KWASU
International Journal of Education



Website: https://www.kije.com.ng ISSN: 2384-6801 Vol. 7 No. 24

KWASU International Journal of Education (KIJE) Vol. 7 Number 24, December 2024

SURFACING ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA: OBSTACLES FOR A POSITIVE CHANGE AND IMPROVEMENT IN THE 21ST-CENTURY

[1]ALAO, Busayo Oluwabukola (P.hD.) & [2]OKOLIKO, Agbo Mathias
Department of Educational Management
Kwara State University, Malete
[1]busayo.alao@kwasu.edu.ng [2]meritagbo@gmail.com

Abstract

This position paper examines the critical administrative issues facing secondary schools in Nigeria, highlighting their implications for educational quality and student outcomes. The evolution and phases of Nigerian educational system has passed through strings of positive changes with great impact on the Nigerian society. Most of these secondary schools are handled by school managers in Nigeria who oversees the administration and ensure that the aims and objectives of the schools come to reality. Secondary school education is the education that offers post-primary school education. It is the education that prepares the student for career choice in life. Through a comprehensive analysis of existing literature and empirical data, the paper identifies key challenges such as inadequate funding, ineffective leadership, poor infrastructural conditions, and insufficient training for school administrators. These issues contribute to systemic inefficiencies and hinder the effective delivery of education. Furthermore, the paper emphasizes the need for a strategic approach to reform, advocating for enhanced policy frameworks, capacity building for school leaders, and greater stakeholder engagement. By addressing these administrative challenges, the paper argues that Nigerian secondary schools can better fulfill their roles in fostering academic excellence and promoting social equity. Ultimately, this position paper aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on educational reform in Nigeria and to provide actionable recommendations for stakeholders involved in the secondary education sector.

Keywords: Surfacing administrative issues, Secondary schools, Positive change and improvement

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the role of education has expanded beyond merely imparting knowledge to shaping the social, economic, and cultural development of societies. For Nigeria, a nation with a rapidly growing population and diverse educational needs, the effective management of secondary schools is crucial to achieving sustainable development goals and preparing young citizens for the challenges of a globalized world. Secondary schools serve as the bridge between basic education and higher learning, making them vital for the intellectual and personal growth of students. However, the ability of these institutions to fulfill their mandate is often undermined by numerous administrative challenges.

Administrative practices in secondary schools are the backbone of a well-functioning educational system. They encompass a wide range of activities, including resource management, policy implementation, staff coordination, and stakeholder engagement. In Nigeria, secondary school administration faces several persistent issues that hinder the realization of positive change and improvement. These challenges, if not addressed, can stifle the potential of the education sector to contribute effectively to national progress and the development of students. As the nation navigates the complexities of the 21st century, effective school administration has become critical to achieving educational reforms, improving student outcomes, and fostering overall national development. However, several persistent administrative problems continue to hinder progress, making it difficult for secondary schools to adapt to modern educational standards and expectations.

This study focuses on identifying and analyzing the key administrative challenges that impede the efficient functioning of secondary schools in Nigeria. Issues such as insufficient funding, poor communication channels, lack of professional development for administrators, and rigid bureaucratic structures have long been cited as barriers to educational reform. Additionally, the gap between policy formulation at the national level and practical implementation at the school level further complicates the administrative landscape.

Addressing these issues is not only essential for enhancing the quality of education but also for creating an environment where students and teachers can thrive. A deeper understanding of these obstacles can inform policy changes and management strategies that are tailored to the unique needs of Nigerian schools, ensuring that they are equipped to meet the demands of modern education. By exploring these administrative challenges, this study aims to shed light on the critical reforms needed to enable secondary schools in Nigeria to embrace positive change and improvement in the 21st century.

Significance of the Study

This significance of this research includes the following:

i. Provides a roadmap for policymakers to enact practical and targeted reforms that can transform the management of schools, thereby raising the standard of education in Nigeria.

ii. Highlights the disparities and the need for equitable management practices fostering social equity and inclusivity.

iii. Emphasizes the role of continuous professional development for school administrators, making it a key consideration for those looking to strengthen the leadership capacity of Nigeria’s secondary schools.

iv. Provides insight into the day-to-day challenges encountered by school leaders, helping to bridge the gap between national educational policies and their execution and ensuring that reforms have a real and lasting impact on the ground.

Overview of Key Administrative Issues in Nigerian Secondary Schools

The persistent administrative challenges faced by secondary schools in Nigeria pose significant barriers to progress and the overall improvement of the education sector. To achieve meaningful and sustainable change in the 21st century, these obstacles must be addressed comprehensively. This paper posits that targeted interventions to resolve issues such as inadequate funding, ineffective leadership, lack of professional development, and poor stakeholder engagement are crucial for fostering a modern and inclusive education system. By addressing these administrative problems, Nigeria's secondary schools can become more effective in preparing students for the complexities of the contemporary world and contributing to national development. These key problems or challenges include the following:

1. **Bureaucratic Constraints and Rigid Structures**: The centralized nature of Nigeria's education system creates bureaucratic bottlenecks that hinder efficient decision-making at the school level. This rigidity often stifles the ability of school leaders to respond to local challenges swiftly. According to Ayeni and Bamire (2022), decentralizing certain aspects of school management could enable more localized decision-making, allowing schools to adapt to their unique needs and circumstances. It also discusses how the centralized nature of Nigeria's education system limits the autonomy of school administrators, leading to delayed decision-making and a lack of responsiveness to local needs. Decentralization could provide school leaders with the flexibility to address their unique challenges more effectively. However, Legbo (2022) notes that excessive bureaucracy often results in rigid administrative structures, stifling innovation and creativity in managing school resources

   Empowering school administrators with greater autonomy can encourage more innovative approaches to school management, but this must be accompanied by accountability measures to ensure transparency and effectiveness.

2. **Poor Communication and Stakeholder Engagement**: Effective communication between school administrators, teachers, parents, and community members is critical for fostering a supportive learning environment. However, studies like Fashiku, Okotoni, and Yusuf (2018) have highlighted the lack of strong communication channels in many Nigerian secondary schools. This communication gap often leads to low parental involvement, which is essential for student success and community support. Building better communication frameworks can help engage parents and communities in school activities, fostering a collaborative approach to education that supports student outcomes. Rayoso & Bertillo (2023) emphasize that stakeholder engagement is crucial for creating a collaborative learning environment, as it ensures that the voices of parents and community members are considered in school decisions.
3. **Inadequate Funding and Resource Allocation:** The chronic underfunding of secondary schools in Nigeria remains one of the most significant challenges to effective administration. According to Legbo (2022), the lack of sufficient financial resources hampers the ability of school administrators to provide necessary infrastructure, learning materials, and support services. This problem is compounded by the inequitable distribution of funds, which often leaves rural schools at a disadvantage compared to their urban counterparts. Without addressing this financial gap, efforts to improve the overall quality of education will remain insufficient and unevenly implemented. Many schools face financial limitations that impact their ability to provide quality education and necessary resources for students. Insufficient funding can result in inadequate staffing, outdated infrastructure, limited access to technology, and a lack of extracurricular opportunities. These budget constraints pose significant challenges for administrators in managing resources effectively and ensuring equitable access to education.

According to Ihebom, Ajuru and Uko (2020), the funding of education in Nigeria is done by the federal government through ministry of education. The federal ministry of education on the 16th of April 2018 declared that the funding of education at all levels in Nigeria is below the benchmark recommended by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). While UNESCO's benchmark for funding of education is 15 percent to 20 per cent of the national budget and 6 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), Nigeria has been allocating 7 per cent of the national budget to the funding of its education. Since 1999 when democratic governance returned, the annual budgetary allocation to education in Nigeria has been between four percent and 10 percent.

The global organization recommended the budgetary benchmark to nations adequately cater for rising education demands. In view of this, in 2018, the proposal presented to the National Assembly, the then President Muhammadu Buhari allocated only 7.04% of the 8.6 trillion budget to education. Currently, President Ahmed Bola Tinubu's 'Budget of Renewed Hope', recently submitted to the National Assembly proposed a N27.5 trillion expenditure for the 2024 fiscal year. A review of the budget indicates that the education sector got N1. 54 trillion, representing 6.39 per cent of the total budget (Premium Times, 2024). Even the blind can see in Figure 1, how Nigeria's system of educational funding has degraded in the last few years and the government of the day seem to be reluctant to improve it. Compared to the present situation, the country's exchange rate 6.39 % in 2024 is same as 5.94% of 2018.

Figure 1

Funding of Education: % of GDP of various countries from year 2018-2024

Country	Expenditure on education (% of GDP)	Year
Marshall Islands	15.8	2019
Cuba	11.5	2020
Micronesia	10.5	2020
Kiribati	15.6	2021
Somaliland	9.6	2021
Bhutan	8.1	2022
Lesotho	6.5	2018
South Africa	6.2	2018
United States	6.1	2020
Nigeria	5.94	2018

Nigeria	6.39	2024

Source: World Bank, 2024.

4. **Lack of Professional Development for School Leaders**: Effective leadership is a cornerstone of successful school administration, yet many Nigerian school leaders lack access to ongoing training and professional development. As Wiyono (2018) notes, school administrators need continuous learning opportunities to keep pace with modern educational practices and management techniques. The absence of such opportunities results in outdated administrative practices and a lack of innovative solutions to emerging challenges. Training programs that focus on leadership skills, digital literacy, and stakeholder engagement are vital for empowering school administrators to make data-driven decisions that can enhance school performance. Wiyono (2018) highlights the importance of continuous learning opportunities for school administrators, emphasizing that regular training can keep them updated with modern educational practices and management techniques. Effective leadership requires the ability to adapt to changing educational demands, which can only be achieved through structured professional development programs. Likewise, Ayeni & Bamire (2022) point out that professional development is critical for equipping school leaders with skills in digital literacy, stakeholder engagement, and strategic planning, which are essential for making data-driven decisions that can enhance school performance.

5. Challenges in Teacher Recruitment and Retention: The recruitment and retention of qualified teachers is a major administrative challenge that affects the quality of education in secondary schools. Factors such as low salaries, poor working conditions, and limited opportunities for career advancement have led to high turnover rates among teachers, particularly in rural areas (Rayoso & Bertillo, 2023). This turnover creates instability within schools and increases the administrative burden of hiring and training new staff. Addressing these issues through better incentives, improved working conditions, and support for professional growth is essential for creating a stable and effective teaching workforce.

6. **Poor Maintenance and Inadequate facilities:** When the government sets policies on school management for the maintenance of the school, most of these policies are not implemented. Research shows that the UBE legislation has laws governing the state, local, and federal government in funding the public primary level of education. There are inadequate facilities in these schools and even when funds are directed, these funds are not implemented adequately for the establishment of the school or fully funded for the purpose it was directed for. This becomes a problem for the school administration. Omisola (2020) points out that while the government has policies for maintaining school infrastructure, these are often poorly implemented, leading to dilapidated facilities and inadequate learning environments. Fashiku et al. (2018) note that the lack of adequate facilities, such as classrooms, science labs, and libraries, directly affects the quality of education and student engagement.

7. **Problem of Institutional Capacity Gap:** In recent times, there has been excessive growth in the enrollment population of primary and secondary schools. This excessive growth does not amount to the productivity and effectiveness of the school management. In a case where a class is over 100 students, there is no possibility to establish a student-teacher relationship among the students and this does not lead to proper and effective school management, especially when there is the absence of the student's statements on the date of closure results is an example of institutional capacity gaps. However, capacity building involves activities aimed at enhancing an entity's ability to address challenges, improve performance, and adapt to changing circumstances

(Maxwell, 2024). When there is an inadequate supply of classrooms for students to learn in respect to production, science laboratories, sporting facilities, qualified teachers for every subject, etc. More classrooms should be built by the community and other bodies apart from the government. Private agencies can also establish schools in these communities making education affordable and reliable.

8. **Problem of Discipline in Schools:** The school administration is faced with the problem of indiscipline among students and even among staff. There are situations where fights and violence occur in schools due to indiscipline.This must be controlled for the predetermined objectives of the school to the attainable. Examples of staff indiscipline are lateness to classes, absence from work without permission, or refusing to sign the time book examples of student indiscipline are stealing, wearing of wrong or improper uniform, breaking bounds, fighting, and so on. Disruptive behaviour is a concern to schools and parents and to fellow students, whose education may be adversely affected. So, it cannot be ignored, and schools must tailor a well-understood sound behaviour and discipline policy
(Ajibola & Ali, 2024).

9. **Poor Infrastructure:** One of the primary challenges faced by secondary schools in Nigeria is the lack of adequate infrastructure. Insufficient classrooms, dilapidated buildings, inadequate libraries, and outdated teaching facilities hinder the learning process. Currently, infrastructure is the most challenging factor that militates against the country's effort for sustainable economic and social development. Inadequate and dilapidated infrastructure isa problem as it retards development (Salisu, 2016). This issue necessitates increased investment in infrastructure development and maintenance to create a conducive learning environment for students.
10. **Teacher Shortage and Quality:** There is a shortage of qualified and experienced teachers in many secondary schools across Nigeria. This shortage is exacerbated by inadequate remuneration, leading to difficulty in attracting and retaining talented educators. Teachers are very important in any educational system, they are the foundation layers for any developed and developing countries (Ihebom & Uko, 2020). This is because the quality of teachers determines the quality of teaching and learning in any educational system. Secondary school administrations should offer competitive salaries, provide opportunities for professional development, and create a conducive working environment to attract competent teachers.
11. **Examination Malpractice:** Examination malpractice continues to cast a shadow on the integrity of the Nigerian education system. The prevalence of cheating and leaking of exam questions undermines the credibility of students' qualifications. Stronger security measures during examinations, improved supervision, and stricter penalties for offenders are necessary to curb this issue. Additionally, fostering a culture of integrity and ethics in schools is crucial to overcome this challenge.
12. **Inequality and Disparity:** The Nigerian education system faces significant disparities between urban and rural areas. Many rural secondary schools lack basic facilities and qualified teachers, leading to unequal access to quality education. The government should prioritize the equitable distribution of resources, ensuring that all schools, regardless of location, receive adequate support in terms of infrastructure, learning materials, and qualified teachers.
13. **Technological Integration:** The lack of technology integration in Nigerian secondary schools hinders students' development of digital skills needed in the modern world. Administrators should strive to incorporate technology into teaching and create digital literacy programs. Government initiatives, such as providing computers and internet access to schools, can also help bridge the digital divide.
14. **Bullying and Violence:** Bullying and violence pose serious challenges to secondary school administrators in Nigeria. These issues create an unsafe environment and hinder students' well-being and academic performance. Schools should prioritize the implementation of anti-bullying

policies, engage in regular sensitization programs, and enforce disciplinary measures to combat these problems.

15. **Parental Involvement:** Lack of parental involvement in the education of their children affects students' motivation and academic success. Secondary school administrators should encourage and facilitate parental engagement through regular communication, parent-teacher associations, and involvement in school activities. Parental education programs can also help parents understand their role in supporting their children's education.
16. **Lack of Career Guidance:** Secondary school students often lack access to proper career guidance and counseling services. To address this, schools should invest in career guidance programs, which would provide students with information about different career paths, university admissions, and scholarship opportunities. Collaboration with job placement agencies and successful professionals can also expose students to various career options.
17. **Lack of Accountability:** Accountability issues plague secondary school administration in Nigeria, leading to corruption, mismanagement of funds, and poor educational outcomes. Enhancing transparency in financial management, strengthening oversight mechanisms, and enforcing strict sanctions against offenders can help foster a culture of accountability among administrators.

The Urgency of Addressing Administrative Challenges in the 21st Century

1. Addressing administrative issues in secondary schools is not just an internal school matter; it is crucial for achieving Nigeria's broader social and economic development goals. As Pieters (2021) notes, education plays a fundamental role in shaping a productive workforce and fostering innovation. By improving the administration of secondary schools, Nigeria can ensure that its education system contributes positively to national progress, providing students with the skills needed to thrive in a competitive global economy.

2. The 21st century has brought rapid technological advancements that have transformed education worldwide. Nigerian secondary schools must adapt to these changes to remain relevant and effective. Bowen and Kisida (2023) argue that integrating technology into school administration can streamline processes, improve data management, and enhance student learning experiences. However, many Nigerian schools lack the necessary technological infrastructure and expertise. Addressing administrative challenges, including the training of administrators in digital tools, is essential for schools to harness the benefits of technology in education.

3. Administrative issues such as funding disparities and uneven resource allocation perpetuate inequalities in Nigeria's education system. Omisola (2020) emphasizes that creating equitable learning opportunities requires addressing these underlying administrative barriers. By ensuring that all schools, regardless of their location, have access to necessary resources and competent leadership, Nigeria can promote a more inclusive education system that provides equal opportunities for all students.

4. Secondary education plays a crucial role in shaping students' ability to think critically and creatively. Effective school administration can create an environment where these skills are nurtured. As Enamhe (2013) highlights, arts education, including programs like fabric-based arts, can significantly enhance student engagement and creativity. However, such programs require strong administrative support to thrive. Addressing administrative obstacles ensures that schools can implement diverse curricula that foster creativity, preparing students for the challenges of the modern world.

Recommendations for Addressing Administrative Issues

1. The Nigerian government must prioritize increased funding for secondary education to address critical resource shortages. This includes not only higher overall investment but also a transparent framework for equitable distribution of funds to ensure that resources reach the schools most in need.

2. coordinated effort to provide professional development for school administrators is essential. This should include workshops on leadership skills, digital literacy, and stakeholder engagement. Such training can enable school leaders to adopt best practices and innovative approaches to school management.

3. Schools should be granted more autonomy to make decisions that address their specific needs, especially in areas like resource management and curriculum development. However, this decentralization must include accountability mechanisms to ensure that school leaders are effectively using their autonomy to improve educational outcomes.

4. Schools should establish regular channels for communication with parents, such as parent-teacher associations, digital platforms, and community meetings. This will build stronger relationships between schools and their communities, leading to increased support for students and educational initiatives.

5. To attract and retain qualified teachers, it is essential to offer competitive salaries, create better working conditions, and provide opportunities for career advancement. Incentives for teachers willing to work in underserved areas can help address the disparities between urban and rural schools.

6. To accommodate the growing student population, both the government and community stakeholders should invest in building more classrooms, science laboratories, and sporting facilities. This can help reduce overcrowding and improve the quality of learning.

7. Schools should establish clear codes of conduct for both students and staff, outlining expectations for behavior and the consequences for misconduct. This will create a consistent standard of discipline.

8. The government should allocate specific budgets for building new classrooms, renovating existing facilities, and maintaining libraries and science labs in secondary schools.

9. Incentives such as additional allowances, scholarships for further education, and career advancement opportunities for teachers who accept postings in remote or underserved areas should be created.

10. Schools should introduce integrity workshops that emphasize the importance of honesty and ethics to students before major exams, fostering a culture of accountability.

11. The government should establish policies to ensure that funding and resources are distributed fairly between urban and rural schools, prioritizing the needs of underserved areas.

12. There should be collaboration with technology companies to provide computers, internet access, and other digital tools to schools, particularly those in rural areas. Likewise, professional development for teachers should include training on integrating technology into teaching and using online learning platforms to enhance student engagement.

13. Regular workshops and sensitization programs for students, staff, and parents about the harmful effects of bullying and violence should be conducted, and how to report it.

14. Workshops that educate parents on how they can support their children's learning at home should be conducted, emphasizing the importance of their involvement in the academic process.

15. Schools should work with governmental and non-governmental bodies to enforce anti-corruption laws within the education sector, ensuring that mismanagement and embezzlement are addressed swiftly.

Conclusion

Addressing the administrative challenges of secondary schools in Nigeria is critical for achieving a modern, inclusive, and high-quality education system that meets the demands of the 21st century. By focusing on improving leadership capacity, resource management, and stakeholder engagement, Nigeria can transform its secondary schools into effective engines of educational and social progress. This position paper calls for a strategic and evidence-based approach to resolving these issues, ensuring that Nigeria's secondary education system can provide the foundation needed for the country's continued growth and development. Through targeted reforms, Nigeria can ensure that every student, regardless of their background, has access to the education they need to succeed in an increasingly complex world.

References

Adesina, A. E. (2011). Perceived impact of primary education on the attainment of Nigerian Vision 2020. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, 2*, 2117-2039.

Ajibola, A. L., & Hamadi, A. A. (2014). Disciplinary measures in Nigerian senior secondary schools: Issues and prospects. *Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSR-JRME), 4*(3), 11-17. http://www.iosrjournals.org

Ayeni, A. J., & Bamire, F. B. (2022). The role of school-based management and students' academic performance in secondary schools in Owo Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Education, Teaching, and Social Sciences, 2*(3), 49-63. https://doi.org/10.47747/ijets.v2i3.794

Enamhe, B. (2013). The role of arts education in Nigeria. *African Journal of Teacher Education, 3*(1). https://doi.org/10.21083/ajote.v3i1.1963

Federal Government of Nigeria. (2014). *National policy on education.* Abuja: NERDC.

Ihebom, B., & Uko, J. O. (2020). Challenges and prospects of secondary education in Nigeria. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education, 13*(4), 670-688.

Ikgbusi, N. G., & Iheanacho, R. C. (2016). Factors militating against effective administration of secondary schools in Anambra State. *World Journal of Educational Research, 3*(1), 213-226. https://www.scholink.org/ojs/index.php/wjer

Kisida, B., Winter, M. A., & Cho, I. (2023). The impact of principal attrition and replacement on indicators of school quality. *Education Finance and Policy, 18*(2), 302-318.

Legbo, T.-I. G. (2022). Exploring the relevance of school-based curriculum development with culture integration. *European Journal of Education and Pedagogy, 3*(2), 36–42. https://doi.org/10.24018/ejedu.2022.3.2.139

Maxwell, D. (2024). Capacity building as a strategic tool for attainment of quality education in public schools in Nigeria. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education, 17*(1), 111-126.

Nanbak, A. J. (2020). An analysis of secondary education in Nigeria: A need for rethinking in a philosophical perspective. *Benue State Journal of Educational Management, 2*(1), 127-132.

Omisola, R. (2020). Art education in Nigerian secondary schools: A case study of Osun State. *International Journal for Cross-Disciplinary Subjects in Education, 11*(2), 4294-4304.

Rayoso, B. B., & Bertillo, J. B. (2023). The role of school-based management teams in enhancing learners' academic performance. SSRN Electronic Journal. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4320492

Salisu, A. K. (2016). Infrastructure condition in public secondary schools in Katsina: Implication for rural development. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, *21*(10)(4), 40-46. https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-2110044046

Suleiman, H., & Umejiaku, C. (2023). Transforming secondary education in Nigeria: Problems, prospects and the way forward. *International Journal of Social Science and Education Research Studies, 3*(5), 778-783.

Suleiman, Q. (2023). 2024 budget: Tinubu's improved funding for education still below UNESCO recommendation. *Premium Times*. https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/653545-2024-budget-tinubus-improved-funding-for-education-still-below-unesco-recommendation.html

Wiyono, B.B. (2017). The effect of self-evaluation on the principals' transformational leadership, teachers' work motivation, teamwork effectiveness, and school improvement.* International Journal of Leadership in Education*, *21*(3), 1-21.

Sulaiman O., (2019 June 20) Rethinking education in Nigeria [Online]. Tribune Online; Retrieved from https://tribuneonlineng.com