

The Role of Nigeria's Education in Developing Future Leaders: Current Challenges and Prospects

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ABSTRACT: In Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, education plays a significant role in shaping future leaders. Education not only provides the necessary knowledge and skills but also shapes attitudes and values that are critical for leadership. Despite the significant role education is meant to play in cultivating future leaders, the ongoing leadership crisis in Nigeria has raised doubts about the effectiveness of education in fulfilling this role. Persistent issues such as widespread corruption, the politicization of the education sector, lack of motivation among teachers, and infrastructural decay have created significant roadblocks in the path to developing future leaders capable of driving Nigeria's growth and development. It is against this backdrop that this study was undertaken to examine the role of Nigeria's educational sector in developing future leaders: Current challenges and prospects. The study reviewed relevant literature in line with education and leadership. The study was anchored on the Human Capital Theory while qualitative research design was adopted for the study. Data were sourced from the secondary sources such as textbooks, newspapers, government publication and other allies' material. The study noted that despite the importance of education in leadership development, the sector is burdened by infrastructural deficits, inadequate funding, and issues with the quality and relevance of education. To maximize the role of education in leadership development, strategies involving curriculum reform, pedagogical innovation, character education, experiential learning, and stakeholder engagement are proposed. With these strategies, Nigeria's educational sector can overcome existing challenges and effectively nurture competent and ethical leaders, instrumental in steering the country towards prosperity.

KEYWORD: Education, Future Leaders, Leadership, Development, Organization.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a multifaceted concept that transcends mere acquisition of knowledge. It is a process that involves the transfer of knowledge, habits, skills, values, and attitudes from one person to another, typically through teaching, training, or research (UNESCO, 2017). It's a lifelong process that starts from early childhood and continues throughout our lives. One of the primary purposes of education is to equip individuals with the cognitive skills required to navigate the world, including critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making capabilities (Blosser, 2019). Beyond cognitive skills, education also fosters social and emotional development, helping individuals to understand and manage their emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Jones et al., 2015). The modern education system is diverse and includes formal

(e.g., primary, secondary, tertiary), non-formal (e.g., vocational, adult education), and informal education (e.g., self-directed learning, learning from experience) (Coombs & Ahmed, 1974). Each form serves a unique purpose and caters to different learning needs and styles. However, the quality and accessibility of education remain significant issues worldwide. According to the World Bank (2020), around 258 million children and youth are out of school. This alarming figure underlines the importance of intensifying global efforts to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, as stated in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 (UN, 2015).

The educational sector in Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, has a rich history and faces unique challenges and opportunities. Since Nigeria gained independence in 1960, the country has made substantial efforts to build a robust education system (Okojie, 2008). Nigeria's education system is divided into three sections: primary, secondary, and tertiary education. Primary education typically lasts six years and is intended for children aged six to eleven. Secondary education, which is also six years, is divided into two three-year phases: Junior Secondary School and Senior Secondary School. Tertiary education includes universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2014).

Despite the clear structure, the Nigerian educational sector faces several critical challenges. A significant issue is the quality of education, with many Nigerian students performing poorly in national examinations. According to the West African Examination Council (2018), more than half of the students who sat for the West African Senior School Certificate Examination did not achieve the minimum credits in five subjects, including English and Mathematics. In addition to quality, access to education is also a major challenge, particularly in the northern region where conflict and poverty have made schooling difficult for many children. According to UNICEF (2020), over 10.5 million children in Nigeria are out of school, the highest number in the world.

The Nigerian government has been making efforts to address these challenges. For instance, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, launched in 1999, aimed at providing free and compulsory education for all Nigerian children (UBE, 2020). However, the effectiveness of such programmes has been hindered by insufficient funding, inadequate infrastructure, and teacher shortages (Okojie, 2008).

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the leaders of tomorrow. It is through education that individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to lead. It provides a foundation upon which leadership qualities are built and nurtured (Northouse, 2018). The first aspect to consider is the role of education in cognitive development. Education is not merely about imparting knowledge; it is about developing the cognitive skills necessary for effective leadership. These include critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, and the ability to learn from experience (Paul & Elder, 2006). These skills are fundamental to leadership as they enable leaders to analyze situations, make informed decisions, and adapt to change (Hannah et al., 2009). Second, education contributes to the development of interpersonal skills. These are the abilities necessary for leaders to interact effectively with others. They include communication skills, negotiation skills, and conflict resolution skills (Riggio, 2014). Effective leaders are those who can articulate their vision clearly, negotiate win-win solutions, and resolve conflicts in a manner that maintains group cohesion. Through group projects, presentations, and other interactive activities, education provides a platform for students to practice and enhance these skills.

Third, education fosters ethical judgment. Leaders are often faced with ethical dilemmas that require them to balance the interests of different stakeholders. Education, particularly in subjects such as philosophy, ethics, and law, can help students understand the ethical implications of their decisions and actions (Ciulla, 2004). This understanding is crucial in leadership as it promotes trust, fairness, and respect within the group or organization. T

Beyond these skills and competencies, education also plays a role in shaping the values and attitudes of future leaders. It encourages qualities such as resilience, empathy, and the ability to inspire and motivate others. Resilience is the ability to bounce back from failure or adversity, a quality that is crucial in leadership given the challenges and uncertainties that leaders often face (Masten, 2001). Empathy, on the other hand, is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. It enables leaders to connect with their followers on an emotional level, thereby fostering trust and cooperation (Goleman, 2015).

Institutions of learning, particularly universities, serve as breeding grounds for future leaders. They offer various platforms where students can practice and enhance their leadership skills. These include student governance, clubs, societies, and sports teams. Through these platforms, students can take on leadership roles, face real-life challenges, and learn from their experiences. This form of experiential learning is invaluable in leadership development as it enables students to apply the theories and concepts they learn in class to real-world situations (Kolb, 2014). However, it's important to note that while education plays a significant role in leadership development, it is not the only factor. Other factors, such as personality traits, experiences, and the influence of mentors and role models, also contribute to leadership development (Avolio et al., 2009).

In Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, education plays a significant role in shaping future leaders. Education not only provides the necessary knowledge and skills but also shapes attitudes and values that are critical for leadership (Adeosun, 2014). Cognitive development is a primary role of education, fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. These skills are fundamental for leadership as they equip future leaders to analyze situations, make informed decisions, and adapt to change (Kpolovie et al., 2016). The Nigerian educational system, through its curriculum, strives to instill these skills in students. However, more needs to be done to shift the focus from rote learning to critical thinking and creativity, which are vital for effective leadership (Onuka & Durowoju, 2013).

Interpersonal skills are another critical area where education can contribute to leadership development. Effective leaders need strong communication skills, the ability to negotiate, and the aptitude to resolve conflicts (Riggio, 2014). The Nigerian education system can provide a platform for students to develop and enhance these skills through group projects, presentations, and other interactive activities. Ethical judgment is a leadership quality that education can foster. Leaders often face ethical dilemmas, and education can help them understand the ethical implications of their decisions (Adeosun, 2014). Ethics education, which is still relatively underdeveloped in Nigeria, needs to be integrated more thoroughly into the curriculum across all levels of education. Beyond these competencies, education plays a significant role in shaping the values and attitudes of future leaders. Qualities such as resilience, empathy, and the ability to inspire and motivate others are essential for leadership. The educational system, through various activities and teaching methods, can help inculcate these qualities in students (Okojie, 2008). In addition, Teachers in debt knowledge, experience, training and skills on the job help students to become useful members in society (Gbarage, & Ololube, 2022).

Universities and other institutions of higher learning serve as breeding grounds for future leaders in Nigeria. They offer various platforms, such as student governance, clubs, and societies, where students can practice and enhance their leadership skills (Okebukola, 2002). Through these platforms, students can take on leadership roles, face real-life challenges, and learn from their experiences. However, it's important to note that while education plays a significant role in leadership development, it is not the only factor. Other factors, such as personality traits, experiences, and the influence of mentors and role models, also contribute to leadership development (Avolio, et al., 2009).

Despite the significant role education is meant to play in cultivating future leaders, the ongoing leadership crisis in Nigeria has raised doubts about the effectiveness of education in fulfilling this role. Persistent issues such as widespread corruption, the politicization of the education sector, lack of motivation among teachers,

and infrastructural decay have created significant roadblocks in the path to developing future leaders capable of driving Nigeria's growth and development (Adeosun, 2014).

Corruption, a pervasive issue in Nigeria, has seeped into the education sector, undermining its effectiveness and credibility. It manifests in various forms, such as bribery in admissions, misappropriation of funds, and academic dishonesty, all of which compromise the quality of education and the integrity of future leaders (Ibukun, 2011). The politicization of education is another major concern. Political interference in academic affairs, such as appointments, promotions, and funding, can distort educational priorities and hinder the development of effective leaders (Okojie, 2008). Further, the motivation of teachers, which is a critical factor in the quality of education, is often low due to poor remuneration and working conditions. This demotivation can affect the quality of instruction and, consequently, the development of leadership skills among students (Oni, 2014).

Furthermore, infrastructural decay, characterized by inadequate classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and other essential facilities, limits the opportunities for experiential learning, a critical aspect of leadership development (Ejeh, 2006). Education is expected to be a solution to Nigeria's leadership crisis, providing the means to nurture leaders equipped with the right skills and values. However, the myriad challenges plaguing the Nigerian education system have cast doubts on its capacity to achieve this goal. As such, it is crucial to comprehensively examine the role of Nigeria's education sector in developing future leaders and its associated challenges. Doing so can provide valuable insights for robust policy-making aimed at addressing these issues, thereby enhancing the capacity of the education sector to nurture future leaders who can propel Nigeria to greater heights of development.

The Aim and Objectives of the study

The aim of the study is to examine the roles of educational sector in developing future leaders in Nigeria.

The study was guided by the following research objectives:

- 1) Analyze the Role of Education in Leadership Development in Nigeria
- 2) Identify the Current Challenges in Nigeria's Educational Sector
- 3) Propose Strategies for Maximizing the Role of Education in Developing Future Leaders

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education

Education is a fundamental human right and a pivotal factor in achieving social, economic, and cultural development (United Nations, 1948). It is a transformative process that not only imparts knowledge, skills, and competencies, but also shapes values and attitudes, fostering personal and social development (UNESCO, 2017). The concept of education extends beyond the traditional confines of the classroom. Dewey (1938) argued that education is not merely a preparation for life, but life itself, emphasizing the importance of experiential learning. This perspective suggests that education should engage learners in meaningful activities and real-life situations, promoting critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Formal education, offered in schools and universities, is structured and curriculum-based. It plays a crucial role in building a strong foundation of knowledge and skills. It provides students with a systematic understanding of various subjects such as mathematics, science, languages, and social studies (OECD, 2019). Furthermore, it shapes social behavior, teaching students to cooperate, respect others, and abide by social norms (Lickona, 1991).

However, the educational landscape is not without its challenges. Disparities in access to quality education persist, particularly in low and middle-income countries. Poverty, gender, disability, and conflict are among the factors that prevent millions of children and adolescents from attending school (UNESCO, 2020). According to the World Bank (2019), these disparities have long-term implications, undermining economic growth and perpetuating cycles of poverty and social inequality.

Moreover, the quality of education remains a concern. Many students, even those who complete primary school, lack basic literacy and numeracy skills (UNESCO, 2017). This learning crisis underscores the need to improve not only access to education but also its quality. Instructional quality, learning resources, school infrastructure, and teacher training are among the factors that influence learning outcomes (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015).

In the 21st century, the demands of the knowledge-based economy and rapid technological changes are reshaping education. Today's learners need not only academic knowledge but also a broad range of skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy, to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Thus, education systems worldwide are undergoing reforms to integrate these 21st-century skills into their curricula. Furthermore, lifelong learning has gained prominence in educational discourse. As jobs become obsolete and new ones emerge, individuals must continuously update their skills and competencies. Lifelong learning fosters adaptability and resilience, enabling individuals to navigate the changing labor market (OECD, 2019).

Education is a multifaceted concept with profound implications for individuals and societies. Despite the challenges, education remains a powerful tool for empowering individuals, reducing poverty, and promoting sustainable development. Therefore, efforts should be made to ensure that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, has access to quality education.

Leadership

Leadership in any organization is about given directions, planning, organizing, co-ordination, and motivating others to follow in order to achieve organizational set goals (Gbarage, 2020). Leadership is an integral component of human societies, from the smallest social units to the most complex organizations and nations. It is a multifaceted concept that has been examined and theorized about from various perspectives across different academic disciplines (Northouse, 2018).

Historically, leadership was conceptualized under the "Great Man" theory, which posited that leaders are born, not made, and are destined to rise when the time is right (Carlyle, 1841). This view was later challenged by the trait approach, which suggested that certain individuals have inherent traits that make them effective leaders (Stogdill, 2018). However, these trait theories were criticized for their failure to consider situational factors that might influence leadership effectiveness (Vroom & Yetton, 2013).

The behavioral approach to leadership emerged as a response to the limitations of trait theories. It argued that leadership is not just about who leaders are, but what they do (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 2019). This approach identified two main types of leader behaviors: task-oriented and relationship-oriented behaviors. The former focuses on accomplishing tasks, while the latter is concerned with building relationships and fostering a positive work environment (Blake & Mouton, 1964).

The contingency approach to leadership proposes that the effectiveness of a leader depends on the match between the leader's style and the situational demands (Fiedler, 1967). This approach recognizes that there is no "one best way" to lead, and that different situations call for different leadership styles.

Transformational leadership, a widely researched leadership style, emphasizes the importance of inspiring and motivating followers to exceed their own self-interests for the good of the organization (Bass & Riggio,

2006). This type of leadership has been associated with various positive outcomes, including increased follower satisfaction, performance, and organizational innovation (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Leadership, however, is not without its challenges. Ethical issues often arise in leadership, as leaders must make difficult decisions that can have significant impacts on their followers and organizations (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). Leaders must also navigate the complexities of leading diverse teams, managing conflict, and leading change in turbulent environments (Northouse, 2018).

In the 21st century, the concept of leadership continues to evolve. Servant leadership, which emphasizes the leader's role as a servant to their followers, has gained popularity (Greenleaf, 1977). This type of leadership focuses on the growth and well-being of followers, community service, and shared decision-making (Spears, 2010).

In conclusion, leadership is a complex and dynamic process that involves influencing others towards the achievement of a common goal. It is influenced by the traits and behaviors of the leader, the characteristics of the followers, and the situational context. As the world becomes more interconnected and diverse, understanding and practicing effective leadership will continue to be a critical factor in organizational success and societal progress.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING: HUMAN CAPITAL THEORY

The Role of Nigeria's Educational Sector in Developing Future Leaders: Current Challenges and Prospects" is a complex topic that calls for the application of various theoretical frameworks. Human Capital Theory (HCT), proposed by Schultz (1961), and later expanded upon by Becker (1964), is one such theory that can be highly relevant to this topic. HCT posits that investments in education and training enhance individuals' productivity, which in turn contributes to economic growth and development.

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Human Capital Theory (HCT) was proposed in the 1960s by economists Theodore Schultz (1961) and Gary Becker (1964). According to Schultz (1961), human capital refers to the knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired through education, training, and experience, which increase individuals' economic productivity. Becker (1964) further elaborated this concept, arguing that investments in human capital, such as education and training, lead to improved economic outcomes at both individual and societal levels.

Major Assumptions of Human Capital Theory

The fundamental premise of HCT is that education and training are investments that yield returns in the form of higher productivity, wages, and economic growth (Becker, 1964). The theory suggests that individuals decide to invest in education by weighing the costs, such as tuition fees and foregone earnings, against the expected benefits, such as higher lifetime earnings (Becker, 1962). HCT also assumes that not all education and training are equally valuable. The quality of education, the field of study, and the fit between an individual's skills and job requirements are among the factors that influence the return on investment in human capital (Schultz, 1975).

Applying HCT to the Nigerian education sector provides a useful lens through which to examine its role in developing future leaders. The theory underscores the importance of education in equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective leadership. According to this perspective, investing in high-quality education can help cultivate a cadre of competent and visionary leaders who can drive Nigeria's socio-economic development (Okojie, 2009). However, the current challenges facing Nigeria's educational sector, such as limited access to quality education, inadequate funding, and outdated curricula, may hinder its

ability to develop future leaders (Oni, 2019). These challenges suggest that investments in Nigeria's educational sector may not be yielding the expected returns in terms of leadership development, underscoring the need for policy interventions. Moreover, HCT emphasizes the importance of aligning education with the demands of the labor market (Schultz, 1975). This has implications for leadership development, as it suggests that Nigeria's educational sector should not only provide general education but also foster leadership skills that are relevant to the country's socio-economic context.

In conclusion, HCT offers valuable insights into the role of Nigeria's educational sector in developing future leaders. It underscores the importance of investing in quality education and aligning education with labor market demands. However, to harness the full potential of education in leadership development, it is imperative to address the current challenges facing Nigeria's educational sector.

METHODOLOGY

This research employed a qualitative approach to elucidate the roles of educational leaders in cultivating future leaders in Nigeria. A comprehensive review of secondary data was undertaken, encompassing a diverse array of sources. These included textbooks, scholarly articles from various journals, official government publications, and online resources, among other relevant materials. The selected data were subjected to a rigorous content analysis, a research technique used to interpret textual data within their context. This method allowed for the identification of patterns, themes, and biases, providing a deep, nuanced understanding of the research topic. By employing such a methodological approach, the study aimed to present an informed, holistic view of the impact of educational leadership on the development of future leaders within the Nigerian context. The findings from this research could potentially inform educational policies and practices aimed at fostering effective leadership in Nigeria.

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

Role of Education in Leadership Development in Nigeria

Education plays a critical role in leadership development, shaping the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective leadership (Day, 2011). In Nigeria, the educational sector is an integral part of developing future leaders, preparing them to navigate the complexities of the country's socio-political and economic landscape. The relevance of education in leadership development stems from its ability to impart cognitive abilities and soft skills essential for leadership roles. Cognitive abilities such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making are fundamental to leaders' effectiveness (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, & Fleishman, 2000). These abilities, fostered through a well-rounded education, enable leaders to analyze complex situations, generate solutions, and make informed decisions.

Education also nurtures soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, and emotional intelligence, deemed crucial for leadership (Goleman, 1998). Effective leaders are adept at expressing ideas, inspiring others, building relationships, and managing conflicts. Education, especially when it incorporates experiential learning and group projects, can help students cultivate these skills (Kolb, 1984).

In Nigeria, the need for competent leaders is evident. The country grapples with challenges such as corruption, insecurity, and economic instability (Ogbeidi, 2012). Education, particularly leadership education, can equip future leaders with the skills and ethical orientation necessary to address these challenges. Leadership education, which involves the systematic development of leadership knowledge and skills (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2013), is gradually gaining recognition in Nigerian educational institutions.

However, several challenges inhibit the role of education in leadership development in Nigeria. One such challenge is the quality of education. Despite the increase in school enrollment, many Nigerian students

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graduate with inadequate knowledge and skills (World Bank, 2018). Issues such as outdated curricula, poorly trained teachers, and insufficient learning resources contribute to this quality deficit (Odukoya, Ibidunni, & Atolagbe, 2019).

Furthermore, Nigerian education often emphasizes rote learning over critical thinking and creativity (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002). This approach may not foster the cognitive abilities and innovative mindset necessary for leadership in the 21st century. In a rapidly changing world, leaders need to think critically, adapt to change, and generate novel solutions (Day, 2011).

Moreover, the Nigerian educational sector often overlooks the importance of character and ethics in leadership development. Ethical leaders, who act with integrity and prioritize the common good, are needed to tackle corruption and promote good governance in Nigeria (Ejiofor, Anugwom, & Eme, 2017). Incorporating ethics and character education into the curriculum could help nurture such leaders.

In conclusion, education is a vital instrument for leadership development in Nigeria. It nurtures the cognitive abilities, soft skills, and ethical orientation necessary for effective leadership. Despite the current challenges, with strategic reforms, the Nigerian educational sector can be a potent catalyst for developing competent and ethical leaders who can steer the country towards prosperity.

Current Challenges in Nigeria's Educational Sector

Nigeria's educational sector plays a crucial role in the nation's development and progress. However, it currently faces a myriad of challenges that hinder its effectiveness and ability to produce well-rounded, skilled individuals prepared to contribute meaningfully to society. These issues range from infrastructural deficits, inadequate funding, and quality of education, to curriculum relevance and teachers' welfare.

➤ **Infrastructural Deficits:** A key issue facing Nigeria's education sector is the pronounced infrastructural deficit. A substantial portion of schools, predominantly in rural areas, are devoid of fundamental facilities, leading to an unfavorable learning environment. According to a report by the World Bank (2018), approximately 49% of rural primary schools in Nigeria lack access to clean water, and about 77% do not have electricity. School facilities such as classrooms, libraries, and laboratories, which are instrumental to learning, are also inadequate. The Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS, 2018) states that only 35% of schools have a library, and only about 10% of schools have science laboratories.

Additionally, the issue of overcrowded classrooms is prevalent. The student-to-classroom ratio in many Nigerian schools significantly exceeds the UNESCO recommendation of 1:35. Data from the National Population Commission (NPC) and the Education Data Survey (EDS, 2015) reveal that the average pupil to classroom ratio in Nigeria is approximately 1:50, leading to overcrowded classrooms that compromise the quality of learning. In essence, the infrastructural deficits in Nigeria's educational sector present a significant challenge, negatively affecting the quality of education and the overall learning environment.

➤ **Inadequate Funding:** Inadequate funding constitutes a significant hurdle facing Nigeria's education sector. Despite the recommendation from UNESCO that 15-20% of a nation's total budget should be devoted to education, Nigeria has consistently undershot this target. For instance, in the 2020 budget, only about 6.7% of the total budget was allocated to education, falling far short of the UNESCO benchmark (Budget Office of the Federation, 2020). This chronic underfunding has led to a host of challenges within the educational system. One direct consequence is the poor maintenance of educational facilities. For example, as of 2019, only 53% of government primary schools in Nigeria had access to electricity, while only 37% had access to potable water (Nigeria Education Data Survey, 2019). Furthermore, insufficient learning materials have also been a persistent problem, with only one textbook

available for every three students in some regions (World Bank, 2018). In addition, teachers' remuneration has been adversely impacted. As per the Nigerian Union of Teachers, about 30% of teachers earn less than the minimum wage, leading to low morale and high turnover rates (Nigerian Union of Teachers, 2021).

In conclusion, the inadequate funding of Nigeria's education sector has significant repercussions, including poor infrastructure, insufficient learning materials, and low teachers' salaries, which collectively impair the quality of education.

- **Quality of Education:** The quality of education in Nigeria presents a significant concern. Despite the steady increase in school enrollment, a large proportion of students graduate without mastering the essential knowledge and skills. As per a World Bank report (2018), a staggering 50% of students who complete six years of primary education in Nigeria lack the literacy skills to read a straightforward sentence. This educational crisis can be attributed to several factors. One is the outdated nature of the curriculum, which does not adequately address the skills needed for the 21st-century labor market. According to a study by the Nigerian Education Research and Development Council (NERDC, 2016), less than 20% of the current curriculum content aligns with the skills demanded by the modern economy. The issue of poorly trained teachers also contributes to the low quality of education. A survey by the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN, 2017) revealed that approximately 30% of teachers in public primary schools are unqualified.

Additionally, a lack of sufficient learning resources further exacerbates the situation. The Nigeria Education Data Survey (2015) reported that only about one textbook is available for every three students in some regions, which is far below the UNESCO recommendation of one textbook per student.

- **Curriculum Relevance:** A significant issue confronting Nigeria's educational sector lies in the relevance, or rather the lack thereof, of the curriculum to the requirements of the nation's economy. The Nigerian educational framework has traditionally laid greater emphasis on rote memorization, often sidelining the development of crucial skills like critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and vocational competencies (Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2002). This approach, unfortunately, falls short of preparing students adequately for the demands and challenges of the 21st-century labor market. The consequence of this curricular disconnect is a labor force that is ill-prepared for modern job requirements, a fact reflected in the high unemployment rates among Nigerian graduates. Without the necessary skills to navigate and contribute effectively to the rapidly evolving world of work, many graduates find themselves ill-equipped to secure gainful employment or to create entrepreneurial opportunities.

In essence, the current educational approach in Nigeria is failing to adequately equip students with the competencies needed for the modern workplace and the dynamic global economy. To address this, a critical reassessment of the education system's goals, methods, and curriculum is needed. The emphasis should be shifted from mere rote learning to an approach that cultivates critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and vocational training, which are more aligned with the needs of today's labor market.

- **Teachers' Welfare:** Teachers' welfare is referring to good and regular payment of salary, prompt promotion when due, good healthcare, regular in-service-training, professional development, good work-life and other incentives (Gbarage, 2021). Teachers need to be motivated that will enhance job satisfaction resulting to good educational goals attainments. Teachers' welfare can positively or negatively affect productivity. Teachers need to be rewarded for their hard work. Nigerian education leaders do not value and respect teachers for their sacrifices as regard to their welfare work, and this is bad. They lack good working environments, good healthcare, professional training, lack good leadership, they are overloaded in their daily assignment; therefore, a lot of teachers are not having job satisfaction.

Gbarage, (2019) opined that teachers’ job satisfaction in an organization is all about teacher’s enjoying his/her job while working. The welfare of teachers is another pressing issue. Teachers' salaries in Nigeria are often low, and delays in salary payment are common (Ogundele & Fasasi, 2017). This situation demotivates teachers and impacts their performance, which in turn affects the quality of education. Furthermore, professional development opportunities for teachers are limited, impeding their ability to keep up with evolving pedagogical practices and curricular changes.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach. Infrastructural deficits could be addressed through increased public and private investment in education. This investment should aim not only to build more classrooms but also to provide essential amenities and learning resources. For funding issues, the government needs to prioritize education in its budgetary allocations. Additionally, innovative funding strategies, such as public-private partnerships, could be explored to supplement government funding. Improving the quality of education requires a comprehensive review and reform of the curriculum to make it more relevant to the needs of the Nigerian economy. Such reforms should emphasize the development of 21st-century skills, including critical thinking, creativity, digital literacy, and vocational skills.

Furthermore, addressing teachers' welfare involves not only improving their remuneration but also providing regular professional development opportunities. This approach would enhance their motivation and teaching efficacy, thereby improving the quality of education.

Nigeria's educational sector faces significant challenges that require urgent attention. Addressing these challenges is crucial for the development of the nation's human capital and its overall socio-economic development.

Strategies for Maximizing the Role of Education in Developing Future Leaders

The role of education in developing future leaders is critical, as it shapes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective leadership (Day, 2011). However, for education to optimally serve this role, specific strategies need to be implemented. These strategies encompass curriculum reform, pedagogical innovation, character education, experiential learning, and stakeholder engagement.

- **Curriculum Reform:** A key strategy for maximizing the role of education in leadership development is curriculum reform. The curriculum should be designed to foster the cognitive abilities and soft skills essential for leadership, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, communication, teamwork, and emotional intelligence (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, & Fleishman, 2000; Goleman, 1998). Furthermore, the curriculum should incorporate leadership education, which involves the systematic development of leadership knowledge and skills (Komives, Lucas, & McMahan, 2013). Leadership education can equip students with an understanding of leadership theories, models, and practices, and nurture their leadership potential.
- **Pedagogical Innovation:** Innovative pedagogical practices can enhance the effectiveness of leadership education. Instead of relying solely on lectures, educators can employ active learning strategies that engage students in the learning process. These strategies include case studies, simulations, role-playing, and group projects, which provide students with opportunities to apply leadership concepts and theories in practical contexts (Bonwell & Eison, 1991).
- **Character Education:** Character education (Good leadership) is another vital strategy. Ethical leaders, who act with integrity and prioritize the common good, are needed to promote good governance and societal progress (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). Character education, which aims to develop virtues such as honesty, responsibility, fairness, and respect, can help nurture ethical leaders. It can be

integrated into the curriculum and school culture through methods such as modeling, discussions, and service-learning projects.

- **Experiential Learning:** Experiential learning is a powerful approach to leadership development. According to Kolb's experiential learning theory (1984), learning is a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Leadership experiences, such as leading a group project, organizing a school event, or serving in a student government role, can provide students with opportunities to practice leadership skills, reflect on their experiences, and learn from their successes and failures.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engaging various stakeholders, including educators, parents, community members, and policymakers, can also maximize the role of education in leadership development. Stakeholder engagement can ensure the alignment of educational goals, practices, and resources with leadership development needs. It can also foster a supportive environment that encourages and recognizes student leadership (Mitra, 2004).

In sum, maximizing the role of education in developing future leaders requires a multi-pronged approach, involving curriculum reform, pedagogical innovation, character education, experiential learning, and stakeholder engagement. Implementing these strategies can help cultivate a generation of competent and ethical leaders who can steer society towards a better future.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the development of human capital, as underlined in Schultz's Human Capital Theory (1961), is fundamental for societal progress. Education, a crucial component of human capital, plays a significant role in developing future leaders. It equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective leadership, thereby enhancing the quality of human capital. However, Nigeria's educational sector, which is entrusted with the vital task of leadership development, currently faces significant challenges. Infrastructural deficits, inadequate funding, and the quality of education are significant barriers that hinder the system's effectiveness in nurturing future leaders. The disconnect between the current curriculum and the demands of the 21st-century labor market, coupled with issues related to teachers' welfare, also compromises the quality of education.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach. Curriculum reform is a key strategy. The curriculum needs to be updated to align with the demands of the modern world and to foster the cognitive abilities and soft skills essential for leadership. Pedagogical innovation, incorporating active learning strategies, can enhance the effectiveness of leadership education. Furthermore, character education is vital for nurturing ethical leaders who can tackle corruption and promote good governance.

Experiential learning, which enables students to learn from their experiences, is another powerful approach to leadership development. It provides students with opportunities to practice leadership skills, reflect on their experiences, and learn from their successes and failures. Finally, the engagement of various stakeholders can ensure the alignment of educational goals, practices, and resources with leadership development needs and foster a supportive environment that encourages and recognizes student leadership.

Human Capital Theory posits that investment in education can increase the productivity and economic output of individuals (Becker, 1964). As such, the strategies proposed in this discussion represent an investment in education that can enhance the quality of human capital in Nigeria. By improving the quality of education and maximizing its role in leadership development, these strategies can contribute to the development of competent and ethical leaders. These leaders, in turn, can steer society towards prosperity and address the challenges facing the country.

Therefore, the role of education in leadership development, and the strategies for maximizing this role, have significant implications for human capital development in Nigeria. By enhancing the quality of education and nurturing future leaders, Nigeria can harness the potential of its human capital for national development and progress.

Recommendations

Based on the above conclusion, the study recommended that:

1. **Comprehensive Curriculum Reform:** The curriculum plays a vital role in shaping students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Therefore, it is recommended that a comprehensive curriculum reform be undertaken. This reform should ensure that the curriculum is relevant to the demands of the 21st-century labor market and fosters the cognitive abilities and soft skills essential for leadership. It should also integrate leadership education and character education. Leadership education can nurture students' leadership potential, while character education can develop virtues such as honesty, responsibility, fairness, and respect, which are essential for ethical leadership. The curriculum reform should involve various stakeholders, including educators, students, parents, community members, and policymakers, to ensure diverse perspectives and needs are considered (Darling-Hammond, 2010).
2. **Improve the Quality of Teachers:** The quality of teachers significantly impacts the quality of education. Therefore, it is recommended that efforts be made to improve teacher quality. This could involve enhancing teacher training programs to equip teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and pedagogical practices. It could also involve improving teachers' welfare, including their salaries and working conditions, to enhance their motivation and job satisfaction. Furthermore, regular professional development opportunities should be provided for teachers to keep up with evolving pedagogical practices and curricular changes. Research shows that well-trained and motivated teachers can significantly enhance student learning outcomes (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005).
3. **Increase Investment in Education:** Investing in education is investing in the future. Therefore, it is recommended that both public and private investment in education be increased. This investment should aim to address infrastructural deficits, provide sufficient learning resources, and improve teachers' salaries. It could also involve innovative funding strategies, such as public-private partnerships, to supplement government funding. Moreover, the government should prioritize education in its budgetary allocations, adhering to the UNESCO recommendation of allocating 15-20% of the national budget to education. Increased investment in education can enhance the quality of education, maximize the role of education in leadership development, and contribute to national development

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