

Balancing Micromanagement and Sustainable Development in Nigerian Secondary Schools: A Pathway to Educational Excellence

¹Magareth Oluwatoyin ABRAHAM, ²Adekunle Emmanuel ADENIJI & ³Senimetu ILEUMA

¹magareth.o.abraham@gmail.com: +2347038064682

²adenijadekunle1@gmail.com : +2348077005385

³ileumaesther@gmail.com : +2348038047958

^{1,2&3}Department of Educational Management, Lead City University Ibadan, Nigeria.

Abstract

Sustainable development, as defined by the United Nations, is the practice of meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In the context of Nigerian secondary schools, achieving educational excellence while maintaining sustainable development requires a delicate balance between micromanagement and fostering an environment conducive to holistic growth. Micromanagement in the education sector often leads to a rigid curriculum, excessive administrative control, and limited autonomy for teachers and students. On the other hand, sustainable development necessitates a more flexible and inclusive approach, where students are empowered to become critical thinkers and problem solvers. Fostering a collaborative and participatory school culture, providing professional development opportunities for teachers, and implementing learner-centered pedagogies are key components of achieving educational excellence while maintaining sustainable development. Through an extensive review of literature, this paper explore the challenges and potential solutions for balancing micromanagement and sustainable development in Nigerian secondary schools, with a focus on achieving educational excellence. It further identifies the need for policy reforms and institutional changes that support a more balanced approach to education management and provide valuable insights for policymakers, school administrators, and educators in achieving a harmonious balance between micromanagement and sustainable development in Nigerian secondary schools, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes and a brighter future for generations to come. Recommendations include revising curriculum frameworks to incorporate sustainability principles, empowering school communities to have a voice in decision-making processes, and investing in infrastructure and resources that promote sustainable practices

Keywords: Balancing, Micromanagement, Sustainable Development, Educational Excellence

Word Count: 250

Introduction

Education plays a crucial role in the development and progress of any nation. In Nigeria, as in many other countries, secondary schools serve as important institutions for shaping the future generation's knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The issue of micromanagement in Nigerian

secondary schools has been a long-standing concern. Historically, the education system in Nigeria has been characterized by a centralized management approach, where administrators exercise top-down control and closely monitor teachers' activities. This excessive intervention can stifle innovation, creativity, and autonomy, thereby limiting the potential for educational excellence (Khaddage, F., & Young, D. J. 2019). Micromanagement often results in demoralized teachers, diminished student engagement, and a rigid curriculum that fails to meet the evolving needs of learners. (Jones, L., 2020). Sustainable development in education on the other hand entails creating an environment that supports continuous improvement, innovation, and adaptability (Oshunniyi, 2020). It involves promoting teacher professional development, enhancing infrastructure, fostering community engagement, and aligning educational policies with global trends and best practices. By focusing on sustainable development, Nigerian secondary schools can become centers of educational excellence, producing well-rounded individuals equipped with the knowledge and skills required for the challenges of the 21st century (Czerniawski, G., 2020).

Conversely, sustainable development is vital for the long-term growth and success of Nigerian secondary schools because it fosters continuous improvement and adaptability, resulting in a dynamic and effective learning environment. By implication therefore, the effective management of secondary schools is often hindered by the challenge of finding a balance between micromanagement and sustainable development. Achieving a balance between micromanagement and sustainable development requires a paradigm shift towards a facilitative management approach and collaborative efforts from various stakeholders in the way secondary schools are managed in Nigeria. Instead of rigidly controlling every aspect of teaching and learning, administrators should adopt a more facilitative and empowering approach. This approach encourages teacher autonomy, fosters a culture of collaboration and innovation, and allows for experimentation with new pedagogical approaches (Ogunniyi, 2019).

This paper aims to explore the pathway towards achieving this delicate equilibrium. By pursuing this delicate equilibrium, Nigerian secondary schools can provide high-quality education that prepares students for success in a rapidly changing world.

Objectives of the Article

The objective of this paper is to explore the negative impact of micromanagement in Nigerian secondary schools and highlight the importance of sustainable development as a means to

achieve long-term growth and improvement. It aims to propose a balanced approach to management that promotes teacher autonomy, collaboration, and innovation, while also fostering continuous improvement, adaptability, and alignment with global trends and best practices thereby creating an environment that promotes educational excellence in Nigerian secondary schools.

Educational Excellence

Educational excellence refers to the achievement of high academic standards, fostering intellectual curiosity, critical thinking skills, and a love for learning among students (Smith, 2018). Educational excellence is characterized by an inclusive and equitable learning environment that supports the diverse needs and abilities of all learners, promoting their holistic development and ensuring equal access to educational opportunities (Babajide, A. A., & Odion, E. C. 2020). It involves the cultivation of key skills, such as creativity, problem-solving, collaboration, and adaptability, which are essential for students to thrive in the rapidly evolving 21st-century world (Brown, 2020). It also encompasses the development of character, values, and ethical behavior; fostering a sense of social responsibility and civic engagement among students, preparing them to become responsible global citizens. (Jones, L. 2020)

Elements of educational excellence

Educational excellence entails high academic standards and performance across various subjects and disciplines. It encompasses mastery of core knowledge and skills, critical thinking abilities, problem-solving skills, and a deep understanding of concepts as well as the development of well-rounded individuals (Jones, L. 2020). It emphasizes the cultivation of social and emotional skills, creativity, leadership qualities, ethical values, and physical well-being alongside academic growth. High-quality teaching plays a crucial role in educational excellence (Grunewald, K., et al. 2019). It requires skilled educators who are knowledgeable, passionate, and capable of employing various instructional strategies and technologies to engage students and facilitate meaningful learning experiences (Brown, M., et al. 2021). It recognizes the diverse needs, interests, and abilities of students and ensures the provision of tailored instruction, individualized support, and opportunities for personalized learning experiences to meet the unique requirements of each learner.

Pursuing educational excellence involves a commitment to ongoing reflection, evaluation, and improvement. It involves a culture of continuous professional development for educators, regular assessment of student progress, and the implementation of evidence-based practices

and innovative approaches fostering positive relationships, and ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities. It also encourages active student participation, collaboration, inquiry-based learning, and the integration of real-world experiences

Micromanagement

Micromanagement refers to a management style characterized by excessive control and close supervision over subordinates' work, often involving intrusive and unnecessary involvement in day-to-day tasks (Weldon, 2020). It involves a manager's tendency to closely monitor and direct the work of their employees, often undermining their autonomy and stifling creativity (Chaleff, 2003).

Micromanagement and Nigerian Secondary Schools

In the secondary school context, micromanagement refers to the excessive control and intervention by administrators in the day-to-day activities of teachers and the overall management of the educational institution (Ogunniyi, 2017). The term "micromanagement" has been extensively discussed in academic literature, business articles, and popular management books. Scholars and researchers have examined its effects on employee performance, organizational culture, and leadership effectiveness. Micromanagement is characterized by a top-down management approach, excessive control and detailed supervision; lack of trust and autonomy (Elmore, 2008); excessive focus on details (Nash, 2020); and rigid decision-making (Davidson & Niven, 2019) which discourages educators from exploring innovative teaching methodologies (Smith, 2018).

Micromanagement can lead to demoralized teachers, limited autonomy, decreased creativity, and a rigid curriculum that fails to meet the evolving needs of learners, diminished morale and motivation and high staff turnover (Ogunyomi & Brunetto, 2018). It inhibits innovation and stifles the potential for educational excellence by restricting the flexibility, creativity and freedom of teachers, students and members of staff to develop critical thinking skills (Jones, 2020). While micromanagement in Nigerian secondary schools may stem from a desire to ensure quality and efficiency, it poses several challenges that can impede productivity and hinder academic excellence (Kim & Beehr, 2020).

Impact of Micromanagement on Nigerian Secondary Schools

Micromanagement has been linked to lower levels of teacher job satisfaction and commitment. Research by Kim (2020) found a negative relationship between micromanagement and both

job satisfaction and commitment among secondary school teachers. Micromanagement restricts teachers' independence and professional judgment, leading to reduced autonomy in the classroom. This can hinder their creativity, motivation, and ability to adapt teaching methods to students' needs (Czerniawski, 2020). Another study by Deci et al. (2020), found that micromanagement practices were associated with decreased autonomy, support and teacher empowerment. Additionally, micromanagement can limit teachers' opportunities for professional growth. According to a study by Johnson et al. (2020), micromanaged teachers have limited chances to engage in reflective practices and collaborative learning, which are crucial for professional improvement. Weng (2021) also reveal that micromanagement practices were negatively associated with teachers' participation in professional development activities in secondary schools.

Micromanagement tends to stifle creativity and innovation within teams. Constrain by rigid procedures and constant monitoring, leads to fear of failure and reprimand which discourages experimentation and hampers the generation of fresh solutions (Akpan, E. O., & Udoh, E. F. 2021). It an environment of distrust and undermines employees' confidence in their abilities. When there is constant questioning and criticism of the work of teachers and members of staff, they may experience decreased morale and motivation. They may feel undervalued and develop a sense of learned helplessness, believing that their efforts will be overridden or disregarded (Kim & Beehr, 2018). Consequently, their enthusiasm for the job may wane, leading to reduced productivity.

Micromanagement can negatively impact student autonomy and engagement in the learning process. A study by Qian et al. (2019) found that micromanagement behaviors from teachers were negatively related to student autonomy and engagement in secondary schools. It can undermine student motivation and engagement. A study by Rahimi et al. (2018) found that teacher micromanagement negatively influenced student intrinsic motivation in secondary schools. Micromanagement can have indirect negative effects on student learning outcomes. When teachers are constrained by excessive control and detailed instructions, they may have less time and energy to focus on individual student needs and provide personalized instruction, leading to decreased student achievement (Steffens, et al., 2016).

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development refers to a mode of development that aims to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own

needs. It entails the integration of economic, social, and environmental considerations to ensure long-term well-being and resilience. This concept was first officially introduced in the report titled "Our Common Future," also known as the Brundtland Report, published by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987. The Brundtland Report's definition of sustainable development contains within it two key concepts: (1) The concept of 'needs,' in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and (2) The idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs."

Sustainable Development and Nigerian Secondary Schools

Sustainable development in the context of Nigerian secondary schools refers to creating an environment that supports continuous improvement, adaptability, and long-term growth (Oshunniyi, 2020). It involves fostering a dynamic and effective learning environment by promoting teacher professional development, enhancing infrastructure, aligning educational policies with global trends, and engaging with the local community Davies, J., et al. (2019). Sustainable development has become a pressing global concern, requiring efforts from all sectors of society, including educational institutions. Secondary schools play a crucial role in shaping the minds of future generations and instilling the values and knowledge necessary for sustainable development in order to address the evolving challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. However, the pathway to educational excellence lies in striking a balance between micromanagement and sustainable development. This balance requires providing teachers with the necessary resources, professional development opportunities, and support systems to enhance their effectiveness and job satisfaction (Deci, E. L. et al 2020). It entails moving away from rigid control and adopting a more facilitative and empowering management approach that encourages collaboration, innovation and teacher autonomy under well-defined guidelines in order to achieve the required measure of control and coordination (Ogunniyi, 2019).

Nexus between Micromanagement, Sustainable Development, and Educational Excellence

The nexus between micromanagement, sustainable development, and educational excellence is evident in their interdependence and influence on organizational and societal outcomes. Micromanagement practices, characterized by excessive control and supervision exerted by managers over their subordinates, often lead to reduced autonomy, creativity, and motivation can have detrimental effects on sustainable development initiatives (Smith, 2018). Educational excellence, on the other hand, encompasses the provision of high-quality education, student-centered learning, and fostering a supportive and engaging environment (OECD, 2019). Educational excellence relies on the cultivation of independent thinking, innovation, and self-directed learning, which are hindered by micromanagement practices (Désaunay, C., et al.

2021). Therefore, micromanagement in educational settings compromises the pursuit of educational excellence.

Sustainable development and educational excellence share common goals and mutually reinforcing relationships. Sustainable development requires a well-educated population equipped with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to address complex societal challenges (UNESCO, 2017). Educational excellence plays a pivotal role in nurturing individuals who can contribute to sustainable development by fostering critical thinking, environmental awareness, and social responsibility (Steffens et al., 2016). By integrating sustainability principles into the curriculum, educational institutions can enhance students' understanding of sustainable development and empower them to become active contributors to a more sustainable future (UNESCO, 2014). Thus, sustainable development and educational excellence are intertwined, as educational excellence serves as a foundation for sustainable development, and sustainable development, in turn, provides a meaningful context for educational excellence.

Micromanagement poses a significant challenge to sustainable development and educational excellence, as it curtails autonomy, creativity, and critical thinking. On the other hand, sustainable development and educational excellence reinforce each other, with educational excellence providing the necessary skills and values for sustainable development and sustainable development offering a meaningful context for educational excellence. To foster sustainable development and educational excellence in Nigerian secondary schools, there is a need to recognize the importance of empowering individuals, promoting participatory decision-making, and nurturing a culture of innovation and collaboration.

Theoretical Framework

Theory X and Y

Theory X and Theory Y are two contrasting management theories developed by Douglas McGregor in 1960, that describe different assumptions about human behavior in the workplace. While these theories are typically applied in the context of organizational management, we can explore their implications for balancing micromanagement and sustainable development in Nigeria secondary schools as a pathway to educational excellence.

Theory X assumes that individuals inherently dislike work and will avoid it if possible. It suggests that people need to be closely supervised and controlled to ensure they meet their

responsibilities. In the context of secondary schools, a theory X approach would involve strict control and micromanagement of teachers and students. This could mean constant monitoring, rigid rules, and a top-down decision-making structure. While this approach may be effective in maintaining discipline and order, it can stifle creativity, limit autonomy, and hinder sustainable development. Teachers and students may feel demotivated and disengaged, resulting in limited innovation and growth.

On the other hand, Theory Y assumes that individuals are inherently motivated, seek responsibility, and can be self-directed. It suggests that people can enjoy their work and are capable of taking ownership of their responsibilities. Applying Theory Y principles in secondary schools would involve empowering teachers and students, fostering an environment of trust and collaboration, and encouraging autonomy and initiative. This approach allows for sustainable development as it promotes creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Teachers and students feel valued, leading to increased motivation, engagement, and educational excellence. To balance micromanagement and sustainable development in Nigeria secondary schools lies in adopting a Theory Y management approach while acknowledging the need for, and putting in place established guidelines that ensures some level of firmness, and overall monitoring.

Micromanagement is widely recognized as a counterproductive management approach that can hinder productivity, demotivate employees, and hinder organizational success (Sharma et al., 2016). Although the Nigerian National Policy on Education mandates the integration of sustainable development principles across all levels of education and the secondary school curriculum includes subjects such as Environmental Education, Civic Education, and Geography, which provide a foundation for understanding sustainability issues (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013); much attention has not been paid to the establishment of a management framework that promotes critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills, enabling teachers and students to analyze complex problems and develop innovative solutions (Désaunay et al., 2021). Secondary school authority should empower teachers and students by delegating appropriate responsibilities and granting autonomy within established guidelines. This would foster trust, open communication, a more positive empowering work environment (Hwang, 2021); and bring about holistic development of students and overall educational excellence.

Summary

Balancing micromanagement and sustainable development in Nigerian secondary schools is crucial for fostering educational excellence. Micromanagement refers to excessive control and intervention by school administrators, which can stifle creativity and hinder students' overall growth. On the other hand, sustainable development emphasizes a holistic approach that addresses environmental, social, and economic aspects of education. Finding the right balance between these two factors requires empowering teachers, promoting student-centered learning, and implementing policies that prioritize long-term educational goals while considering the unique challenges faced by Nigerian schools.

Conclusion

Achieving educational excellence in Nigeria's secondary schools necessitates finding a delicate balance between micromanagement and sustainable development. While micromanagement can offer short-term solutions and ensure adherence to specific guidelines, sustainable development provides a long-term vision that fosters growth, innovation, and adaptability. To attain educational excellence, administrators, educators, and policymakers must prioritize a holistic approach that embraces autonomy, encourages critical thinking, promotes teacher development, and integrates sustainable practices. By striking this balance, Nigeria's secondary schools can pave the way for a transformative educational system that empowers students, cultivates lifelong learning, and contributes to the overall development of the nation.

Recommendations

To develop a tailored approach for finding the right balance between micromanagement and sustainable development in Nigerian secondary schools, it is important that the Nigerian government and policy makers consider the following recommendations

- i. **Encourage shared vision and participation:** Involve teachers, students, and other stakeholders in the decision-making process. Encourage open communication, active participation, and collaboration to foster a sense of ownership and commitment to sustainable development.
- ii. **Curriculum Review:** Conduct a comprehensive review of the curriculum to ensure that sustainable development principles are integrated across subjects. A balanced curriculum that addresses sustainable development goals prepares students for the challenges of the future while minimizing micromanagement tendencies.

- iii. **Delegate responsibility and autonomy:** Empower teachers and students by delegating appropriate responsibilities and granting autonomy within established guidelines. Encourage teachers to design their lesson plans, utilize innovative teaching methods, and tailor their approaches to meet students' individual needs.
- iv. **Foster a positive and inclusive school culture:** Create a supportive environment that values diversity, encourages creativity, and promotes positive relationships among teachers, students, and parents. Recognize and reward achievements and contributions, fostering a sense of belonging and motivation.
- v. **Student Participation and Leadership:** Foster student participation in decision-making processes within the school. Establish student councils or leadership programs that allow students to voice their opinions, contribute to sustainable development initiatives, and take on responsibilities
- vi. **Promote professional development:** Invest in continuous training and professional development opportunities for teachers. Provide resources and support for them to enhance their skills and stay updated with best practices, empowering them to take initiative and innovate in the classroom.
- vii. **Parental Engagement:** Actively involve parents in their children's education and sustainable development initiatives. Organize workshops, seminars, and parent-teacher meetings to promote awareness and understanding of sustainable practices. Encourage parental participation in school activities and projects related to sustainable development. When parents are engaged, they become partners in education, reducing the need for micromanagement and fostering a supportive environment.
- viii. **Empowerment of School Leadership:** Encourage school administrators to adopt a more participatory and collaborative approach, empowering teachers and staff to make decisions within their areas of expertise. This reduces micromanagement tendencies while fostering sustainable development through shared responsibility and accountability.
- ix. **Recognition and Rewards:** Implement recognition programs that acknowledge and celebrate schools, teachers, and students who excel in sustainable development practices. This can include awards, certificates, or public appreciation. Recognizing and rewarding sustainable efforts motivates stakeholders, encourages innovation, and creates a positive school culture, minimizing the need for micromanagement as individuals take ownership of sustainable development initiatives

- x. **Continuous Evaluation and Feedback:** Establish a robust monitoring and evaluation system to track progress identify gaps, and make data-informed decisions. Regularly assess the impact of sustainable development initiatives on educational excellence and the balance with micromanagement. Use evaluation findings to refine strategies, address challenges, and continuously improve the tailored approach for Nigerian secondary schools.

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