# A Review of Public Secondary Schools Effectiveness in Nigeria: Challenges and Managing Strategies

S.I. Bashar* and M.A. Yasin

*Abstract--- The global trends of education in the developed nations shifts towards the direction of the fourth and 5th industrial revolutions which are characterized with advances in science and technology that led to the emergence of robotics, internet of things, artificial intelligence, bio and nanotechnologies, autonomous vehicles, quantum computing, material science, and energy storage in the global societies. This is a great challenge to the third world countries- Nigeria inclusive, that are still striving to see themselves through the 2nd and 3rd industrial revolutions in their education sectors. However, this could never be achieved until when schools at all levels become smart, successful and effective. Although literature indicated that public secondary schools in Nigeria were not performing effectively, however, there was hardly any article that compiled all the major factors responsible for this ineffective performance of the schools. The purpose of this paper therefore, is to review and compile the challenges that compromise the effectiveness of the schools and suggest their possible managing strategies. To achieve this, articles were reviewed using appropriate methods as well as inclusion and exclusion criteria. It was found from the review that public secondary schools in Nigeria suffer from substandard leadership, infrastructural decay, overcrowded classrooms, and lots more. To manage these situations, this paper recommends that qualified principals and teachers be provided for the schools, provide intensive training for both the principals and teachers, build more classroom structures, and provide security measures in the schools.*

*Keywords--- Secondary-School, School-Effectiveness, Challenges, Managing, Strategies.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, education is considered an instrument per excellence and an investment that covers the all-round development of an individual which enables one to get practical skills, creativity, innovativeness, advancement of mental, physical and social capacities that will empower one to live, produce and add to the improvement of the general public in which one lives [1]. Nigeria operates an education policy of 6-3-3-4 or 9-3-4 system which stands for 6 years in primary school, 3 years in junior secondary (i.e.9 years of free basic education), 3 years in senior secondary school and 4 years in higher education [2]. The Federal Government of Nigeria in the National Policy on Education [1], described secondary education as an education which is acquired after successful completion of basic education (primary and junior secondary education) before tertiary level education by students aged 11 to 17 years, as it is meant to prepare them for useful living within the society and for higher education. Therefore, secondary education in Nigeria serves as a proxy between the primary education and higher education.

Today, the global trends of education in the developed nations shifted towards the demands of the fourth

*S.I. Bashar*, School of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.*
*E-mail: bashar1984@graduate.utm.my*
*M.A. Yasin, Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Sokoto State University, Sokoto, Nigeria.*

industrial revolution- an era that is characterized with advances in science and technology which led to the existence of robotics, internet of things, artificial intelligence, bio and nanotechnologies, autonomous vehicles, quantum computing, 3-D printing, material science, and energy storage in the global societies [3,4]. This is a great challenge to the third world countries- Nigeria inclusive, that are yet battling to see themselves through the 2nd or 3rd industrial revolutions in their education sector. To achieve this and smell the scent of era 4.0, schools at all levels need to be smart, successful and effective.

School effectiveness is the extent to which a school achieves its goals in both output and outcome [5]. It is the degree to which a school accomplishes its objectives higher compared to other sister schools that are delegated equal inputs [6]. Thus, effective schools are the schools which achieve higher than expected in academic subjects and in personal and social development of the students [7]. Similarly, [8] described effective schools as the schools that have the capacity of raising the education quality of their students to the international standard for actualizing international goals. According to [8], these schools help students to develop positive attitudes with which they can adjust and cope with stressful environment and solve their arising problems.

Building the culture of effectiveness in schools is a necessity for achieving the overall societal progress and developments in the society. School effectiveness is significant in that it leads to the realization of high quality education and academic achievements [9,10,11]. Again, effective schools contribute to human resource development [12,13]. According to them, one of the major goals of an effective school is to develop active citizens who can develop their own capacities for personal achievement and contribute to their respective societies as active citizens. This necessitates the need for the schools to be effective to develop the potential abilities of the students so that they can become useful members of their societies [12,14]. Effective schools also contribute in developing skilled labor force because they have the potentials of providing enough training and skills to students thereby creating qualified and skilled workers who have skills and abilities to perform the available jobs in the labour organizations [13].

Interestingly, effective schools help create job opportunities by providing students with knowledge and aptitudes to be job creators and become self-reliant [14,15]. This implies that graduates with high skills have high chances of getting jobs after graduation because, industries, organizations, ministries and parastatals prefer to employ quality graduates that have technical brains and skills to perform the desired services needed for the overall development of the organizations. In addition, effective schools get more recognition and prestige [14,16] because schools with land marks of effectiveness get more prestige than their 'in-effective' counterparts. The prestige can have both national and international dimensions.

Effective schools produce good leaders as they are characterized as homes of micro politics [17] that contribute in the development of the political activities of the society in a manner that prepares individuals to leadership roles and expose them to developing leadership skills, awareness of civic attitudes, citizenship responsibilities vis-à-vis inculcation of national consciousness. Once more, effective schools develop good sense of human relations among people [17]. The sociological perspective of school effectiveness buttressed that school effectiveness is necessary for facilitating good sense of human relations among the people in the schools and those around them [17,18]. Furthermore, effective schools help in cultural preservation [17].

Although different studies in the literature [19,20-25] indicated that public secondary schools in Nigeria were not performing effectively, however, there was hardly any article that has summed up the major factors responsible for this ineffective performance of the schools. The purpose of this paper therefore, is to collect from different write ups the major factors or challenges that are capable of compromising the effectiveness of schools in general and suggest possible managing strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of the schools in order to move to the desired level of education in the country.

## II.    LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature has identified some factors that bring about school effectiveness which include strong and effective leadership, clear goals and missions, strong curriculum, staff development, performance evaluation, safe and conducive environment, positive climate and parent community involvement. Strong and effective leadership is one of the attributes of effective schools [9,17,26].

According to [27,28], effective leadership improves the school performances and therefore principals need to ensure smooth operation of the school by resolving conflicts among staff and students, building unity in diversity, motivating teachers and students, leading in planning and decision making, advocating, formulating, implementing and analyzing the school policies, ensuring accountability, ensuring adequate supervision, and ensuring regular flow of information throughout the school.

Effective schools have visions, missions, and goals that are clearly spelled out, stated, articulated and communicated [26,29–31]. These are the rudiments that guide the efforts of teachers, nonteaching staff and students towards achieving the target goals of the schools [32]. In essence, communicating these things gives a sense of focus and direction to the teaming members of the schools. Thus, the school leaderships must ensure proper documentation of those elements as well as making them available, open and accessible to both the staff, students, parents and other community members who may want to know about them whenever the need be and must not be hidden.

School safety and orderliness are necessary for a school to be effective [7,29,31,33,34]. Safety is all about providing proper security and protection of lives and property of the members of the schools particularly teachers and students from any harm or danger. Effective schools therefore ensure safety of their schools right from choosing the school site or location up to developing their school plants in environments that are free from any crime, hazard or natural disaster. They also ensure discipline and command respect within the school environments. They engage the services of security personnel to guard the internal operations of the schools and guard the schools from any possible external attack that may harm the school members. Orderliness is also necessary to ensure that every aspect of the school facilities and equipment are kept in a proper order and descent manner thereby creating an enabling environment for both the teachers and the learners to carry out their teaching and learning functions effectively and efficiently [31,35].

Positive climate is another factor of school effectiveness [7,30,31,35]. This means that effective schools have adequate structures such as conducive classrooms, libraries, laboratories, hostels, workshops, and other gadgets that facilitate teaching and learning. Effective schools also employ quality teachers who are child-friendly that are ready

to teach, guide, support, entertain and assist students to learn and understand the subject matter being taught [36–38]. Similarly, effective schools ensure standards in student-teacher ratio to avoid over crowdedness and enable proper classroom management by the teachers, proper interaction between the teachers and the students and between and among the students themselves while in the classroom [32].

Effective schools are characterized by high academic expectation on both sides of teachers and students [7,16,26,33,39]. These schools normally inform the staff and students the expectations of the schools on them with regards the teaching and learning endeavors and thus the communication challenges the students and the teachers to rise on the demands of the expectations of the schools [32]. So, by conveying the information, students and the teachers are expected to commit themselves towards high performance for realizing the school goals.

Effective schools give prominence to monitoring performances of both students and teachers [7,14,16,26,30,31]. This is by assessing the performances of both the teachers and students regularly. As for the students, continuous assessments in forms of tests, class works, team works, field works, assignments and examinations are being used to determine the level of their performances; while the teachers' performances are being monitored through performance appraisal practices and supervisions [41]. These improve the entire performances of the schools thereby enhancing academic excellence of both the staff and the students.

The curricular programmes of most of the effective schools tend to be strong and give much emphasis on basic skills that enable the learners to become prepared for life challenges in their future endeavors [12,14,32–34]. Therefore, the curricular provide learning experiences that conform to the basic skills of life such as communication, critical thinking, collaboration and creativity [42]. These skills groom the students towards the global trends of life.

Effective schools give prominence to training and development of teachers for professional development [7,16,26,42]. This is by sending them to further their studies, attend conferences, seminars, workshops to enable them add to their knowledge and experiences on their respective subject matters which would in turn give them technical expertise in performing their teaching and other academic functions as effectively as possible [44]. Therefore, providing chances for teachers to go for in-service training, gives them ability to boost their cognitive capabilities and also gives them room to improve their academic activities in the schools.

Parental and community participation in the schools' educational activities is one of the attributes of effective [11,16,26,30,31,42]. This by implication suggests that effective schools involve parents of the students in many of the schools' activities in order to gain their inputs and support in running the teaching and learning programmes of the schools. Most of the effective schools, make parent-teacher-associations to enhance the collaboration between the parents and the schools in dealing with issues of concern with regards to erecting structures or supplying some equipment or facilities for boosting the teaching and learning activities [32].

## III.    OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Two questions were identified to guide the study:

- To identify the challenges that compromise the effectiveness of public secondary schools in Nigeria and,
- To suggest different strategies for managing them

## IV. METHODOLOGY

To achieve the stated objectives, about 13 research articles were selected from Scopus, Web of Science, Jstor, Science Direct, Google Scholar, and other data bases such as Emerald and Elsevier. The terms "school effectiveness" and "school effectiveness AND challenges" were used in the search engines in order to determine appropriate articles for the review. The inclusion criteria that was followed in the selection of the articles are that: full texts articles, English versions, on school effectiveness in Nigeria, published between 2011-2019 were selected for the review. However, the exclusion criteria are that: any research article that was not on secondary school effectiveness, not on the Nigerian context, not written in English, not in the time frame of 2011-2019, was excluded from the review.

## V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the review, the challenges that affect the effectiveness of public secondary schools in Nigeria are poor leadership in the schools as well as substandard teachers, poor motivation and poor climate. While others also include poor school community relations, insecurity and indiscipline, coupled with low expectation on students' success.

Table 1: Challenges Affecting the Effectiveness of Public Secondary Schools in Nigeria

| Challenges | Authors |
|---|---|
| Poor school leadership | [44–46] |
| Substandard teachers | [25,47–49] |
| Poor motivation | [50,12,51] |
| Poor climate | [52,53,45,51,54,55] |
| Poor community relations | [44,56]. |
| Insecurity and indiscipline | [50,53,57–60]. |
| Low expectation on students' success | [45]. |

Table 1 shows the challenges that affect the effectiveness of public secondary schools in Nigeria. It can be observed from the table that the poor school leadership has been identified as one of the major challenges affecting the effectiveness of public secondary schools in Nigeria [44–46]. In Nigeria, many of the public secondary schools suffer from bad leadership from principals that are unqualified and unprofessional. This is because many of the principals lack expertise, lack self-concept and self-confidence, lack moral fitness, lack intellectual fitness, lack social fitness, lack creativity, humility, sincerity and tactfulness, lack tolerance and sympathy [61,62]. The consequence of this is that the school heads become skeptical in running the affairs of the schools and end up doing rubbish instead of doing the right thing. This problem is not only in Nigeria but in other countries too because a study carried out by [32] disclosed that poor principal leadership was one of the issues bedeviling the effectiveness of Malaysian public secondary schools where he stressed that many of the principals in public schools could not even explain the schools' missions, visions and goals to either the teachers, students or even the parents of the students. Similarly, a study conducted in Philippines by [31] established that some secondary schools in the country were not effective due to the poor management practices of the principals of the schools.

Substandard teachers are found in many public secondary schools [25,47–49]. Substandard in the sense that unqualified persons who have no teaching qualifications such as the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) or

Bachelor degree in Education are being employed as teachers and so have no pedagogical skills for conducting professional teaching [45]. As a result, they end up doing blunders in the classrooms and this affects the effectiveness of a school system. This issue of ineffective teaching practices has also been identified as one of the challenges deteriorating the effectiveness of a school system in Philippines [31].

Poor motivation of teachers is one of the challenges affecting the effectiveness of public secondary schools in Nigeria [51]. This is because teachers in Nigeria work in a very poor working condition as they receive the lowest salary structure compared to other labour forces of other parastatals in the country [12,51]. This is coupled with the delay in the payment of the salaries, unauthorized deductions, with no allowances, no incentives, and with irregular promotions and this resulted in to the low morale of teachers feeling discomfort and dissatisfied with the job [52]. So, this bring about brain drain whereby teachers navigate for other jobs that have more lucrative salaries and considered teaching as a means to an end not an end to itself [45]. This finding has been corroborated by the opinions of [32] who buttressed that lack of motivation and commitment of teachers was one of the challenges that affect the overall effectiveness of the public schools in Malaysia.

Another challenge that limits the effectiveness of public secondary schools in Nigeria is poor climate which is characterized by inadequate facilities coupled with infrastructural decay [52,53]. It was reported that some public secondary schools in Nigeria suffer from shortage of facilities coupled with infrastructural decays and this is quite disgusting and alarming as it cripples the effort of the school systems towards actualizing academic excellence [38,63]. It was further discovered that, in many public secondary schools in the country, teaching and learning suffers from over-crowded classrooms, unconducive atmosphere, lacking essential teaching and learning materials and this in no small measure thwarted the realization of the target educational goals of the schools [45,51,54,55]. However, many public secondary schools have dilapidated buildings, hot and congested classrooms and in some cases, students tend to sit on the floor to receive lessons due to lack of seaters [45]. Undoubtedly, this affects the effectiveness of the educational programmes of the schools.

Low parental and community involvement affects the effectiveness of public secondary schools in Nigeria [44,56]. This is often characterized with poor relationship between the schools and the parents of the students vis-à-vis the community members. According to [45], sometimes low parental and community support or involvement is a consequence of the principals' lack of readiness to engage them in the management affairs of the schools for the fear of being challenges, interrogated or criticized. Conversely, in Malaysia, a study has shown that in many times their public schools experience a very low turn-out of parents when it comes to meetings with the Parent-Teachers-Association [65] and thus this affects the effective nature of the performances of the institutions. This therefore indicated that low involvement of parents and community members is not only confined to the Nigerian contexts but also could be found in other parts of the world.

Insecurity and indiscipline is another factor responsible for the ineffective operations of many public secondary schools in the country [53,57,58]. The situation manifest itself in a trend whereby some of the schools are in unsecured environments, having unsafe conditions for teaching and learning due to some reported cases of Boko-haramism, armed banditry, kidnappings, insurgencies, bullying and other criminal activities [57,58]. Similarly,

indiscipline issues like fighting, theft, rape, murder, extortion, loafing, free socializing, and black metal attitudes are found to be disrupting the peaceful environment of learning in many of the public secondary schools in the country [50,58–60].

Low expectation on students' success has been found as one of the issues derailing the effectiveness of public secondary schools in Nigeria [45]. According to [45], many public schools have low expectation on the achievements of their students that is why teachers' expectation on students' achievement was very low today and this is seen in the teachers' attitude of not giving challenging assignments or academic task to students that will make them think creatively to find solution to academic problems. According to them, nowadays, teachers do not monitor the progress of performances of their students and that many teachers had been found not keeping the records of students' successes.

To suggest remedy to the above identified challenges, there are needs for the stakeholders of education in the country to:

- Provide good leadership in the schools by appointing experienced and qualified personnel especially those having the degree certificate of educational management to serve as principals in the schools.
- Provide qualified teachers who hold relevant teaching qualifications such as the NCE or degree in education to teach in their respective areas of proficiency.
- Provide in-service training and development for both the principals and teachers across the schools for enhancing their performance and effectiveness capabilities in the schools.
- Boost the morale of teachers by giving them good salary promptly with allowances and promotion on regular basis.
- Provide adequate school facilities especially the classrooms, the libraries, the laboratories, books and other instructional facilities that are needed for quality teaching and learning.
- Enhance good school-community relationships and involve parents in the educational programmes of the schools.
- Ensure all round security and discipline in the schools.
- Develop high expectation on students' success by encouraging the teachers to give challenging tasks to the students and keep their performance records seriously

## VI. CONCLUSION

The paper concludes by buttressing that school effectiveness is a major yardstick for measuring quality education. Developed nations had given significant attention to school effectiveness and so enhanced their education system and that's perhaps why they succeeded in achieving high rate of excellence in their educational endeavors. The paper was able to discuss the school effectiveness variables such as effective school leadership, school missions and goals, high expectations, parents' involvement in school administration and others. The paper also reviewed and discussed the challenges that compromise the effectiveness of the public secondary schools in Nigeria and therefore recommended possible managing strategies for building school effectiveness in the country. Therefore, the paper

submits that for developing nations to achieve high academic excellence in their secondary education system, they must rise up and uplift the level of their school effectiveness. Based on the review, it was observed that there was hardly any attempt from the literature to assess the level of effectiveness of the public secondary schools in Nigeria generally and north western Nigeria specifically. There is the need to have one that will bridge these research gaps.

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