

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND IMPERATIVES FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of education in national development and its major purposes which include consumption and investment functions. It conceptualizes education from a social service perspective, using a rights based approach. It examined the concept of inclusive education, and analysed the statistics of enrolment for basic education in Nigeria. The findings established that enrolment for basic education increased from 30,170,969 in 2012 by 14.45% in 2013, and thereafter declined to -3.55% in 2016. Thereafter, the paper made a situational analysis of the problem of illiteracy in Nigeria particularly that of out- of- school (which include the Almajiri, pastoralist communities and girl- child) estimated at 10 million (UNICEF, 2017). Finally, it examined the Ministerial Action Plan for out- of- school children and spelt out the imperatives of data for educational planning.

Introduction

Education is a key development index and broad based quality education is recognised as the foundation for sustainable development (Imam, 2018). It has proven benefits for social development, contributes to democratization and good governance, healthy living and promotes peace and stability, as well as concern for the environment. Also, education stimulates economic competitiveness through improved skills, enhanced productivity and earnings, laying foundation for sustained economic growth and national development (Olaniyonu & Gbenu, 2016). Education should not be desired and realised only when it is convenient, it is something every government should be committed to investing in because of the benefits which accrue to the individual, the society, and the nation at large (Imam, 2018).

Conceptual Framework

Education has two major functions which include consumption and investment functions. The benefits from consumption are non- economic while investment in education is for profit by the nation or the individual. Education as consumption function is on the premise that education is a social service

that does not yield any economic returns. Individuals and government desire or give education for its own sake, while others desire or give education for expected social and economic returns (Atolagbe and Atolagbe, 2017).

Investment function of education is on the premises that education is desired for social and economic returns. In every economy, it is assumed that people with higher education earn higher than people with less education. The rate and level of the development of any nation is a function of how much was invested in education in relation to the improvement in the quality of the citizens through education. Individuals invest in themselves in order to improve the residual form of human capital. Such investment takes the form of additional education. The cost incurred by the individual acquiring education constitutes an investment in their future earning capacity. However, Government investment in education is usually referred to as social investment (Atolagbe and Atolagbe, 2017). Thus on the part of the nation, investing in education of the citizenry will eradicate illiteracy, equip recipients with skills and improve on the living standards of the people. The people are the human resources and active agents who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social economic and political organization and carry forward national development (Imam, 2016). Since education is an investment which yields returns, it is expected that government invests in basic education for all children regardless of their peculiar circumstances as this is a basic human right, which is in tune with social justice.

The right to education has long been recognized as encompassing not only access to educational provision, but also the obligation to eliminate discrimination at all levels of the educational system, to set minimum standards and to improve quality. In addition, education is necessary for the fulfilment of any other civil, political, economic and social rights. Education as human right is rooted in social justice which is based on the premise that all members of the society ought to enjoy the same basic rights, opportunities and social benefits regardless of nationality, gender, religion, ethnicity and colour. (UNESCO, 2007).

Thus, those who contend that education is a social service, have propose a rights- based- approach to education that embodies three interlinked and interdependent dimensions (UNICEF, 2007) as enumerated below.

1. The right of access- the right of every child to education which must be available, accessible to and inclusive of all children.
2. The right to quality education -the right of every child to an education that enables him or her to develop life skills and achieve his or her full potential, through an education that is child-centred, relevant, has

broad curriculum, and that is appropriately resourced and monitored to achieve educational goals.

3. The right to respect within the learning environment- the right of every child to be respected within the education system through an education that is provided in consistent with equal rights, opportunities for meaningful participation, freedom from all forms of violence, and respect for language, culture and religion.

Using this framework an effective basic education cannot be realised unless and until all three above are addressed. The framework is in consonance with the provisions of the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014).

Situational Analysis

The Nigerian Constitution, international treaties and the National Policy on Education have all been important elements in the Universal Basic Education ACT (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004), which provides for a universal, free, basic education in a number of settings to cater all children aged 6 to 14+ years, in Nigeria irrespective of peculiar circumstances. Despite this development, Nigeria is faced with many out- of-school children. They constitute 10.5 million school aged children, the highest in the world (UNICEF, 2017). However, The Nigerian Digest of Educational Statistics (Federal Ministry of Education, 2017) revealed a higher figure. Table 1 below gives the statistics of out- of- school children..

Table 1: Statistics of Out- of-School Children

Population			Enrolment in Primary 1			Out of School children		
Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
15,414,612	15,118,571	30,533,183	10,232,168 (66.38%)	9,590,204 (63.43%)	19,822,372 (64.92%)	5,182,444 (33.62%)	5,528,366 (36.57%)	10,710,810 (35.08%)

The results of the analysis of data in Table 1 indicate that out of a population 30.5 million school aged going children, only 64.92 % enrolled for UBE while 35,08% of the children are out-of-school. These constitute 10.7 million out-of-school children with more being girls.

These include the children of the pastoralist communities who are spread across the country, the Almajiri and girl-child found predominantly in the northern parts; the out of school boys in the south west and south east as well as children of migrant fishermen in the south-south. In addition, there is

the growing number of migrant farmer children in parts of Ebonyi, Ekiti and Ondo states and more recently, children displaced by the insurgency by a religious extremist group in the north east (Imam, 2018). This problem persists despite the progress made in legislation and policy which have enhanced school participation because of underserving of the underprivileged communities, socio-cultural factors, poverty and child labour, as well as emergency situations which have further marginalized already disadvantaged groups. In addition Nigeria has over 40 million illiterate adults with an overall literacy rate of about 57 %. In addition, there is rising youth illiteracy (UNESCO, 2017). These problems should be of great concern to all education stakeholders.

There is indication of an increase in number of out- of- school children which can be attributed to school dropout and under serving of communities.

Table 2 below shows the statistics of enrolment for basic education in Nigeria from 2012 to 2016.

Table 2: Statistics of Enrolment for Basic Education from 2012 to 2016

Class	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
Primary	24,893,442	26,158,375	25,801,197	25,442,535	25,591,181
1-6		5.08	-1.37	-1.39	0.58
JS1-3	5,277,527	6,168,764	6,203,094	6,180,291	5,968,142
		16.89	0.48	-1.28	-2.65
Total	30,170,969	32,327,139	32,004,291	31,622,826	31,559,323
		14.45	0.55	-0.37	-3.55

Table 2 shows that in 2012 enrolment for basic education stood at 30,170,969. This increased by 14, 45% in 2013, after which there was a decline in the enrolment figures to -3.55% in 2016. This is in part due to emergency situations in some parts of the country and the fact that some states did not make returns on private schools.

Ministerial Action Plan for Education

The Federal Ministry of Education has come up with a framework for educational development in Nigeria. The ‘Education for change: A Ministerial Strategic Plan (2016-2019) prioritised the enrolment of out-of-school children in appropriate educational institutions to ensure that all of them have the opportunities to learn. Strategies and Action Plan for addressing the challenges of this phenomenon includes engaging states in addressing educational problems such as targeted funding that focuses on the factor of exclusion, raising national enrolment rate for basic education in the next three years at the rate of 2,875,500 children annually. The action plan for out of school

children is clearly indicated as federal and non- federal activities, details are contained in the Education for Change- Ministerial Strategic Plan. In addition, the MSP highlights the challenges, delineates strategies for addressing the issues with timelines, targets and roles/responsibilities appropriately assigned for efficiency and effectiveness.

Implementation status

- i. The advocacy and sensitisation of stakeholders on the need to enrol every child of school going age in qualitative education till completion of the appropriate (Primary, Junior and Senior Secondary) cycle was flagged off in Bauchi, Bauchi State,
- ii. Advocacy visits to states to determine the number and locations of these children to generate preliminary information was undertaken between May and July 2018
- iii. Meeting of the Honourable Minister of Education, Mallam Adamu Adamu, with the Governors held in Abuja at the National Economic Council meeting in2018 on this issue
- iv. Review of relevant Policies in line with emergent needs and development appropriateness on-going through the instrumentality of the Joint Consultative Committees on Education (JCCE)
- v. The Conditional Cash Transfer Scheme targeting indigent families across the nation with enrolment of school going age children and continued attendance as one of the conditions
- vi. The home-grown school feeding programme was introduced to boost access and attendance till completion through provision of midday meal in targeted public primary schools across the country
- vii. Expansion of school infrastructure and renovation of dilapidated ones is on-going through UBEC/SUBEB partnerships
- viii. Provision of textbooks in core subject areas
- ix. Supplementation of teachers under the Federal Teachers Scheme (FTS)
- x. The Almajiri Education Programme is on-going
- xi. Curricular reviews for relevance and functionality is on-going
- xii. Strengthening partnerships with relevant stakeholders is on going

Imperativeness of Data and Educational Planning

Statistical data is a prerequisite for effective educational planning. In the last few decades the country has experienced a dearth of reliable data in education and there is the politicization of educational planning where enrolments are inflated with the hope of attracting more federal allocations. This has led to poor provision for education which is manifested in the level of education quality and rising youth unemployment (Imam, 2018).A survey of

the population should provide reliable, current and verifiable demographic data on children by gender, age, and geographical distribution in planning for provision of education of underserved communities. Knowing the number of persons to expect will enable the government make projections for the future in terms of Number of teachers to recruit, No of schools and classrooms to be built and No of equipment and teaching learning resources to be provided. Decision making based on reliable data is central to making projections for capital and recurrent expenditure to ensure that no child or individual is left behind. Central to achieving the objective educating out-of-school children is the availability of data that is current, time-bound, verifiable, and accurate for educational planning.

Conclusion

Education and skills that an individual acquires throughout life need a continuum of educational activities to strengthen, adapt and maintain them over time. However, initiatives to tackle illiteracy are not enough by themselves; they are dependent on and need the support of lifelong learning, even through adulthood. The effectiveness of a comprehensive strategy to universalize literacy also depends on preventive measures—for instance, initiatives to improve the education system overall (Morretti, 2016). Nigeria is doing a lot to address the issues on out-of-school children, but the land mass, demographic pressure and the economic situation makes task seem daunting but this is not insurmountable. With our collective efforts, sincerity of purpose and commitment of all stakeholders, this objective of leaving no child enrolled is achievable.

Recommendations

1. There is a need for states to conduct surveys to determine the number of out of school children, youths and adults by gender, age and distribution to enable the Governments plan for effective implementation of basic education according to individual needs and peculiar circumstances. This is in line with the National Policy on education (2013)'s objectives. For example all the children of all nomadic groups particularly pastoralists and fishermen aged from 0-18 years who are born in Nigeria should be registered as Nigerian citizens. These groups take off from somewhere annually on their migration as well as settle somewhere.
2. To forestall the harmful effects of child neglect through poverty and deprivation, there should be campaigns organised by local and state governments for drastic attitudinal change amongst parents in

grassroots communities in the educational development of rural children.

3. Special programme to address challenges of girl- child education should urgently be put in place and implemented without further delay by the three tiers of government and in the eastern part one that addresses out – of - school boy- child education.
4. Emphasis on rural development should be intensified by the state governments to make life in the suburbs more attractive to grassroots communities through education enrichment programmes. For instance Almajiri and child labour are the greatest source of rural urban drift that is taking its toll on farming communities in Nigeria.
5. In particular, the Almajirai are a disadvantaged group in need of peace education in order to stem the rise of extremist ideologies in Nigeria. There is a need for the government and educational bodies to explore now how an early start in learning Arabic language can be infused in Integrated Quranic schools for peace education without prejudice to the national education system. This is culturally sensitive and is one of the approved subjects in the national curriculum.
6. Radio is very popular among grassroots communities. Open and distance learning institutions should vigorously explore how mass education can be achieved through radio as a way of reducing illiterate population.
7. The government should institute penalty for parents and their collaborators who contravene the law on free compulsory universal basic education.
8. The federal and state governments should intensify efforts at nomadic education as a major key for ending incessant pastoralists and sedentary farmers' conflict in Nigeria.
9. The States Government should also invest more in basic education and diversify training in practical works for out- of- school youths. Required counterpart funding for accessing UBEC matching grant should be made available on time.

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