

IMPACT OF FUEL SUBSIDY REMOVAL ON EDUCATION AND TEACHER DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper argues that the current fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria has caused serious havoc on so many aspects of the country's economic, social, political and educational endeavours. Due to this, the paper examined the impact of fuel subsidy removal on teachers' education and development in Nigeria. Based on the review of literature, it was established that the fuel subsidy removal has undermined the sector of teacher education and development as it caused education to be less accessible to teachers due to cost of transportation, increased teachers' cost of living, brought about protests that lead to disruption of academic activities, funding challenges to educational institutions, underdevelopment of teacher professional development processes, difficulty in teacher recruitment and retention as well as decreased teachers' morale. It is concluded that improving the teacher education and development during the crises of fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria requires a multi-faceted approach. It is therefore recommended that government should focuses on investing in teacher training, professional development, incentives, technology, collaboration, and evaluation. By prioritizing the needs of teachers and supporting their growth, the quality of education in Nigeria can be enhanced even in challenging economic circumstances.

Key words: Fuel subsidy removal, teacher, education, development.

Introduction

Historically, fuel subsidies in Nigeria emerged since 1970s when the government wanted to subsidise the price of gasoline and other petroleum products so as to provide affordable energy to Nigerian citizens and support economic development (Adenaike, 2016). However, over the years, fuel subsidies have become a major drain on the country's finances, with costs escalating due to increasing fuel prices and smuggling of subsidized fuel to neighbouring countries. According to a report by the World Bank (2019), fuel subsidies in Nigeria cost the government over \$2.4 billion. In an effort to address the unsustainable nature of fuel subsidies, the Nigerian government has made several attempts to reform the subsidy system. In 2012, the government attempted to partially deregulate the price of gasoline, leading to widespread protests and strikes across the country. The government eventually reversed the decision and reinstated fuel subsidies.

In 2020, the government announced plans to fully deregulate the downstream oil sector and remove fuel subsidies, citing the need to reduce government spending and attract private investment in the sector. This move was met with mixed reactions from the public, with many concerns about the potential impact on the cost of living. As of 2021, fuel subsidies in Nigeria have been partially removed, with the government implementing a pricing mechanism that allows for fluctuations in fuel prices based on international market conditions. However, the issue of fuel subsidies remains a contentious and complex issue in Nigeria, with ongoing debates about how best to manage the cost of fuel while also ensuring the availability of affordable energy for citizens.

In other words, fuel subsidy in Nigeria dates back to the 1970s when the country started to subsidize petroleum products such as gasoline and diesel. The aim of the subsidy was to ensure that the Nigerian population had access to affordable fuel despite fluctuations in global oil prices. However, over the years, the subsidy system has faced challenges including inefficiency, corruption, and significant fiscal burden on the government.

The removal of the subsidy was seen as a necessary step to reduce government expenditure and address the systemic corruption in the subsidy system. However, the protests forced the government to partially reinstate the subsidy. Since then, the Nigerian government has made several attempts to reform the fuel subsidy system by introducing measures such as the deregulation of the downstream oil sector and implementing a Petroleum Support Fund (PSF) to manage the subsidy payments. Despite these efforts, the subsidy system continues to be a contentious issue in Nigerian politics and has caused significant challenges for the economy. In recent years, the Nigerian government has faced increasing pressure from international financial institutions and experts to completely remove the fuel subsidy in order to reduce fiscal burden and improve transparency in the energy sector. However, the political implications of such a move continue to complicate the issue.

Conceptual clarifications

A fuel subsidy is a government payment to reduce the price of fuel for consumers which could be done through direct payments to fuel producers or distributors, or through tax breaks (Ajayi, 2013). In other words, fuel subsidy is a government policy or program that aims to artificially reduce the cost of fuels, such as gasoline, diesel, and kerosene, for consumers (Adenaike, 2016). He further illustrates that government typically provides subsidies to fuel suppliers, allowing them to sell fuel at a lower price than the market rate. Ajayi (2013) expressed that the purpose of fuel subsidies is to make energy more affordable for consumers, especially low-income individuals, and to stimulate economic growth by reducing transportation costs and supporting industries that rely on fuel. However, fuel subsidies can have negative impacts on government budgets, leading to fiscal strain, inefficiencies, and market distortions. Subsidies can also encourage overconsumption of fuel, which may contribute to environmental degradation, such as air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

Teacher education refers to the formal training and preparation that individuals undergo to become professional teachers and this typically includes undergoing academic course works, practical teaching experience, and pedagogical training (Akiba, 2021). Teacher education programs aim to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to effectively educate students and support their learning and development. According to

Darling-Hammond (2014), teacher education programs may vary in structure, content, and duration depending on the country, educational system, and level of teaching (such as early childhood, primary, secondary, or higher education). Thus, effective teacher education programs are essential for ensuring the quality of education and improving student outcomes.

Teacher development refers to the ongoing professional growth and learning that educators engage in to enhance their teaching practice, instructional strategies, and subject knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Teacher development activities include workshops, seminars, conferences, mentoring, coaching, and collaborative learning opportunities. Darling-Hammond further contends that the key goal of teacher development is to improve teaching quality, student achievement, and overall educational outcomes. Teacher development is a continuous process that allows educators to stay current with educational research, best practices, and teaching methodologies (Akiba, 2021). Akiba, further expressed that it also helps teachers address challenges, adapt to changing student needs, and enhance their effectiveness in the classroom.

Impact of Fuel Subsidy Removal on the Nigerian Economy

The removal of subsidies in Nigeria, particularly in the petroleum sector, has significant implications on the economic, social, and political aspects of the Nigerian economy.

Economically, the removal of subsidies can lead to improved fiscal health for the government. This is because, traditionally, fuel subsidies have consumed a significant portion of the national budget, which could be redirected towards critical sectors like education and healthcare (Adedoyin & Osunleke, 2019). On the contrary, while subsidy removal can enhance government revenue, it might trigger inflation due to increased fuel prices affecting transportation and production costs (Oni & Amoo, 2019). Consequently, this could reduce the purchasing power of citizens and impair consumer spending. Again, subsidy removal may positively impact the investment climate, as it can eliminate market distortions. This is based on the fact that with a more predictable pricing system, investors may be more willing to invest in the oil and gas sector as well as renewable energies (Nwafor et al., 2019). Similarly, by reallocating resources from subsidies to infrastructure development and other sectors, Nigeria could foster economic diversification, reducing dependence on oil (Onosode & Dele-Muhammed, 2020).

Socially, the immediate aftermath of subsidy removal often perceived as an increase in the cost of living could exacerbate poverty levels. Lower-income households disproportionately bear the brunt of increased fuel prices (Adeyemo, 2016). Similarly, social unrest is a likely consequence of subsidy removal, as seen during past subsidy governance controversies. The January 2012 protests and that of 2024 against subsidy removal highlight the potential for widespread dissent (Ajakaiye & Akomolafe, 2016).

Politically, the removal of subsidies demands transparent governance and effective communication from the government. If citizens are convinced that the funds saved from subsidies are being reinvested into public services, it may bolster confidence in leadership (Adewale et al., 2018). In the same vein, subsidy removal can serve as a catalyst for broader economic reforms, including deregulation of the oil sector and enhanced accountability mechanisms (Ojo & Baruwa, 2020).

Therefore, the removal of subsidies in Nigeria presents multifaceted implications for economic development, encompassing fiscal stability, inflation, investment, and socioeconomic

challenges. While it holds the potential to foster long-term economic health and diversification, immediate socioeconomic risks demand strategic mitigation

Effects of Fuel Subsidy Removal on Teacher Education and Development in Nigeria

The removal of fuel subsidies in Nigeria affects teacher education and development in various aspects as examined accordingly as follows:

1. It led to higher cost of transportation which in turn affects teachers' and students' commute. This could make education less accessible, particularly in rural areas where transportation options are limited (Eguakhide & Efe, 2021). According to a study conducted by Adeyemi, and Ochonogor (2019), the removal of fuel subsidies in Nigeria would have a negative impact on the education sector as a whole, including teacher education. The study found that the increase in transportation costs would lead to a decline in the number of individuals willing to enter the teaching profession, as well as a decrease in the number of teachers who are able to attend professional development workshops and training sessions.
2. It increased the cost of living. Adeyemi and Ochonogor (2019) buttressed that the removal of fuel subsidies has increased the cost of living for teachers, potentially leading to salary stagnation or cuts in the education sector. This could further discourage individuals from pursuing a career in teaching, resulting in a shortage of qualified teachers in the country.
3. It causes protests that could lead to disruption of Academic Calendars. The removal of fuel subsidies has historically been met with public protest due to its immediate impact on living costs. As noted by Obasi (2022), these protests can disrupt academic calendars. Teacher education institutions may face extended strikes, delaying programmes completion and affecting the future workforce.
4. It brings about funding challenges. The teacher education programmes often rely on government funds, which might be strained post-subsidy removal as the government reallocates funds to address social unrest and inflationary pressures. This reallocation may limit investments in teacher training programmes, resources, and infrastructure development (Ogunyemi, 2022). According to Yahaya and Jibril (2021), fuel subsidy removal may lead to a decrease in funding for educational resources and thus, teachers might have less access to training opportunities and materials necessary for their professional development. This could impact the overall quality of instruction in those institutions.
5. It affects teacher professional development. The impact of fuel subsidy removal affects teachers' ability to access professional development opportunities, attend workshops, conferences, and training programs (Olajide, Arinola, & Adelakun, 2019). Higher fuel prices can add to the financial burden on teachers, making it more challenging for them to afford the costs associated with their professional growth and development. This can ultimately hinder their ability to enhance their skills, knowledge, and teaching practices, which can impact the overall quality of education in the country.
6. The removal of fuel subsidies can also lead to budget constraints for educational institutions and government bodies responsible for organizing teacher development programmes (Olajide, Arinola, & Adelakun, 2019). With limited funds available, there

may be a decrease in the number of professional development opportunities offered to teachers, as well as a reduction in the quality and scope of training initiatives. A report by UNESCO highlighted that investment in teacher development is crucial for improving the quality of education and achieving sustainable development goals. However, challenges such as insufficient funding, lack of access to professional development opportunities, and economic barriers like increased fuel prices can impede the progress of teacher development efforts in countries like Nigeria (UNESCO, 2016).

7. It brings difficulty in teacher recruitment and retention. According to Zulu and Nziramasanga (2013), the removal of fuel subsidies could make teaching less financially attractive, leading to difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified educators. This may result in a shortage of teachers, especially in remote areas where higher transportation costs could be a deterrent for potential candidates.
8. It decreased morale. Higher fuel prices could affect the teachers' morale, as they may feel financially burdened and undervalued (Zulu & Nziramasanga, 2013). They stressed that this could lead to decreased job satisfaction and motivation, ultimately affecting the quality of education provided to students.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria has affected so many aspects of the country's economic, social, and political endeavours. Moreover, it has affected the training and development of teachers in the education sector as it caused education to be less accessible due to cost of transportation, increased cost of living, protests that lead to disruption of academic activities, funding challenges to educational institutions, underdevelopment of teacher professional development processes, difficulty in teacher recruitment and retention as well as decreased teachers' morale. Thus, improving the teacher education and development during the crises of fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria requires a multi-faceted approach as forwarded in the following recommendations.

Recommendations

Improving teacher education and development during the crises of fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria can be a challenging task. However, the following recommendations are important for consideration:

1. There is need to government to Increase funding for teacher education. The government needs to reallocate funds saved from fuel subsidy removal to invest in teacher education programmes. This includes providing more resources for teacher training, professional development, and educational materials.
2. There is need to strengthen teacher training programmes that can help improve the quality of education in Nigeria. This includes focusing on practical teaching skills, pedagogy, and subject knowledge.
3. There is need to support ongoing professional development of teachers to make them up-to-date with best practices in education. This can be by providing funding for workshops, seminars, and conferences to support teachers in their professional growth.
4. There is need to provide incentives for teachers such as performance-based bonuses, scholarships for further education, and career advancement opportunities so as to motivate teachers and improve retention rates in the profession.

5. There is need to implement technology in education by providing teachers with training and resources to integrate technology into their classrooms so as to improve education quality during the crises of fuel subsidy removal.
6. There is need to foster collaboration and peer learning among teachers so as to create a supportive learning environment and improve teaching practices. This is because, peer-to-peer learning and mentorship programs can also be beneficial for teacher development.
7. There is need to monitor and evaluate teacher performance so as to identify areas for improvement and provide targeted support for teachers.
8. There is also a need for regular feedback and supervision to teachers to enable teachers meet up with the quality standards of education.

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