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INSTITUTIONAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AFFECTING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

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Abstract: This article examined the factors affecting the teaching and learning of students in government secondary schools (GSS) in Benin Metropolis, Nigeria and suggested solutions to curtail its impact. The study identified and categorized numerous educational problems ranging from environmental (infrastructural decay and classroom climate) to political (poor funding, inappropriate curriculum, and politicization of teacher recruitment) as factors affecting the teaching and learning of students negatively. It uses primary and secondary data to ascertain the various factors attributed to the declining effect of teaching and learning in secondary schools. The study also recommended that the government should adequately fund the educational sector and provide enough statutory allocation to secondary schools, embark on infrastructural development, review the educational curriculum to align with students' aspirations and conduct teacher recruitment based on merit and academic qualification to improve the quality of the teaching and learning of students in GSS.

Keywords: Education, factors, secondary schools, students, teaching and learning

Introduction

The basis for having an effective educational system in a country hinges on providing quality teaching and learning in schools. The low quality of these aspects of educational and academic activities produces poor skills and attitudes and undesirable behaviour in individuals and students. In Nigeria, like any other nation, teaching and learning is one of the oldest and most crucial educational activities. They play “a vital role in shaping the country’s future and impacting students’ lives”.¹ However, the Nigerian educational sector faces numerous problems, which invariably affect and constrain the desired outcome of teaching and learning in government secondary schools (GSS). These problems include examination malpractice, indiscriminate mass promotion syndrome, lack of funding, and poor facilities.² many of these problems are identified and classified in this research study into various factors. They range from environmental to political factors. Some are contemporary issues caused by modern innovations and trends in telecommunication and technology (David and Onasoga, 2023), robbing somewhat of students’ interest in teaching and learning in GSS. However, in Nigeria, three parties create numerous factors affecting teaching and learning: the government, teachers, and students. For example, one of the factors militating against the culture of teaching and learning is examination malpractices, which

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usually involve both the students and teachers. What underpins this kind of teacher-student relationship is bribery. It is a requirement to "enhance teacher-student collusion to cheat" (Udim, Abubakar, Essien, 2018, p. 208) in examinations. This form of examination malpractice has become common practice in secondary education examinations (Udim, Abubakar, Essien, 2018, p. 208), rendering teaching and learning less necessary for students to pass exams. Another factor is the government's lackadaisical attitude towards uplifting the standard of the educational system, especially at its secondary level. As a result, secondary schools are poorly funded and lack competent teachers and instructional materials for teaching and learning to educate their overpopulated students in classrooms (Osuolale, 2014; Simwa, 2023). Such arising factors have discouraged academic hard work and rigorous studies among growing numbers of secondary school students and resulted in low productivity from poor acquired knowledge. They stemmed from the government not prioritizing education in its scheme of affairs and being insensitive to educational needs such as a conducive environment for teaching and learning. The article employed descriptive survey research to ascertain solutions to mitigate the factors affecting the teaching and learning of students in the GSS. The research questions utilized for this study include: What environmental factors are constituting challenges to teaching and learning in the GSS? Why would socio-economic factors deter some students in the GSS from continuing their education? What are the teacher/student personal factors rendering teaching and learning ineffective? What technological factors are declining the enthusiasm of students in teaching and learning? Are there political factors lowering the standard of teaching and learning in GSS? How will the Nigerian government (both at national and state levels) improve the standard of education in the GSS? These questions explored the following research propositions: First, environmental factors not being tackled over the years are attributed to the negative impact of the teaching and learning of the GSS students. Second, socio-economic factors could disorganize some students from imbibing teaching and learning as a culture and later discourage them from continuing to attend school. Third, teacher/student personal factors could make teaching and learning less significant and un-impactful. Fourth, technological factors may endanger students' interest in teaching and learning in class time. Fifth, political factors are responsible for poor teaching and learning, resulting in a low standard of education; finally, the Nigerian government should adopt measures such as prioritizing the educational sector by ensuring huge budgetary funds are available to resolve various educational problems at the secondary level. This article is organized and structured into six sections for analytical convenience. After this introduction, the second part is the conceptual framework that underpins the study. The third part offers an overview of Nigerian secondary education, while the fourth section sketches out the methodology of this study. The fifth part focuses on and discusses the research findings, while the final section concludes with an outline of some recommendations.

Conceptual framework: teaching and learning

The bedrock of education is teaching and learning. Both cannot be over-emphasized within the educational system since they continue to serve as a means for imparting and acquiring knowledge. Teaching and learning are significant processes of educating children (students) from the cradle to adulthood. It is also a lifelong process. Therefore, educators and scholars have argued and defined education as a "process that starts from birth and ends at death" and "the process of developing knowledge and ability in learners for personal and societal enhancement" (Bagudo et al., 2022, p. 10). To achieve these definitions, however, the process must involve teaching and learning in line with the educational policies of a country. Teaching and learning are inseparable in the performance of academic activities. Together, they intend to transform the learners into relevant members of the society. While

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teaching is “an attempt to help someone to acquire or change some idea, knowledge, skills, and attitude” (Muhammed and Haliu, 2019, cited in David and Onasoga, 2023, p. 62), learning is “an inference from the performance of the organism resulting in an enduring change of behaviour” (Mukherjee, 2002, cited in Salawu et al., 2022, p. 108). However, learning brings about permanent changes in the learner as an individual. Learning relates to behavioural change based on interaction with an environment and due experience or practice. It involves the ideas, knowledge, values, experience, and skills acquisition that enable the individuals (learners) to alter or modify their actions. Meanwhile, teaching brings about the desired change in students' behaviour due to the interaction between a teacher and students. Hence, teaching and learning are abilities that a teacher requires to effect changes in learners' or students' behaviour. Generally, it is perceived and recognized that all great variety in human reasoning, skills, and appreciations, as well as human values, attitudes, aspirations, and hopes, largely depend on teaching and learning as events for their development and enhancement (Gagne, 1977; Salawu et al., 2022). On this basis, society strongly desires that its young ones, at various levels or stages of their lives, attend schools for learning and be taught so that they can properly fit into the scheme of things and well-behavedly adjust to its way of life. In this regard, teachers, who are assumed to possess the necessary skills, are employed to arrange and bring in school experiences for teaching and learning to take place or occur (Salawu et al., 2022). Here, the paramount role of teachers is to “determine what is needed or what would work best with their students” (Oranefo and Nzekwe 2017). Teachers are practitioners of educational theories and principles, which makes them fully involved in various processes of teaching and learning (Hamza, 2006; Oranefo and Nzekwe, 2017). In other words, teachers are indispensable and prominent members of school organizational teams (Okorie, 2007; Oranefo and Nzekwe, 2017). Note that in this study, the term students are referred to or considered as the learners in secondary schools. Hence, psychologists and scholars described students as “innocent God's creatures who are being pushed by the adults to face a forced task called learning” (Egunjobi et al., 2022, p. 112). Therefore, students need their teachers and school guidance-counsellors support and guidance at various stages of learning. Where teachers behave so, some students take teachers as their immediate parents and confidants. Notwithstanding, both internal personal factors and external environmental factors often shape human behaviours, attitudes, and skills (Bandura, 1997, 2002; Honicke and Broadbent, 2016; Schunk and DiBenedetto, 2020). Therefore, a variety of factors, such as classroom conduct, peer group influence, and expectations about the ability level of the students, are weighed by teachers when deciding whether to invest in a relationship with a student or not (Muller, Katz, and Dance, 1999; Muller, 2001). However, in the learning process, the behaviour of the learners is demonstrated and displayed through expectations of self-efficacy and control of learning beliefs: the learning process is affected by the learners' factors, such as value. The value is measured and ascertained by intrinsic goal orientation, extrinsic goal orientation, and task value. The learning process is also affected and influenced by environmental factors such as social support. This social support involves social engagement and instructor support (Mustafa et al., 2023; Fowler, 2018).

Overview of secondary education in Nigeria

One of the crucial levels of education in Nigeria is secondary education, which served as a midway between primary and tertiary (higher) schools for progressive acquisition of knowledge. On educational hierarchy, secondary is a form of education that students who have completed their primary education will obtain before they proceed to higher institutions for the advancement of their knowledge and skills. It is a level of education intended for the ages of students who are between 11-17 years.³ Therefore, “secondary education is the building

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ground for future professionals as well as the foundation for the discovering and classification of the specific fields of professions” (Nanbak, 2020, p. 127). In Nigeria, the education provided at the primary level is being argued and proving by many scholars and educationists to be inadequate for a child/pupil to acquire permanent literacy, numeracy, and communicative skills as expected at the end of his or her training or schooling necessitated the acquisition of secondary education (Osho and Osho, 2000; Yusuf, 2009; Ige, 2011; Chinelo, 2011; Matthew, 2020). According to Matthew (2020), secondary “provides opportunity for a child to acquire additional knowledge, skills, and traits beyond the primary level”. Historical, Western education was introduced in 1842 by the Christian missionaries with the development of primary education which was aim at wooing the children or people of Africa into Christian religion (Adesina, 1977; Matthew, 2020). This effort was not complemented by the Colonial government until 1909 when its decided to pay attention to the educational sector with the establishment of King’s College as the government first owned secondary school in Lagos, owing to the outputs of primary school leavers who were willing to further their education (Adesina, 1977; Matthew, 2020). As a result, more secondary schools were established to provide secondary education; and many edicts, ordinances, and bye-laws were promulgated and executed to enhance the state of the secondary education in the country (Fafunwa, 1974; Adesina, 1977). Before Nigeria attain her independence and until 1982, the duration for the acquisition of secondary school was only five (5) years. However, the existing curriculum was broadened to extend its duration to six (6) years due to the need to improve secondary education with the provision of core scientific and technical subjects (Nanbak, 2020). Furthermore, Secondary education, in line with the 6-3-3-4 system of education, is divided into two phases as junior and senior secondary schools respectively. That is, the junior secondary (JS) covers the first three years of secondary school with a curriculum that contain core academic (Mathematics, English Language, Basic Science, Social Studies, Citizenship Education, French, and a major Nigerian language), pre-vocational (Home Economics, Computer Education, Agricultural Science, Fine Arts, Business Studies, Music, Local Crafts), and the non-prevocational (Physical and Health Education, Arabic, Christian Religious Knowledge- CRS) subjects. At the end of this phase, students’ will take part in Junior School Certification Examination (JSCE) and obtain the certificate which may qualify him or she to proceed and pursuit his or her education in the senior secondary school’s (SSS) level. This second phase, in three years, has a wider scope and it aim at broadening the student knowledge, abilities, and skills acquired beyond the junior level of education. It scope involves both academic and vocational studies. In some states, SSS students are expected to offer and have knowledge in all subjects in the first year. But in the following years, they are split into various academic classes of academic areas with minimum of seven (7) and maximum number of eight (8) subjects to offer (Matthew, 2020). However, like in Edo state, admitted students from the first year in SSS are categorized into their various choice areas of academic studies such as science, art and humanity, and social science. This implies that students in social science or art class do not offer core science subjects which include Physics, Chemistry, and Biology. Likewise, students in science class don’t offer core art and social science subjects which include Government, Literature, History, and religious studies (CRS and Arabic). In addition, students are encouraged to engage in agricultural practice with the schools’ farm and participate in cultural exhibition, games, and sports such as football, athletics, and acrobatic gymnastics as part of extra-curriculum activities. This phase ends with the annual certification of students in the last year of their educational programme which depends on their performance in continuous assessment (CA) and Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE).⁴ In Nigeria, the salient broad objectives of the secondary education are to:

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- Provide an increasing number of primary school leavers with the opportunity to acquire a higher quality of education, irrespective of their sex, social, religious, and ethnic background.
- Diversify its curriculum to cater for the differences in talents opportunities and roles possessed by or open to students in the future.
- Equip students with relevant scientific knowledge and training in effective application of technology in modern age.
- Develop, project, and promote the Nigerian culture, language, and art as well as world's cultural heritage
- Foster the unity of Nigeria with an emphasis on the common ties that unite us in our diversity.
- Inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement both at school and in later life.
- Raise generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, respect the dignity of labour, appreciate those values specified under our broad national goals, and live as good citizens.⁵

Unfortunately, secondary education, right from the era of military administration to democratic dispensation, has not been getting adequate attention from the Nigerian government towards the actualization of the above objectives. Despite the importance of secondary education, the Nigerian government has somewhat left it in the hands of various state governments, private individuals, and voluntary agencies, which operate and manage it shabbily and with levity (Nanbak, 2020). Hence, there is no establishment of an effective commission to provide the needed care and protect the secondary educational level from all emerging predicaments⁶ for better teaching and learning.

Methodology

The research adopted both the primary and secondary sources of data collection to provide relevant data analysis. The primary data source includes survey questionnaires that incorporate close-ended and open-ended questions. The author distributed and administered the questionnaires to educationalists, teachers, students, politicians, business/shop owners, journalists, public/civil servants, proprietors, academicians, and others in the Edo South Senatorial District. The questionnaires were administered from August 2023 to January 2024. That is, it spanned six months. The secondary data sources include school libraries, newspapers, daily and weekly magazines, the internet, government official documents, non-governmental organizations yearly reports, textbooks, journals, and other literature materials or educational articles related to the research. The population study consisted of indigenes and non-indigenes of Edo South Senatorial District of Edo State of Nigeria. Each local government area composed of the Edo South Senatorial District has numerous notable GSS in the Benin metropolis. However, the seven mass-populated and highly commercial places in the Benin metropolis across the seven local government areas were considered and selected as the study areas. In each council area, some residents include nonindigenes from various states of the country who attended government schools. The responses from some of the non-indigenes indicated that similar situations exist in other states of the federation. The accumulated population across the seven local government areas in the Edo South Senatorial District, according to the National Population Census of Nigeria (NPCN) in 2006, was one million six hundred eighty-six thousand forty-one (1, 686, 041). It is pertinent to note that the population of the local government areas of the senatorial district has increased after the 2006 population census. This study decided to rely on the 2006 population census because the federal

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government of Nigeria has not conducted another national census since 2007 to this year. The sample size was four hundred respondents (400) from the Benin metropolis across the seven local government areas of Edo South Senatorial District. The sample size (400 respondents) was randomly selected using a Simple Random Sampling Technique (SRST). There was an equal chance for every member (respondent) of the population to be in the sample. Its purpose was to eliminate any prejudice and guarantee that the response was representative of the total population.

However, Yamane's (1967) formula was used to determine and validate the adequate sample size. His formula is applied below as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

From the formula above, n = sample size, N = population size, e = sampling error (error terms = 0.05%). Note that the confidence level chosen is 95%.

$$N = \frac{n}{1+N(e)^2} = n = \frac{1,686,041}{1+(1,686,041)(0.05)^2} = 400 \text{ (four hundred) respondents}$$

Hence, the study used the sample size to determine the specific number of questionnaires administered to respondents in the Benin metropolis across each local government area in the senatorial district. In other words, each local government area's estimated population was divided by the total Edo South Senatorial District population and multiplied by the sample size (i.e., $340,287/1,686,041 \times 400 = 80$), as indicated in Table 1 below. Such intends to ensure that each local government area in the Edo South is represented adequately in the sample.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents

Local government area	Population	Study areas comprised of Benin metropolis across the Local government areas	Number of Respondents
Egor	340,287	Urelu	80
Ikpoba-Okha	372,080	Ramat Park-Aduwawa	88
Oredo	374,515	King's Square/Ring Road	89
Orhionmwon	183,994	Abudu	44
Ovia North East	155,344	Ugbowu-Oluku	37
Ovia South West	138,072	Siluko	33
Uhunmwonde	121,749	Eyaen	29
Total	1,686,041	7	400

Source: Compiled by the author from Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette (2009)/Survey study (2023). The respondents' social profiles included 245 (61%) females and 155 (39%) males; for both genders, age ranged mainly from 16-30 (52.5%) and 36-45 (30%). A large number of the respondents were single (58%), while several were married (36%), and others were divorcees and widowers (6%). Out of the 400 respondents, 250 (62%) were educated up to a tertiary level, while those with secondary school qualifications were 150 (38%). The respondents, as previously stated, majorly consisted of the indigenous people of Edo State (82%) and several residents who are indigenes of other states, including Delta and Rivers (3.8%), Ondo, Ogun, and Ibadan (3.2%),

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Abia, Enugu, and Imo (4.5%), Kano, Kaduna, and Sokoto (3.5%), Benue, Kogi, and Kwara (2%), and Adamawa and Yobe (1%). The obtained responses were based and placed on frequency, categorized according to the formulated propositions, presented in tables, and analyzed with quantitative and qualitative techniques.

Ethical consideration

Permission and consent of the respondents, in line with the globally acceptable standards for research ethics, were obtained before they chose to participate in the study. The respondents were duly informed about the research purposes and objectives and their rights to willingly respond to research questions and freely exercise their inalienable rights to withdraw from or decline to participate in the study at any moment, and one’s convenience, and no attendant or possible consequences. The respondents were also informed and aware of no research incentives or benefits for participation, and their complete confidentiality was assured.

Discussion of findings

Table 2: Environmental factors

What are the environmental factors that affect the teaching and learning of students negatively in GSS?

Percentage agreeing	
Dilapidating, deteriorating, and unattractive physical structures	
Of government secondary schools	88
Overgrown grass and flooding during the rainy season at the	
Government school premises drab their appearance to students	87
Classroom climate: too hot/cold	91
Libraries and laboratories are unavailable in most secondary schools	95
The physical classrooms are not designed, beautified	
Or branded with educational items	90
Unsuitable classroom furnishings – broken and dirty chairs and desks	66
Overpopulated classrooms	88

Table 2 indicates that in GSS, educational activities, which include teaching and learning, are faced and distorted with numerous challenges due to environmental factors such as flooding, unattractive physical structures, dilapidated buildings, overpopulated classrooms, and classroom climate. In a worse scenario, some collapsed government-owned school buildings still await reconstruction so that the schools can start operating again and educational activities are re-activated. Thus, these environmental factors are undermining and negatively impacting the teaching and learning of students in GSS.⁷ Unfortunately, many GSS not only lack infrastructural facilities, but some of their existing ones are also in a bad state. In this regard, Matthew (2020) opined that students will be uncomfortable learning in schools with inadequate facilities such as libraries, workshops, chairs, desks, lockers, and classrooms. Ahmed (2003) also observed that teaching and learning in most secondary schools across the federation of Nigeria are taking place in unfavourable and uncondusive environments, hindering the achievement of the educational set objectives. Even the most available classroom conditions are unbearable, and their atmosphere does not encourage learning. Some GSS classrooms have no fans, ceilings, window covers, or roofs, thus exposing teachers and students to the mercy of nature (Ekuruemu, 2020) or a harsh environment. The premises of some schools, whenever it rains, are submerged in flood, and the classroom climate will become very

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cold. In sunny weather, the classrooms become very hot. Most schools, according to Ekuruemu (2020), “have been overgrown by weeds endangering the lives of students and teachers to reptile and other harmful creatures”.

Table 3: Socio-economic factors:

What are the socio-economic factors militating against the culture of teaching and learning, and such may hinder students’ chances of continuing their education? Percentage agreeing	
Students fending for themselves by engaging in menial jobs	
due to poor economic status of their parents Lack of resources to pay development	80
levy (school fees)	
and purchase educational materials such as textbooks	81
Parents poor attitude to students’ education resulting from	
their low socio-economic backgrounds and conditions	96
Students having the impression that educational qualification	
is less pay off than other values not relating to schooling	95
Taking apprenticeship more serious than schooling	94

Table 3 shows that students having less value for educational qualification, engaging in menial jobs, lack of financial resources to obtain educational materials, and parents' poor attitude toward their ward's education are due to their disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. One of the socio-economic factors has to do with or relates to the students assuming or playing parental roles by taking care of their needs by themselves. As a result, they are often busy looking for what to eat, clothes to wear, paying house rent, and footing other bills through engagement in all kinds of menial jobs that offer them daily wages. Such has been one of the sources of distraction to many GSS students, as they no longer have sufficient time and chance to concentrate on their studies and attend classes for learning. Thus, respondents ascribed it to the poor socio-economic background and conditions of the parents of the students. In other words, the decline of the socio-economic of the homes or families of students is also a significant factor affecting their learning and educational achievement. Therefore, some GSS student-parent's low socio-economic status may hinder their educational opportunities. According to Bagudo et al. (2022, p. 109), problems such as “lack of motivation and encouragement, drop-out, negative attitude of parents to schooling resulting from poor condition, parents’ inability to cope with school expenses, and problems related to noncompletion of schooling” are encounter by students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. In Nigeria, according to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the educational system “faces challenges in retaining students and ensuring their continued education across all the regions, and the problem persists in the North-East and North-West” (Doya, 2024; Agwam, 2024). The numerous obstacles, according to UNICEF, include the dependence on children for income and household tasks (child labour), inadequate planning and evidence-based policy, limited budgetary allocation, poor infrastructure, and significant shortages of classrooms and qualified teachers that are preventing students from being consistent in attending school and completing their education (Agwam, 2024; Doya, 2024). Thus, UNICEF's report indicates that Nigeria is currently leading the world in the number of out-of-school children, with 18.3 million (Agwam, 2024; Doya, 2024). The lifelong African traditional educational system, which has to do with the acquisition of functional/vocational skills, is still in practice in Nigeria (Fafunwa, 1974; Ozigi, 1981; Ayodele et al., 2022). A large number of students are engaging in such informal educational practices as apprenticeships, and they meet their trainers (masters) daily after school hours

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and at weekends at their various workshops to be trained and acquire experience in fishing, tailoring, mechanic, barbering, hairdressing, welding, and other vocational skills. Unfortunately, some of the students are not striking a balance between their schoolwork and vocational acquisition. For some reasons, including financial freedom, self-reliance, and the prospect of becoming self-employed as benefits they will obtain after they have completed apprenticeships - they believe such practice to be more valuable than education.⁸ Such is observed and coupled with the fact that many graduates are roaming in the streets just because of a lack of white scholar jobs, and throughout their studies at various levels of institutional education, they did not acquire vocational skills to be self-employed. Even some graduates who have been employed, especially in private organizations, are not earning up to the prescribed minimum wage of seventy thousand (\$44) monthly (Zainab, 2024), and their employment contracts are devoid of promotion from one level to another, health insurance, and pension schemes.⁹ As a result, some students believe, opine, and often say that going to ‘school is a scam’ opening. In other words, to them, schooling is time-wasting since its outcome may be less valuable or not relevant in the future.¹⁰ Also, in secondary schools, the disturbing trend is that some students are involved in unscrupulous activities, including cyber-crime/fraud (popularly known as “Yahoo Yahoo”), in desperation to become rich at an early age of their lives (Muhammad, 2022). Seeing this as a pathway to success has become a significant contributing factor to peer pressure among young minds to go into internet fraud and later abandon their educational pursuits.

Table 4: Teacher-student personal factors

What teacher/student personal factors are making teaching and learning less important and ineffective?

Percentage agreeing	
The teachers are unable to create a favourable atmosphere for interaction	84
Lack of teacher-student relationship	65
Teacher-student collusion for examination malpractices	87
Eating and drinking or chewing gums during class time	77
Negative concept of one-self as a student	95
Lack of intrinsic motivation	94
Low-level perception of learning	90

Table 4 points out that poor teacher-student personal factors have a negative effect on teaching and learning outcomes. The respondents also firmly believed that teacher-student personal factors such as teacher-student collusion for examination malpractices, eating and drinking or chewing gums during class, and lack of teacher-student relationship are making and impacting teaching and learning less important and ineffective. Teaching and learning can only be effective when the school environment and classroom atmosphere are serene and conducive. The responsibility squarely rests on the teachers to charge the atmosphere in the classroom for educational activities to take place. Unfortunately, many teachers can’t create the desired atmosphere for class interaction to enhance learning and impart knowledge to students. It can be associated with poor classroom management and control, which pave the way for students to chew gums, eat, drink, and move in and out without permission during class. The failing teacher-student relationship stems from the involvement of teachers in unwholesome acts such as extortion of money from students, consistent absenteeism from school, neglect of duties, engaging in immoral affairs with students, smoking and being under the influence of alcohol during official or school hours, and late coming to classes (Famade, 2001; Adeyemi and Ige, 2002; Ajayi and Shofoyeke, 2003; Achimugu, 2005;

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Matthew, 2020). The teachers' not adequately showing commitment and reasonable concern has also resulted in indiscipline, unseriousness, and poor academic achievement of secondary school students (Nanna, 1997; Adeyemi and Ige, 2002). Also, the lack of a positive concept of themselves as students, as identified by the respondents, is making it difficult for them not to cultivate self-regulation to master the germane and developmental educational tasks and challenges every day in school. An individual's perception to realize that they possess the required capabilities and skills to complete designated tasks and achieve academic goals needs to be developed (Bandura, 1986; Huang and Zeng, 2023). Another factor is the lack of tendency to carry out school work with self-conviction, self-willingness, and self-determination, known as intrinsic motivation (Salawu et al., 2022). Thus, some of the students are not self-motivated to engage themselves in educational activities to achieve their academic goals without external factors (such as teachers and parents' rewards). This could be one of the reasons why some teachers resort to the use of force just in an attempt or effort to make the students serious in their school work and studies. In educational institutions at any level, the most arduous hurdle that students and pupils in all categories at one time or another have to scale through or overcome is examination (Duyilemi, 2003). However, academic sacrifices (such as constant reading and practical engagement) have been consigned and relegated to the background due to the prevalence of examination malpractices in secondary schools. For example, the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) reported that out of 14,408,336 candidates who sat for SSCE between May/June 1995 and May/June 2006 1, 367, 726 representing 9.4% got involved in examination malpractices. Since many secondary schools are no longer known or recognized for upholding academic excellence, the students see no reason to be devoted to their studies and acquire the appropriate knowledge to pass external examinations. Numerous secondary schools serving as centres for any external (SSCE) examination are now known as or referred to as 'Academic Miracle Centres' where students and teachers collude to perpetrate examination malpractices. For example, 324 Nigerian secondary schools were blacklisted and barred in 2007 from serving as centres for all types of examinations being coordinated and conducted by various examination bodies such as the National Examinations Council (NECO), WAEC, and Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB) due to examination malpractices (Matthew, 2020).

Table 5: Technological factors Technological factors taking away the students' interest during teaching and learning are Percentage agreeing Presence of digital devices (e.g., cell phones and smartphones)

In the classroom	90
Playing video games in class time	88
Watching movies	92
Playing music with the use of MP3	90
Texting and having conversation via social media	91
Surfing (browsing the internet)	84
Availability of smartphones to carryout exam malpractice	90

Table 5 shows that having social media conversations, playing music and video games, watching movies and surfing with digital devices in class time are regarded as sources of distraction to students. The growing number of students using their personal or individual cell phones and smartphones in the classrooms persistently disrupts the teaching and learning process. while teaching and learning are ongoing, some students use their smartphones and mobile phones to email, send and receive text messages, and browse the internet. A particular habit that

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students engage in is related to surfing the internet, known as checking. It is “a new phenomenon for those that cannot seem to endure a day without repeated and regular access to mobile connectivity devices” (Goundar, 2014, p.212). Checking involves checking Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter updates; checking websites, emails, and text messages “on a regular basis, and can typically be four or more times in one hour” (Goundar, 2014, p.212). In the United States of America (USA), a recent survey indicates that in a day, not less than 107 texts are either sent or received by young individuals (persons) as compared to older adults who are about 40 years of age (Goundar, 2014). Several studies have argued that the regular usage of mobile phones hamper students learning by causing distractions. The reason is that learning is a process involving the five key resources such as “attention, working memory, short-term-memory, long-term-memory, and metacognition” used by individuals as they acquire information and learn something new (Ikenyiri and Eresia-Eke, 2017, p. 3). The diminishing capacity for processing information or data with any of the resources can impact others as the use of mobile phones divides attention during learning and teaching. The implication is that “information processed in short-term memory may be incomplete or inaccurate, which could lead to inaccurate or insufficient storage of information in long-term memory” (Ikenyiri and Eresia-Eke, 2017, p.3; Kraushaar and Nouak, 2010). In GSS, the situation seems compounded by the large enrolment classes that affect the auditory presentation of lesson notes, instructions, and opportunities for interaction. Even students who are not technology users are affected as loud music from portable media players, the sound of games played, and mobile phones rigging in the classroom interrupt their attention to learning.¹⁴ Also, the hope of students succeeding in participating in examination malpractices with smartphones in SSCE, which marks the end of the second phase of secondary education, has made many of them decline their interests in teaching and learning towards preparation to freely and genuinely write without external help to pass the exam. WAEC, for example, through its Head of Public Affairs, John Kapi, disclosed that eighty-six (86) mobile devices belonging to candidates who sat for the 2023 SSCE in various exam centres were seized and confiscated (Ankrah, 2023).

Table 6: Political factors

Political factors responsible for the poor quality of education, teaching and learning in GSS are	
Percentage agreeing	
Ministerial/principal approval for general promotion	75
Politicization of recruitment of teachers	77
Poor funding of the educational sector	92
Inappropriate curriculum	55

Table 6 demonstrates that political factors have greatly affected teaching and learning in GSS. The majority of the respondents also strongly agreed that political factors are responsible for the poor quality of education, teaching and learning in GSS. One of the major political factors that has worsened the situation of the GSS is the lack of finance. It is important to note that funding the educational sector is the responsibility of the Nigerian government. It is based on budgetary allocation from the Nigerian government at various levels (federal, state, and local governments) to the educational system yearly (Yaya, Mahuta, Yakubu, and Olude, 2022). However, the substantial annual allocation to the education sector has been consistently inadequate. For example, between 2000 and 2023, the highest budgetary percentage of the total nation's annual budget that the Nigerian government has allocated to the educational sector was 13%. It occurred in the year 2008. Such was below the benchmark

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recommended by UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations), especially for developing countries (OJO, 2023; Ohaegbulem and Chijioke, 2023).¹⁵ Whatever amount is allocated yearly to the sector is shared among the three levels of education: while the tertiary institution receives the largest share, the primary and secondary education share the remaining funds (Hinchliffe, 2002). Statutory funds from other sources, including state and local government to secondary schools, are also meagre and not consistently allocated. Therefore, inadequate funding over the years posed obstacles for school plants to be maintained, and it has been responsible for and attributed to infrastructural decay, shortage of educational facilities, and lack of learning materials in GSS (Author survey, 2023; Ahmed 2003; Omoregie, 2005). However, the Nigerian educational system faces the challenge of politicizing teacher recruitment. That is, the recruitment process of teachers is usually infiltrated and characterized by ethnicity, nepotism, favouritism, and party affiliation. Thus, the less emphasis and strictness on the demand for merit and qualification in education in the employment process has made it possible for the prevalence of low-quality and unqualified teachers in the GSS. ¹⁶ According to the Federal Ministry of Education (2007; 2009), many teachers in secondary schools are unfit for the teaching profession since they still display lower qualifications. In 1969, a National Curriculum Conference (NCC) was inaugurated formally with the idea of designing and having a curriculum (the set of programmes and activities) for education in Nigeria. Such a move was triggered and fuelled by public critics against the colonial educational system bequeathed to the Nigerian government (Ogunnu, 2000). Despite the review of the Nigerian curriculum of education over the years by the curriculum planners, including government officials, the secondary aspect of it still seems characterized by shortcomings (Ukpai and Okoro, 2011). These include that the content driven of the educational curriculum of the secondary school is not relevant to the needs and aspirations of Nigerian society, fails to consider and give regard to the acquisition of vocational skills for a child’s development, is too large in scope and lay too much emphasis on child’s intellectual development; show no care for teachers’ qualification and training to enhance teaching and learning of students (Matthew, 2020).

Table 7: Suggestions to improve teaching and learning

Measures and suggestions should be adopted to improve the quality of the teaching and learning of students in GSS Percentage agreeing

Nigerian government should adequately fund the educational sector	90
Government should embark on infrastructural development in government secondary schools	95
There should be stringent restrictions and prohibitions on the use of digital devices in class time	75
Well-trained guidance counsellors are needed to assist students and teachers in secondary schools	94
The government should make provisions such as grants, aid, and scholarships to support students whose families have low socio-economic backgrounds	80

Table 7 indicates that respondents strongly believed that restriction on the usage of digital devices in classrooms, the availability of well-trained guidance counsellors and financial provisions in any form to support students who are from low socio-economic backgrounds, and the initiation of rapid infrastructural development through adequate funding of the educational sector by the Nigerian government would improve teaching and learning in

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GSS. Appropriate financing is indispensable and serves as a life-wire requirement for the effective administration of the educational sector. It suggests that the allocation and availability of sufficient funds for the sector can improve the current standard of education provided, especially in GSS and for Nigerian citizens. As such, educationists and educational stakeholders have argued that the “quality of educational output is positively related to the quality of funding” (Nwafor, Uchendu, and Akani, 2015, p.119). Therefore, the Nigerian government should improve the annual budgetary allocation by making an effort and showing commitment to set aside 26% of the total national budget for the educational sector following the UNESCO recommendation. In addition, it is expedient to curtail the number of school dropouts caused by the low socioeconomy situations of their parents. Social mobilization officers (SMO) in the educational sector should devise means and implement strategies to secure grants, bursaries, scholarships or sponsorships from diverse sources such as community donations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations, and partnerships with philanthropists and corporate organizations to support students financially to complete their secondary education. Management of schools, staff, equipment, curriculum review, and infrastructure revolve around funds to achieve educational programmes and projects. It is also expedient that funds earmarked for educational purposes should be available to educational policy implementers to access a range of designed goods and services to support the student’s educational and academic development (Ugbudu and Ashir, 2021). Such measures will ensure that existing and abandoned school plants (physical facilities and structures) are maintained and rehabilitated respectively and new ones are designed and constructed in ways that facilitate the imperativeness of teaching and learning. The fixing and restoring walls, floors, broken windows, falling ceilings, and blown-off or leaking roofs of the abandoned school buildings to their original conditions, when in operation as required for teaching and learning, will make more classrooms available to decongest the overpopulated ones. The part of the resources that would be appropriated and allocated should also be used and invested into other facilities like play and sports grounds and indoor sports spaces that will encourage physical activities, offer stress relief and promote sportsmanship to enhance the learning experience. The need for professional guidance counsellors cannot be overemphasized since their roles and services (such as information, appraisal, placement, counselling, and follow-up services) will engender effective teaching and learning in secondary schools. Schools’ guidance counsellors with the requisite knowledge and qualifications, through the provision of their services, can help the students to understand themselves, adjust and adapt adequately to their school’s environment, understand or solve their learning difficulties, have cordial academic relationships with their teachers, able to strike a balance between their work life and schoolings, obtain relevant data about educational, vocational, and social opportunities in their societies (Mogbana, Ekwenze, Chiemela, 2022). They can also make significant contributions to the school’s curriculum development and provide technical assistance to teachers, which will help students identify and develop their potentialities through accessing learning opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge and vital information. Teacher forums can be consistently organized and conducted by the school’s guidance counsellors along with resource individuals to educate and direct teachers on how to improve their skills and methods of teaching (Mogbana, Ekwenze, Chiemela, 2022), create a conducive atmosphere and initiate effective and robust discussion concerning the subject-matter in classrooms to enhance students interest in teaching and learning. Thus, the attention and interest of the students in learning need to be prevented and safeguarded against distraction by restricting the use of all forms of technological devices for diverse communications during class time.

Conclusion

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Empirically, this study has critically examined the factors affecting the teaching and learning of students negatively and suggested measures and solutions to be adopted to improve its quality in the GSS. In Nigeria, however, the entire educational system is bedevilled by a myriad of problems, and they are mitigating the efficacy of teaching and learning, which are educational activities in schools daily. Regarding the first and second propositions in the introduction section, the results of the survey permit the suggestion that the environmental factors (such as poor, deteriorating, and abandoned school structures) and the socio-economic factors (student's parents' low economic status and students' caring for themselves by engaging in menial jobs) have not only negatively impacted teaching and learning, but also provided the basis for distracting and discouraging some GSS students from completing their education. As to the third and fourth propositions, the results of the survey also admit to inferred that teacher-student personal factors (collusion for examination malpractice, teachers' inability to create a serene atmosphere for interaction, and lack of intrinsic motivation) and technological factors (surfing, playing video games and watching movies in class time, and the hope of using smartphones to engage in exam malpractice) trivialize teaching and learning and hinder its desired outcome. The Nigerian government has not been taking or making the educational sector one of its agenda on a top priority to foster national development over the years. In this regard, it has been underfunded and inadequately resourced by the government. As earlier stated, the meagre budgetary allocation or educational funds in percentage, are distributed among the three levels of education. Therefore, the lack of resources at the secondary level is an enormous challenge towards realizing the country's national education goals. The effect of poor funding on infrastructural development has invariably affected teaching and learning negatively. As such, there are inadequate classrooms, chairs and desks compared to the large population of students in the GSS. On account of this, the article makes the following recommendations:

1. The Nigerian government should adequately fund and resource the educational sector. Hence, the yearly educational budgetary allocation should be increased at least up to the minimum universally accepted percentage, i.e., 25% of the nation's total budget.
2. The government should have a well-thought-out plan and design and make enormous resources available as soon as possible to embark on infrastructural development and create more facilities to accommodate and decongest overpopulated classrooms for easy teaching and learning. The government should also make provisions such as grants, aid, and scholarships to support students of underprivileged parents and whose families have low socio-economic backgrounds to stem the tide or curtail the potential number of school dropouts.
3. The recruitment process should be based on merit for more quality and dedicated teachers to have greater chances and opportunities to be in the educational system to guarantee the desired outcome of teaching and learning of students. To enhance the quality of education, the government should also meticulously review the educational/academic curriculum and upgrade instructional and training/learning facilities that will make the students more innovative and creative and capable of actualizing their dream careers and aspirations.
4. The government should employ well-trained and professional guidance counsellors to help students and teachers to be able to cope with the educational challenges in GSS.
5. In Nigerian secondary schools, during class time, there should be stringent restrictions and prohibitions on the usage of digital devices. Perhaps there should be enforcement of no operation of smartphones and other tech

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devices during school hours to retain and undergird the students' interest in teaching and learning. In addition, High-quality teachers and educators who practice and uphold the quality of education should be employed as supervisors and invigilators by various examination bodies in their yearly conduct of SSCE to curb exam malpractices.

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