth but also serves as an input for the development of new products and the production of outputs that supplement input in the future. Hanushek and Woessmann (2015), made reference to "East Asian Tigers," who developed rapidly between 1960 and 2000 and also examined how growth is impacted by the proportion of pupils achieving basic literacy as opposed to the proportion of top

performers. They demonstrate how fundamental skills seem to have an impact in every country, but that higher education seems to be more significant, which they claim validates the theory of technological diffusion.

## **ii. Income and poverty reduction through education**

Through increased income and technical know-how, education is essential to reducing poverty (skills). Education-based human capital development has been shown to be extremely beneficial for the country's economic growth as well as for its acquirers (Armeanu et al., 2018). Increasing the number of individuals with access to high-quality education can contribute to the eradication of poverty by teaching them essential skills like reading, writing, and critical thinking, which have been shown to raise salaries. Research typically indicates that nations with higher levels of investment in human capital development or education have lower rates of poverty and higher rates of growth than nations with lower levels of investment in education (Khan and Cheri 2016). People with higher education have better occupations, more vision to change their lives, and are also better able to make beneficial contributions to society. The various facets of education, ranging from primary, secondary, and tertiary education to vocational training, crafts, and artisan, demonstrate the significance of education in enhancing an individual's ability to compete and develop their cognitive abilities (Okwu et al., 2022; Abdulahi et al., 2023).

According to Robbin (2016), the following are the impact of education to income and poverty reduction:

- Opportunities for employment will inevitably result in the creation of income and a drop in the high rates of inequality and poverty. The population's well-being will further improve as a result of this.
- Opportunities are levelled by functional education; most graduates of educational institutions will no longer be looking for white-collar employment, which are hard to come by and rare.
- Graduates from functional education will be self-sufficient, enterprising, and prepared to put their academic knowledge into practice. These business owners will eventually hire employees. There will be more revenue and employment created with this network. As a result, a large number of people will be lifted out of the pit of unemployment and poverty.
- Functional education produces manpower of high quality. Any country's educational system dictates the kind, character, and amount of labor needed. Their degree of success and other national innovations have been linked to the country's educational system and dedication to the development of human resources.
- The functional educational system in Nigeria will bring about high-quality manpower that will turn around the available resources into wealth for the nation. The country will also experience a turnaround in science and technology, which will in turn affect all other sectors of the economy. Thus, the wealth of the nation will be redistributed to favor the poor populace.

## **iii. Education and Employment Opportunities**

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), increasing educational investment, standards-setting, and access will lead to opportunity, prosperity, and justice. A closer connection between education, employment, and rewards is indicated by the increasing value placed on educational

credentials. Since greater credentials are thought to lead to good jobs and bigger rewards while also providing an effective and equitable way of selection based on individual achievement (Adejumo et al., 2017).

The personal expenses associated with seizing our "opportunities" are rising because success hinges on outperforming competitors for jobs, universities, and difficult-to-enter schools. Families in the middle class are become more desperate in their attempts to get an advantage. In the labor market, this is also true. While improving skills within the workforce can increase the number of decent jobs available, it also serves to place job searchers in a hierarchy of positions that vary in terms of pay, benefits, and social standing (Asongu et al., 2020). Credentials and other positional goods have an intrinsic worth of scarcity. Consequently, opportunities can be expanded by increasing access and raising the standard of instruction, but disparities in results will always exist as long as the educational system plays a selective role. In fact, the influence of selection on life prospects has increased as the hierarchy of employment has gotten increasingly specialized. Globalization developments in the economy have also presented challenges to our understanding of these issues.

Given the challenges of unemployment, which continues to be a cancerous phenomenon in Nigeria's development process, and the expected benefits of education, which include positioning and qualifying graduates for better employment opportunities, there is controversy in the literature regarding the relevance of increasingly formal education systems; Thus, given the peculiar challenge of securing relevant employment placement, there has been prescriptions by the International Labor Organization (ILO) imploring developing economies to embrace more technical education that can enhance self-employment as opposed to putting more emphasis on formal primary, secondary and tertiary education systems (Adejumo et al., 2017; Sennuga et al., 2023d).

The model indicated aggregate productivity as a function of the degree of product diversity. Romer made a significant addition to the endogenous growth model by analyzing research and development, which led to the realization that the degree of human capital has a role in long-term growth. With fundamental elementary instruction, the Universal Fundamental Education (UBE) programme is specifically designed to serve as a minimum foundational platform for subsequent builds, A Nigerian child is equipped cognitively to contribute to society as an apprentice, independent contractor, or worker in a related semi-skilled field like shoemaking, bricklaying, tailoring, etc. In particular, the UBE document aims to provide the attendant with the knowledge, abilities, and attitudes necessary to live a respectable life, fulfil civic responsibilities, and contribute to the advancement of society (Bowen, 2018).

### **Challenges in accessing quality education i. Regional and gender disparities:**

Nigeria is among the developing nations that have demonstrated prominent characteristics of regional inequality. One of the primary causes of the emergence of regional disparities in Nigeria is colonization. The colonial masters provided a large amount of infrastructure to their various administrative and commercial centres, including Lagos, Kano, Kaduna, Calabar, Asaba, and so on. It was discovered that the colonial administrative centres were more developed than the noncolonial administrative districts. Similarly, the existence of state capitals has resulted in

the areas benefiting from more projects than surrounding areas, which could lead to an increase in polarisation and the surfacing of further developmental work, particularly in urban areas (Singh, 2016; Sennuga et al., 2023d).

### **Factors affecting regional disparity**

According to Singh (2016), the various factors responsible for the Nigerian regional disparity includes:

**i. Political Factor:** One of the main elements that has made the differences in the nation worse is the political aspect. Poor leadership is also demonstrated by the leaders' attempts to further their personal political agendas at the expense of the country's shared development objectives. Additionally, it discovered that its leaders had prioritized their individual interests over the shared objectives of the state from the time of its independence in 1960 until the present contributed to the underdevelopment and backwardness that exist in numerous state regions. which typically distribute discrepancies in wealth throughout regions.

**ii. Geographical Factor:** In Nigeria, physiographic considerations do not significantly influence developmental variations. However, the country's regional differences have accelerated in large part because to the positioning of several states near the coast. States like Lagos, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, and others that border the Atlantic Ocean have a geographic edge over other states in the hinterland. They drew in and hosted a sizable number of foreign and local private investors, who promoted advancements in fields like education and employment creation.

**iii. Nature of the economy:** The Nigerian economy is reliant on petroleum dollars. Since oil was discovered in the nation more than 50 years ago, the oil industry has taken center stage, accounting for about 90% of the Gross National Income (GNI). The nation gave up on its viable agriculture industry in favor of unstable oil prices. It is vulnerable to forces and shocks in the market. The nation's economy is open because of this mono-cultural economic structure. Nearly everything that Nigeria imports comes from outside. Their Balance of Payments (BOP) suffers for years as a result. Their currency's worth decreased as a result of this. The nation's industrial, social, and economic development are all impacted more than once by this (Abdulahi et al., 2023).

### **Factors that foster gender disparity in education in Nigeria**

In many developing nations, gender inequality is a real problem, making it extremely difficult to keep girls in school and ensure their success in continuing their secondary and further education. In Nigeria, the difference is more noticeable in the north than in the south. 60% of Nigeria's outof-school children reside in the North, where enrollment in girls' education has sharply declined, according to UNICEF (2018).

The following are factors that foster disparity in education according to Oyindo and Osigwe (2019), they include:

#### **i. Socio- cultural perception of the girl child**

This feature also improves our comprehension of the circumstances around girl children. The girl child is severely mistreated, ostracized, frequently excluded from decision-making processes, and rarely given the opportunity to make her own decisions. Most of them are married off before they even become women, which prevents them from going to school. The traditional Nigerian society views girls as second-class citizens, which has a negative

impact on their ability to enroll in school. As a result, girls are not given the same priority in schooling as boys. Because the girls would eventually get married and not bear their father's name, this explains why "most people do not favor female education because they consider any investment in girls an economic waste." Consequently, it is not a prudent investment. The developmental phases of infancy, childhood, and adolescence span the years 1–18. A girl child's character is developed over the years between one and eighteen. A girl kid cannot survive without the support of her parents, guardians, or relatives. The girl child is raised by parents to take care of the house, the kitchen, and her younger siblings. She is treated as her parent's property when she is younger and as her husband's property after she gets married. During this time, the girl child develops abilities and knowledge that will last a lifetime (UNICEF, 2017).

The girl child's education has been impacted by this perception. Instead of focusing on their girl child's education, parents will prioritize their son's. In Africa, women are viewed as men's property and as "machines" for bearing offspring, which also influences the preference for male children to receive an education (Oyindo and Osigwe, 2019).

## **ii. Issue of male dominance in access to educational opportunities.**

Due to the culture's predilection for male offspring and masculine roles in society, female children who skip school face a very high opportunity cost. The belief that being a mother is the primary reason for a woman's existence has dehumanized and degraded Nigerian women and their counterparts in other African nations. It is expected of her to bear children, cook, wash and mend clothes, tend to males, and submit to male authority. Due to cultural customs, some communities do not send their female children to school with their male counterparts. The majority of parents in Nigeria mistakenly think that sending their daughters to school will interfere with their marriage, which they see as a girl's main purpose in life. But in order to lessen the gender gap which has historically favored men, it has been noted that education is the only effective means of addressing inequality in any given society. Because only male children are granted the ability to inherit under the patrilineal system, education for male children has also been prioritized. (Oyindo and Osigwe, 2019).

## **Challenges to increased access to university education in Nigeria**

The challenges of access to University Education in Nigeria remain formidable. According to Agile (2018), the challenges include the following:

### **a. The Problem of Carrying Capacity**

The carrying capacity policy refers to the maximum number of students that a specific school can efficiently oversee for a high-quality education, taking into account the manpower and material resources available to our country. This implies that admittance of students at this level is contingent upon the resources both human and physical that each Nigerian university has on hand. These amenities include adequate staff-to-student ratios, lodging, the necessary number of lecture halls, and libraries that are properly supplied with books. Adewale (2014) claims that the NUC's carrying capacity regulation specifies the maximum number of students that each

university can accept based on its infrastructure. In this respect, the number of students that Nigerian institutions can accept depends on their individual carrying capacity in light of the resources and staffing levels that are available. The National University Commission's carrying capacity policy exacerbates the difficulty in obtaining a university education. The NUC has set a cap on the annual number of students that each Nigerian university is allowed to enroll through this strategy. This has undoubtedly resulted in a significant decline in admissions to Nigerian universities in recent years. Due to increasing demands on education and population growth throughout time, several schools have overcrowded classrooms. Universities now have extremely competitive admissions processes because of the carrying capacity policy, which stipulates that the total number of students each faculty admits should be based on available human and material resources. This policy has led to an inadequate carrying capacity quota, which has made admissions extremely competitive. 70% of students are rejected each year, despite the fact that the majority of them meet the requirements (Adewale, 2014).

**b. Inadequate Public Financing**

Unrestricted access to higher education is contingent upon funding. Almost every issue facing Nigerian universities can be traced back to a lack of financing. Insufficient funding for the educational system in Nigeria has been cited as a contributing factor in the country's low educational quality. Since inadequate funding has been mentioned as a concern by all parties involved in the education sector. The result of this inadequate public funding for education is that it restricts access to learning, which means that only a small percentage of applicants are given the chance to pursue degrees in the Nigerian university system. This could be the reason why studies frequently show that school enrollment, completion rates, and dropout rates are products of lack of finance. The budget allotted to education is so small that it is unable to support the implementation of the many educational policies in the field of education. One of the biggest problems the Nigerian ministry of education is dealing with is inadequate finance.

**c. Problem of Curriculum development and delivery**

The issue of curriculum is one of the main factors affecting access to education. There are currently deficiencies in the curriculum of Nigerian universities. The major stakeholders in tertiary education in Nigeria, namely the National Universities Commission, National Commission for Colleges of Education, and the National Board for Technical Education, are currently revising the curricula for higher education due to the evident shortcomings in the curricula at all levels of education, particularly with regard to relevance and adequacy of content to meet contemporary needs of a knowledge society. Some schools' best efforts involve combining foreign and local content, which leads to curriculum overload, confusion, and diminishing rewards. Although the Nigerian curriculum is indigenized, more work needs to be done. The curriculum's contents are not connected to any particular real-life needs or problems, which makes it difficult to apply knowledge to everyday issues because power comes from applied knowledge (Sennuga et al., 2023c).

**d. Academic Staff Inadequacies**

The instructor plays a key role in realizing the goals and missions of any university institution. Kolawole (2015), noted that lecturers are central to the realization of all the objectives of higher institutions for the development of Nigeria and even globally. A wealth of research suggests that teacher quantity, quality, and motivation have notable influence on a variety of school factors. It continued by outlining the characteristics related to the institution, such as enrollment, involvement, and student accomplishments (in our instance, university students).

### **Challenges facing the implementation of educational policies in Nigeria**

According to Osunyikanmi (2018) Nigeria's educational plans are being implemented in the face of numerous obstacles. Among the obstacles are:

- **Institutional Corruption**

Another issue obstructing Nigeria's educational policies from being fully implemented is institutional corruption. Certain officials within the education ministry are misappropriating funds intended for the execution of educational programmes and programmes, putting them in their own personal pockets. Some heads of educational institutions reportedly receive 10% of the proceeds from any project that is completed within their establishment (Ogbonnaya, 2019). In order to get their children admitted to secondary schools, some parents even bribe the principal. In order to avoid being transferred, teachers also bribe school board members. In order to get the education board officials to authorize their private schools, school owners also bribe them. This puts the execution of educational policies in danger. Everything above explained, suggests that because kids aren't learning, Nigeria is one of the 37 nations losing money on education. According to UNESCO (2016), nations are currently paying USD 129 billion a year to combat this threat. Today, in 2019, this was quoted "We passed the compulsory education from Primary to Secondary school into law when we were in office," We levied taxes on education as well stated (Thisday, 2019; Dahunsi et al., 2023).

According to Osunyikanmi (2018), Nigeria has been developing very slowly despite rampant corruption. This epidemic does not spare the educational system. A large portion of the monies allotted to the industry are able to be misappropriated due to corruption and end up in the personal bank accounts of public servants. As a result, the amount allocated to education is substantially less than what is stated in the budget. Nigeria's score on the 2016 Corruption Perception Index was 28. The least corrupt receives a score of 100, while the most corrupt receives a score of 0. Out of the 176 countries ranked, the nation was at position 136. Nigeria must make a concentrated effort to combat corruption if it is to continue developing. According to Ololube (2016), insufficient finance is the cause of the falling quality of higher education in Nigeria. Likewise, one of the main causes is the misuse and mismanagement of funds for education. According to the report, there should be less corruption and theft and sufficient funding made available for public higher education institutions. One of the issues with Nigeria's educational policies' execution is the misappropriation of monies. In the same vain, Etor (2018) said that, in order to ensure appropriate accountability and improve objective budgeting in the following year, the issue of lack of probity in the management of budgetary allocations should be wisely addressed at the end of each fiscal year.

- **Poor policy formulation**

Another issue contributing to Nigeria's inadequate execution of educational programmes is poor policy articulation or formulation. because educational policy designers have limited ability and are not exposed to novel ideas and techniques for creating policies. According to Ogunode and Ahaot (2020), the federal government does a terrible job of explaining its policies around education. It will be challenging to put educational policies into practice if they are not clearly stated or developed.

- **Lack of continuity in commitment to policy implementation**

Another factor impeding the proper implementation of educational policy in Nigeria is the lack of continuity in their execution. A lot of good educational measures have been put on hold as a result of political shifts. Lack of continuity in commitment to policy is the barrier preventing Nigeria from implementing its educational policies. This has an impact on how smoothly policies are implemented. There have been numerous policy and programming modifications in Nigeria's educational system. While some of the adjustments seem acceptable, others will leave one wondering why the others were ever made in the first place. Part of the problem here has to do with incessant changes in government and paucity of technocrats within the government. Lack of understanding of the power of well-formulated policy and diligent implementation in effecting educational and national development apparently account for this.

- **Lack of political will**

One major issue that hinders the implementation of educational initiatives in Nigeria is the absence of political will to do so. The Nigerian federal government signed the Child Act Right Bill, making it a law. However, many state governments have not signed the bill because they are not required to do so in order for it to be implemented in their respective states. Despite the Child Rights Law's clear advantages for children, twelve northern Nigerian states have failed to enact it.

## **Conclusion**

Every culture has the capacity to give rise to a prosperous emerging country, and as the individual is the foundation of every nation, this can only be accomplished via the development of intelligent, gifted people with deliberate training. Thus, by obtaining equality and opportunity, equality in income growth, boosting productivity in all societal sectors, enhancing the standard of living that lowers poverty, and so forth. Having an education does not guarantee employment. Many recent graduates go years without finding employment. This is caused in part by both corruption and a dearth of job possibilities. A lot of offices only recruit based on preference rather than qualifications. Nowadays, preferential treatment is the norm, which raises the quantity of jobless recent graduates. Nigeria must take further action to help young graduates find jobs. It will also aid in lowering crime rates, given that many young people turn to crime in order to survive. For this reason, efforts to combat corruption ought to encompass all tiers of education. Corruption is a significant issue that has also had a detrimental effect on the standard and accessibility of education in Nigeria (Osim, 2016).

## Recommendations

- i. In order to combat poverty head-on, we must place a high priority on functional education. A more educated populace is better equipped to address the numerous issues pertaining to electricity development, agriculture, especially food technology, and transportation.
- ii. It is imperative that Nigerians adopt an entrepreneurial mindset by creating their own jobs rather than waiting for the government to take action in this area.
- iii. Ensuring adequate money for education is crucial. Education spending should be increased by the government. According to Ibrahim (2018), the government must also guarantee sufficient funds, which is essential for carrying out education policies. Many things need to be done, based on Nigeria's education funding indicators. At the very least, the amount allotted to the education sector should follow UNESCO's recommendations for a nation's budget for education. In addition, the staff members who would be using these monies ought to receive training on financial responsibility to prevent financial theft.

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