



POLITICS OF DIGITALIZATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract.

This study aims to explore Politics of Digitalization in the Management of Educational System in Nigeria. Considering the politics surrounding the digitalization of education in Nigeria which is complex and multifaceted, this study observed the influence of Nigeria politics on Educational digitalization, the role of public – private partnership in the digitalization of Education in Nigeria and challenges in digitalizing Nigerian. Education, Conclusion and recommendations were also made.

Keywords: Politics, Digitalization, Management, Educational System.

Introduction

The digitalization of education in Nigerian is a transformativ shift on how educational content is delivered and consumed. Over the past few decades, the integration of digital tools into the Nigerian Educational System has accelerated, driven by technological advancements and the increasing recognition of the importance of digital literacy. (Akinola and Akande 2017). Therefore, digital tools such as e – learning, plat forms, virtual classrooms and digital classrooms are becoming more prevalent, offering new opportunities for enhancing the quality of education service delivery and expanding access to learning resources. Hence considering the indispensable roles and contributions of digitalization in Educational System of Nigeria in providing the teachers with new ways to engage the students and assess their academic progress, no responsible citizen in Nigeria and other countries of the world, would argue the fact that, its proper and effective use, management and administration should not be given high priority by the government or politicians in power. No wonder, the digitalization of education has become a pivotal aspect of educational reform globally and Nigeria is no exception. However the political context of digitalization plays crucial role in the management of educational system in Nigeria.

Understanding the political context of digitalization according to Ibrahim and Okonkwo (2022) is crucial for comprehending the complexities of digitalization in Nigerian educational system. They went further to stress that the process of digitalizing education in Nigeria is not merely a technological endeavor but also a political one, influenced by various stakeholders, including the government, educational institutions and private sector players.

The politics of digitalization in the management of Nigerian educational system is therefore the significant role played by the government policies and regulations, educational institutions and private sector in shaping the landscape of digital education, determining the extent to which digital tools are procured, and integrated into the curriculum and ensuring access for all students.

According to Federal Ministry of Education, F M E (2019), the Nigerian government's commitment to digital education is evident in several policy documents and initiatives. For instance, the National Policy on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Education outlines the government's strategy for integrating ICT into Educational System, highlighting the importance of



developing digital skills among students and teachers. In the same vein, according to Nigerian communication commission (2020), the National Broadband plan aims to improve internet connectivity across the country is a critical factor for the success of digital education initiatives in Nigeria.

Digitalization according to Adesina (2023), refers to the integration of digital technologies into various aspects of the society, transforming the traditional processes into more efficient electronic forms. He want further to stress that in the realm of education, digitalization encompasses the use of digital tools and platforms to enhance teaching and learning process, administrative operations and communication within educational institutions. These tools according to him, include online learning platforms, digital textbooks, interactive whiteboards and various educational system in Nigeria has the potential to revolutionize the way education is managed and delivered. Furthermore, it offers opportunities for personalized learning, greater accessibility to educational resource and improved efficiency in administrative and managerial tasks. IKO (2013), undoubtedly noted that the adoption of digital tools in education has impacted on the quality and quantity of teaching, learning and research in traditional and distance education institutions. According to Castles (2016), the universality of digital technologies seems to bring rapid, technological, Social, political, economic and educational transformation which has turned the society into network based.

However, the political landscape in Nigeria presents unique challenges, controversies and opportunities for digitalization of education in Nigeria. Issues such as funding constraints, infrastructural deficits, and the digital divide between urban and rural areas are significant barriers that need to be addressed. Moreover, the political will and commitment of government officials and policy makers are crucial for driving the necessary reforms and investment in digital education. Conclusively, the digitalization of education in Nigeria is a multifaceted process influenced by various political, economic and social factors. Therefore, knowing the political dynamics at play, is essential for navigating the complexities of this transformation and ensuring that the benefits of digital education are realized equitably across the country. As Nigeria continues to embrace digital tools and technologies in education, it is imperative to critically examine the political context and address the challenges to create an inclusive and effective digital educational system.

Influence Of Nigerian Politics On Educational Digitalization

The digitalization of education in Nigeria is a deeply landscape intertwined with the country's political Landscape, which is complex and multifaceted. According to Ojo (2021), political decisions, policies and commitment of political leaders significantly influence the pace and success of integrating digital tools into the educational system. This is because the Nigerian government's priorities and vision for the future of education, shape the allocation of resources and development of infrastructure reasonably necessary for digital learning. In the words of Adebayo (2019), the allocation of funding for digital education in Nigeria can be influenced by political considerations including the need to demonstrate progress in modernizing the educational system or garner support from specific constituencies. Furthermore another politics surrounding the digitalization of education in Nigeria is the relationship between Federal and State Governments. Education in Nigeria is managed at both levels and the coordination between Federal policies and State – level implementation can be challenging and political. Some states, such as Lagos and Ogun, have been more proactive in adopting digital education policies, while others lag due to political or economic constraints (Adewale 2020). Another political aspect of digitalization of Nigerian Educational System is the government political will to invest in digital education. For instance the implementation of the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS) 2020 – 2030 demonstrates the government's commitment to fostering a digital economy, which includes improving digital literacy and integrating ICT in education (Federal Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy, 2020). However, the execution of such policies often varies across different administration and political regimes, impacting the consistency and sustainability of digital education initiative. In the same vein, according to Federal Ministry of Education (2019), Government policies and regulations play a critical role in shaping the digitalization of education in Nigeria. This is because, several policies have been introduced to promote the use of ICT in education, such as the National Policy on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Education, which aims to integrate ICT into all levels of the educational System. However according to Ibrahim and Musa (2020), the effectiveness of these policies often depends on the implementation strategies and the coordination between



federal and State governments. According to them, the decentralization of education management in Nigeria means that while Federal Policies provide a frame work, state governments are responsible for execution. This can lead to disparities in the adoption and initiatives with some states being more productive and others lagging behind

The power dynamics between various stakeholders: Government agencies, educational institutions, technological companies and international organizations process in Nigeria. Each stakeholder has different interests and levels of influence, which can lead to collaboration or conflict (Eke and Ezeani 2018). Federal and State Ministries of Education which are government agencies hold substantial power in setting policies and allocating funds for digital education. Their decisions can either facilitate or hinder the adoption of digital tools in schools. For example the Federal Ministry of Education's partnership with the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) aims to enhance ICT infrastructure in schools (NITDA, 2019). Furthermore, Educational institutions are the primary implementers of digital policies. Their leadership and willingness to embrace digital tools are crucial for successful integration. However institutional inertia and resistance to change, can pose challenges

Moreover, the involvement of technology firms that provide the tools and infrastructure needed for digital education is often driven by market opportunities and corporate social responsibility (C S R) initiatives. For Instance partnerships with companies like Microsoft and Google have brought digital tools and training programmes to Nigerian Schools (Microsoft, 2020). Again, international organizations like UNESCO, UNICEF and the Word Bank Play a Significant role by Providing funding, expertise and policy support. Their influence can significantly shape national policies and encourage best practices in digital education in Nigeria.

The politics of digitalization in the management of Educational system in Nigeria, also encompass issues of equity and access. The digital divide which is the gap between those who have access to digital tools and those who do not posses a significant challenge. In Nigeria, this divide is often pronounced between urban and rural areas, as well as between different socioeconomic groups (Ojo, 2021) According to Adeyemi and Olaleye (2020) in their study of Bridging the digital divide in Nigeria's education sector, noted that urban schools are generally better equipped with digital infrastructure compared to rural Schools, which may lack basic amenities like electricity and internet connectivity. According to them, this disparity can exacerbate existing educational inequalities, as students in well – resourced Schools gain greater access to digital learning opportunities. In the same vein Ojo (2021) was in agreement with Adeyemi and Olaleye (2020), When he noted in his study: Digital divide in Nigeria: Implications for educational equity, that there is disparity between urban and rural schools in terms of digital infrastructure, urban schools being better equipped than rural schools. Nigerian Communications Commission (2020) was of the opinion that to address these challenges, government policies must focus on ensuring equitable access to digital tools and resources. According to the commission, initiatives like the Rural Broadband initiative aims to improve internet connectivity, in underserved areas, which is essential for bridging the divide should be vigorously implemented.

From the foregoing, the political dynamics surrounding the digitalization in the management of educational system in Nigeria, are complex and multifaceted. Government policies, the commitment of political leaders, and the interplay between various Stakeholders all play crucial roles in shapping the digital education landscape. While significant progress has been made the ongoing challenges related to policy implementation, power dynamics and equity, need to be addressed to ensure that digitalization benefits all students across the country.

Therefore, as Nigeria continues to navigate these political dynamics, it is essential to foster collaboration among stakeholders and prioritize policies that promote equitable access to digital education.

The Role of Public – Private Partnership in the Digitalization of Education in Nigeria

Public – private partnerships (PPPS) have emerged as a vital strategy for advancing digital education in Nigeria. These collaborations leverage the strengths and resources of both the public and private sectors to address challenges such as infrastructure deficits, funding gaps and capacity building. For example the partnership between the Federal Ministry of Education and the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) has focused on promoting digital literacy and expanding access to ICT Schools (NESG, 2020), According to Udo (2021), private sector initiatives, such as MTN's School connect programmes have provided schools



with internet access, digital devices and training for teachers. He went further to stress that collaborations with tech giants like Microsoft and Google have facilitated the adoption of digital tools and platforms in Nigerian classrooms, offering Professional development for educators and digital skills training for students.

Furthermore, telecom companies like MTN Nigeria, Airtel and Globacom have invested in expanding broadband infrastructure and providing internet connectivity to schools and communities (Udo 2021). This infrastructure is essential for enabling digital learning environments in the underserved areas. Eke and Ezeani (2018), noted that tech companies such as Microsoft, Google and Huawei Collaborate with educational institutions to provide digital tools, software, and platforms. These partnerships enhance access to educational resources, promotes digital literacy among students and teachers and supports the integration of ICT into the curriculum. Again many corporations engage in corporate social responsibility [CSR] initiatives focused on education. For example, MTN Nigeria's "school connect" programmes aims to connect schools to the internet and provide digital services , while also offering training for teachers in digital skills [MTN NIGERIA, 2020]

Furthermore EdTech startup and entrepreneurs are driving innovations in digital education by developing new designing platforms, educational apps and content, tailored to the Nigerian context. Platforms like preclass and passing offer tutoring services, practice tests and educational resources online, enhancing access to supplement learning materials.

It is imperative also to note that Non – Governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations play a crucial role in supporting digital education initiatives in Nigeria through partnerships funding and technical assistance. According to Nwosu and Eze (2018), organizations like UNESCO and UNICEF provide technical expertise and support to strengthen educational systems and build the capacity of educators in integrating ICT into teaching practices. Morealso NGOs such as Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) advocate for policy reforms and investments in digital education. They collaborate with government agencies and stakeholders to influence education policies that prioritize digital Literacy and ICT infrastructure development (NESG, 2020).

Therefore, the current state of digitalization in Nigerian educational system is characterized by significant progress as a result of the fact that public – private partnership and international collaborations continue to play a crucial role in advancing digital education in Nigeria.

Challenges in Digitalizing Nigeria Education

The politics of digitalization in education in Nigeria has been confronted with many teething challenges. One of the most significant challenges in digitalizing Nigerian Education according to Akinola and Akande (2017) is the lack of adequate infrastructure and connectivity. They noted that many schools, particularly in rural areas, face severe shortages of essential infrastructure such as electricity, internet access and digital devices. Hence, the uneven distribution of these resources exacerbates the digital divide, making it difficult for students in underserved areas to benefit from digital education initiatives.

According to the National Bureau of statistics (NBS), about 40% of Nigerian households do not have access to electricity and 38% of the population has access to the internet (NBS, 2020). This lack of connectivity severely limits the ability of students and teachers to utilize digital tools and resources. Moreover, according to Bureau, the high cost of internet data remains a barrier for many families, further hindering access to learning platforms and resources.

The disparity between urban and rural education in Nigeria, according to Adeyemi and Olaleye (2020) is a major challenge in the digitalization process in Nigerian Education System. According to them, urban schools are generally better equipped with the necessary infrastructure and have more access to digital tools and resources. In contrast, rural Schools often lack basic amenities, making it difficult to implement digital education programmes effectively.

For instance, in urban areas like Lagos and Abuja, schools are more likely to have computer laboratories, internet access and trained teachers who can incorporate digital tools into their teaching. On the other hand, rural areas such as those in states like Borno and Zamfara often struggle with inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding and lack of trained personnel to support digital learning (UNICEF 2019). This urban – rural divide according Ojo (2021), not only affect the quality of education but also perpetuates inequalities, since students in urban areas have greater access to digital literacy skills, which are increasingly important for future employment opportunities, while those in rural areas are left behind.



Funding and resource allocation are critical challenges in the digitalization of Nigerian Educational System. The financial constraints faced by the government, coupled with competing priorities, according to Lawal (2019) often results in limited funding for educational technology initiatives. Therefore the allocation of resources is frequently uneven, with more affluent regions receiving a large share of the budget compared to less developed areas. Furthermore, the federal and State governments' budgets for education, according to Akinola and Akande (2017) are often insufficient to cover the cost of implementing comprehensive digital education programmes. For example, the 2021 budget allocation for education was only 5.6% of the total national budget, far below the recommended 15 – 20% by UNESCO (Budget 2021). This under funding affects the procurement of digital devices, the development of ICT infrastructure, and the training of teachers. Additionally there are issues related to the efficient utilization of allocated funds. Corruption and mismanagement of resources can lead to the failure of digital education projects. Therefore, ensuring transparency and accountability in the disbursement and use of funds is essential for the success of digitalization efforts in Nigerian Educational System.

Moreover, the successful integration of digital tools into Nigerian Educational System largely depends on the readiness and capability of teachers. According to Lawal (2019), many Nigerian teachers lack the necessary skill training to effectively use digital tools in their teaching practices. He stressed that professional programmes are often limited and not uniformly accessible, especially in rural areas. To address this challenge, there needs to be a concerted effort to provide ongoing professional development programmes for teachers, focusing on digital literacy and the pedagogical use of technology. Programmes like the Microsoft Educator Community and Google for Education offer valuable resources and training opportunities for teachers, but there is great need to expand these programmes to include all regions of the country (Microsoft, 2020. Google, 2020)

Another significant challenge is the development of relevant and engaging digital content that aligns with the Nigerian curriculum. While there are several e – learning platforms, and digital resources available, ensuring that they are tailored to the Nigerian educational context and meet the needs of students is crucial. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), according to Lawal, (2019), has been working on integrating ICT into the national curriculum, but more needs to be done to develop high – quality digital content. Collaboration with local educators, content developers and Tech companies can help create materials that are culturally relevant and pedagogically sound.

The challenges in digitalizing Nigerian Educational System, are therefore multifaceted and complex. Hence, issues related to infrastructure, connectivity, funding, digital divide, teacher training and content development need to be addressed to ensure the successful integration of digital tools into Nigerian Educational System. Overcoming these challenges requires a coordinated effort from the government, private sector and international partners, as well as a commitment to equitable access and sustainable development.

Therefore, as Nigeria continues to navigate these challenges, it is essential to prioritize policies and initiatives that address the root causes of digital divide and ensure that all students, regardless of their location, religion, tribe or socio economic status, have access to high – quality digital education.

Conclusion:

Politics of digitalization in the management of educational system in Nigeria has the potential to transform education, if played with caution, by improving access, enhancing learning experience and empowering teachers. While significant progress has been made in Nigerian digital education, challenges such as digital divide, dependence on technology, and privacy concern must be addressed to ensure equitable and effective digital education. By investing in infrastructure, supporting teachers, promoting digital literacy and ensuring data privacy, Nigeria can create a robust and inclusive digital education – system that benefits all students.

Recommendation

The following are the recommendations that are put forward for improving digitalization of Nigerian Educational System.



1. Massive enlightenment campaigns on the importance of digitalizing Nigerian Educational System should continue to be advocated. This should go hand in hand with the promotion of effective use of digital tools in teaching and learning activities in all educational institutions in Nigerian
2. Government should enhance funding and Resource Allocation to digital Educational by increasing budgetary allocations for digital education initiatives and transparent resource management practices should be upheld
3. There should be better policy alignment and coordination between federal and state educational policies to ensure uniformity and effectiveness in digital education implementation
4. Comprehensive and ongoing professional development programmes should be put in place for educators to enhance their digital literacy skills
5. Government through the Education Policy makers encourage curriculum reforms by integrating digital literacy and ICT skills into the national curriculum at all levels of education
6. The politicians in power should expand broadband infrastructure and improve electricity supply in underserved areas to bridge digital divide. Furthermore, community – driven initiative and partnerships should be advocated in order also to bridge digital divide and promote digital inclusion
7. Government should create good enabling environment for sustainable public – private partnership (PPP) to leverage resources and expertise for digital education initiatives.
8. Government Should encourage continued collaboration with NGOs and international organizations to leverage funding, expertise and best practices
9. Artificial intelligence (AI) should be adopted in order to explore its potential in personalized learning, automated assessments and educational analytics

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