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ACCESSING BASIC EDUCATION: A STUDY OF SELECTED PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN KWARA STATE

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Abstract

Over the years, the Nigerian government has in various capacities intervened in the provision of basic education across the nation. Given Nigeria's quest for development and its determination to make education accessible to all school-age children in the country, it has intensified effort in the implementation of the Universal Basic Education Programme in terms of funding and provision of policy guidelines. However, despite the robustness of the policy, and the various efforts by governments at different levels in the country to see to the success of the program, its implementation has not been as successful as expected. It is against this background that this paper attempts to examine the access to basic education in Kwara state, using selected public schools in the state. The study engaged the use of primary and secondary data for its analysis. The primary data were elicited through structured questionnaires administered in the selected schools. Data so elicited were analyzed using simple percentage. The study discovers that in Kwara state, in terms of availability, public schools are available within walking distance as stipulated in the basic education policy guidelines, but are not really affordable, despite the fact that they are tuition-free, as most parents still find it difficult to pay the extra charges. The study therefore recommends the introduction of the School Voucher System among others as possible ways out of the conundrum the state has found itself

Key Words: Universal Basic Education, Access, Affordability, Availability, Public School

Introduction

Over the years, the Nigerian government has in various capacities intervened in the provision of basic education across the nation, but the two most popular government interventions in recent times in the provision of public basic education are the 1976 Universal Primary Education Scheme and the 1999 Universal Basic Education Programme. The determination of the Federal Government to make education accessible to all school-age children in the country, led the Federal government, on the 29th January, 1974, to announce the introduction of Universal Primary Education Programme, throughout the country, with effect from 1975. The UPE programme was formally launched by Lieutenant-General Olusegun Obasanjo on February 13, 1976. This Scheme attracted many children to primary schools which resulted in explosive enrolments. In order to effect the implementation of the programme, the Federal Government laid down three guiding principles, namely: policy guidelines; funds for the implementation; and management of the primary schools (Aghenta, 1984).

However, by 1979, it was clear that the Federal Government could not bear the financial burden alone. It proceeded to shed some of the responsibilities to the State and Local governments which also could not cope. By 1999, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme was introduced. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme is a nine (9) year basic educational programme, which was launched and executed by the government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to

eradicate illiteracy, ignorance and poverty as well as stimulate and accelerate national development, political consciousness and national integration. The UBE Programme is Nigeria's strategy for the achievement of Education for All (EFA) and the education-related Millennium Development Goals (UBEC, 2012). Consequently, given Nigeria's quest for development, it has intensified effort in the implementation of this policy program in terms of funding and provision of policy guidelines. For the purpose of this paper, our search light shall be beamed and focused on access to basic education in Kwara State.

Statement of the Problem

Generally, basic education provision in Nigeria has been faced with many and diverse problems, which includes: shortage of infrastructural facilities; controversies over ownership of schools; issues relating to staffing; low teachers' morale; poor characters of pupils and the politics of primary school management. These problems lingered on for decades. However, the Nigerian governments over the years have continued to put some strategies in place to reposition the basic education sector in Nigeria. Some of the strategies include resuscitation of monitoring and inspectorate divisions of ministries of education, and inclusion of out-of-school children, such that access and equity will be a consideration for all children of school age. However, despite government concerted efforts at all levels towards a successful implementation of the UBE policy, in terms of funding and administration of basic education facilities, it was observed that instructional materials were grossly inadequate and that less than forty percent of pupils had basic textbooks and writing materials. It was equally observed that though the teaching staff situation improved in quantity and quality as more teachers were being trained, but that 42.8% unqualified teachers were still found in the public primary schools across the state, and that most public primary and public junior secondary schools operate with few or without teachers for core subjects such as English Language, Mathematics, Basic Science and Basic Technology (UBEC, 2012). Also in the last ten years, it has become a Herculean task for parents to get their children and wards placement in schools of their choice within the state. In fact admission into public junior secondary schools of choice has become problematic in Kwara state. It is against this background that this paper seeks to examine the level of access to basic education, using selected public primary and public junior secondary schools across the three senatorial districts of the state.

To this end, the following research questions are formulated to guide this study:

- I. What are the main thrusts of the Universal Basic Education policy guidelines on access?
- ii. How accessible is basic education in Kwara State?
- iii. How can access to basic education be improved in the Kwara State?

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine the access to basic education in Kwara State. The specific objectives include, to:

- a. **examine** the main thrust of the Universal Basic Education policy guidelines on access.
- b. investigate the level of accessibility of basic education in Kwara state.
- c. suggest ways of improving on the access to basic education in Kwara state.

Literature Review

Universal Basic Education

According to the report of a commissioned research work titled 'The Impact Of The Universal Basic Education Program Delivery In Nigeria', submitted to the Universal Basic Education Commission, in July, 2012, 'The determination of the Federal Government to make education accessible to all school-age children in the country, led the Federal government to introduce the Universal Basic Education Program, throughout the country. (UBEC,2012). The universal basic education idea was conceived to comprise of 6 years of primary education and 3 years of junior secondary school education.

It was to be free as well as compulsory. It was meant to include adult and non-formal education program at primary and junior secondary education levels. This provision was to enable adults and youths who were not in school to benefit, involve and share in the interactions generate-able at this very important level - which has compressed three former levels - primary, secondary, adult and non formal education levels. The universalization of the basic education at the levels was in answer to united Nation's call as amplified in the Millennium Development Goals (UNDP, 2004).

Accessing education by all is the import of its universalization otherwise the "poor may never really be part of the interactions and there are many in the category within Nigeria (Adirika, 2010). The time-bound MDGs benchmarks required every nation to enable access to credible, independent, well articulated, scientific and future oriented curriculum. Nigeria's introduction of the Universal Basic Education is a direct result of a globalize effect on the nation's education (Adirika, 2013).

To ensure that Nigeria achieves the MDGs on education, the curriculum of Basic education has been updated to make it responsive to current problems, contextual forces, both local national and global, which impinge on the educational system and the learning process. By curriculum is meant all planned learning experiences provided by the school to assist the-pupils in attending the designated learning outcomes to the best of their ability (Dada, 1999) Curriculum includes all formal, non formal and informal contents and processes through which learners gain knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes, values and appreciations under the guidance of the school. It is actually through the curriculum that the goals of the school are achieved (Adirika, 2000).

The Universal Basic Education program is meant to address problems of access, quality and equity at the Primary and secondary levels of the Nigerian educational system. Since Nigerian children are expected to enter the primary school at the age of six, the UBE covers the first six years of primary and the first 3 years of a six-year secondary education programme known as the junior secondary school. It is therefore a 9-year programme for children between the ages of 6 and 15. Youths and adults, who were not able to fit into the regular school but have joined adult literacy and non-formal education classes, are also integrated into the UBE effort irrespective of their ages (UBEC, 2008).

The curriculum at the lower basic level, that is primary 1 - 3, provides for elective and compulsory subjects. The same is applicable to the middle basic level, primary 4-6 and the upper basic levels, JSS 1 - 3. The compulsory and elective courses are to ensure that UBE graduates acquire an appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life coping skills. They are expected to acquire appropriate ethical, moral and civic values that would establish, strengthen and fortify scientific and reflective thinking in them- equipping them thus, to cope with life challenges in whatever form.

According to NERDC (2007), among the core compulsory subjects for the lower basic level are – English studies, one major Nigerian language (Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa), Mathematics, Basic Science and Technology, Social studies, Civic Education, Culture and Creative Arts, Religious Studies, Physical and health education as well as Computer Studies/ICT. A learner at this level is expected to offer at least one but not more than two of the following electives – Agriculture, Home Economics and Arabic.

At the middle basic level, learners are expected to take as core courses all that were offered at the lower basic in addition to French Language. The conditions in relation to the electives remain as in the lower basic. At the upper basic, some significant changes are evident in the curriculum. Basic Science is separated from Basic Technology so that learners can achieve more in-depth knowledge in each of them. While the electives remains as in the other levels, a learner may offer all the electives if he so desires but it is however compulsory for him at least to at least offer one of the elective courses. The UBE curriculum, in terms of outcome, is being measured using comprehensive and broad profiles, which reveal students' performance as well as teachers' performance. The array of instruments for students evaluation include teacher made tests, classroom observation and interactions within the society, standardized tests and other methods of evaluation that contribute to the overall assessment profile - these not only reveal the degree of students' mastery of a given body of content but also give a very broad view of learner's performance and detailed information of their competence.

In terms of workability, the UBE curriculum incorporates considerations of analysis of gender equity, citizenship education and national development. The effort, as stated, minimized community's rejection of formal education as earlier noticed in some parts of the country. The UBE reform program of 2008 made a comprehensive review of basic education curriculum with a view to enhancing relevance to local and national aspirations.

As a dynamic response mechanism, the UBE curriculum is geared towards meeting global educational agenda related to Education For All (EFA). The curriculum has adequately provided for contexts and contents to buttress human rights, scientific and technological pursuits as priority, nationality, natural law; all of which are capable of not only transforming social consciousness but also equipping learners with skills that would make them effective citizens of a new world order (UBEC, 2008).

Implementation of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria

The implementation process of the program has been on since 1999, but progress was hampered by lack of an enabling law to execute certain aspects of the program. But a big relief came when the UBE Bill was signed into law on 26th May 2004. The UBE Act 2004 makes provision for basic education comprising of ECCE, Primary and Junior Secondary Education. The financing of basic education is the responsibility of States and Local Governments. However, the Federal Government has decided to intervene in the provision of basic education with 2% of its Consolidated Revenue Fund. For states to fully benefit from this Fund, criteria were established which states are to comply. The Act also provides for the establishment of the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) to co-ordinate the implementation of the programme at the states and local government through the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) of each state and the Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs). The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) was formally established on 7th October 2004 (UBEC, 2012).

According to the act that established the commission, the vision is to be a world class education intervention and regulatory agency for the promotion of uniform, qualitative and functional basic education in Nigeria, while its mission is to operate as an intervention, coordinating and monitoring agency to progressively improve the capacity of states, local government agencies and communities in the provision of unfettered access to high qualitative basic education in Nigeria. In relation to instructional materials and teaching staff, the story was not favorable throughout the country. It was observed that instructional materials were grossly inadequate and that less than forty percent of pupils had basic textbooks and writing materials. The teaching staff situation improved in quantity and quality as more teachers were being trained. It was equally observed that the number of unqualified teachers in the system at this level dropped from over forty percent in 1999 to five percent in 2007 in the south and forty two percent in the north. The primary education curriculum became richer and more elaborate than it was in the 1960s and 1970s (UBEC, 2012).

Access to Basic Education

Kalubi (2015), in his article titled *'Free basic education and its accessibility, a challenge for the African continent'*, argues that 'Free basic education which is stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the 26th article as a chance of schooling for everyone became a dangerous good in a continent that lacks appropriate structures to participate in the international competitiveness'. According to him, "In most of the African educative system there are two kinds of schools. The first is the private schools where both infrastructures and salaries of the teachers are exclusive responsibilities of the parents of the students. Here, governments control the quality of the education but they do not give any subsidies. As such free basic education becomes a fairy tale. The other is the public schools, where teacher salaries and its functionality are partially provided by governments, with parents' intervention to

accommodate the low teacher salaries. There are many public schools that don't benefit from government salaries in a lot of African countries. Everything works as in private schools. In both cases, parents pay for their children basic education".

He argues further that, 'this policy of parent's intervention in teachers' salaries gives justice to teachers offering them acceptable retributions, and therefore giving them motivation to teach quality education. But it also shows the unfortunate exclusion of the families living in poverty from the education system and it impoverishes even more those who are incapable of schooling their children. In large families, there are, above all, girls who don't attend to school. This free education Declaration regrettably affects the quality of education and access to basic education, and it introduces corruption in the education sector in many African countries. The future of many African countries is compromised because of this crime against children's education' (Kalubi 2015).

The Ethiopian experience is aptly captured by Ajala and Asres (2015), in their work titled, *'Accessibility In equality to Basic Education in Amhara Region, Ethiopia'*. To them, 'Education has become the key ingredient in the 21st century recipe for growing the economic pie. Human capital in the form of basic educational attainment is the collateral for economic development. It has a fundamental role in moving sub-Saharan Africa out of its present tragic state of underdevelopment'. However their findings revealed that there is a gross inadequacy in the provision of basic education services in Amhara Regional State of Ethiopia, in terms of available facilities and personnel to adequately prepare the youth for their future. It also revealed the inequality of accessibility to basic education services among the eleven zones in the region with antecedent impact on the development levels among the zones. In order to improve on access and quality of basic education in the region, they suggested that, 'there is urgent need for construction of more schools to reduce over-crowding in classes; more teachers need to be employed to the level of maintaining the standard level of pupils/teacher ratio, and that the teachers must be motivated adequately so as to make them committed to their profession'.

From the two experiences captured above, issues of access and quality continue to resonate with respect to basic education provision in Africa. However, there are diverse views on how to manage and remedy the problems of access in schooling systems across the continent. One of these corrective measures is the introduction of School Vouchers Scheme, which is expected to resolve the issues surrounding access to basic education. One of the most controversial issues in the realm of contemporary education is the introduction of voucher plans, which was proposed by Milton Friedman as catalysts for achieving educational change and quality education provision. Friedman (1962) asserts that when markets are allowed to run freely with minimal government control, both the efficiency of services and the quality of goods will be maximized. In the face of inefficient public education, Friedman also argues that if the government were to minimize its interference in the school system a long-standing monopolistic enterprise, and allow it to be regulated by market forces, education would improve. The use of education vouchers would increase parental influence over, and choices about, their children's education. In practice, education vouchers are a scheme in which certificates would be issued by the government to parents to "purchase" schooling for their children. Parents would select schools — public or private — which would then collect the vouchers and turn them onto the government to be redeemed for cash to run the schools. This would result in providing parents with a variety of schools from which to choose and would require schools to compete for students (Tannenbaum, 1995). Such a regime would subject schools to competitive pressure, thus leading them to formulate clear and distinctive missions, improve their curricula, adopt innovative and learner-centered teaching strategies, develop a strong commitment to defined student outcomes, and establish collaboration and partnership with parents (Howell & Peterson, 2006). Schools would become more accountable for the services they provide and to the families they serve (Paulu, 1995).

In short, Friedman (1962) argues that education vouchers could influence education quality by shifting provision from public to private enterprise and by building up market forces in the form of greater parental choice. The benefits of privatizing and marketization of education services under a

voucher scheme are not confined merely to the effectiveness of the service provision. Studies have found that the positive impacts of such a scheme extend to students and parents. By evaluating a private program supported by the national Children's Scholarship Fund voucher along with similar publicly funded programs in New York City.

Howell and Peterson (2006) have observed that in private schools operating on the basis of education vouchers, the educational climate is more promising and conducive to learning. On average, students in private schools demonstrate fewer disruptive behaviors, such as fighting and property destruction. Incidents relating to racial conflict, truancy, and absenteeism are also relatively infrequent in private schools. Underlying the argument for the use of education vouchers is the desire to empower parents with regard to school choice for their children (Sandler & Kapel, 1995). Parents have the absolute right to choose the school for their children.

However, opponents of parents' school choice argue that working-class parents in particular may be unable to make sound education decisions on behalf of their children (Ball, 2007; Paulu, 1995). Levin (1979) also argues that "Parents will choose those school environments that they believe will maximize the probability of success as defined within the context of their experience. The working-class child will be provided with schooling that will reinforce working-class orientations" (p. 19). The education voucher system clearly implies a notion that, as parents' school choice increases, parents become more involved in the education of their children and become more likely to push schools to improve and operate in ways that most accommodate their desires (Hakim, Seidenstat, & Bowman, 1994).

Theoretical Framework

Because of the nature of this study, its analysis shall be better placed within the ambit of the Neo-Liberal Economics Theory. The study is animated by the postulations of the proponents of Neo-Liberal Economics Theory. The fundamental assumption of the theory lies in "the priority of the price mechanism, the free enterprise, the system of competition and a strong and impartial state (Mirowski and Plehwe, 2009).

Originally, neo-liberalism was an economic philosophy that emerge among European liberal scholars in the 1930s, attempting to trace a so-called 'Third' or Middle between the conflicting philosophies of classical liberalism and collectivists central planning (Mirowski and Plehwe, 2009). The impetus for this development arose from a desire to avoid repeating the economic failures of the early 1930s, which were mostly blamed on the economic policies of classical liberalism.

According to early neo-liberal theorists, neo-liberalism meant advocating a modern economic policy with state intervention (Denord, 2009). Neo-liberal state intervention brought a clash with the opposite *Laissez-faire* camp of the classical liberals (Hulsmann, 2012). Academics (largely left-wing) started using "neo-liberalism" in the 1970s to describe and decry a late twentieth-century effort by policy makers, think-tank experts, and industrialists to condemn social-democratic reforms and unapologetically implement free-market policies (Shermer, 2014). In the 1930s, the mood was decidedly anti-liberal. The worldwide Great Depression brought about high unemployment and widespread poverty. The crisis was widely regarded as the failure of economic liberalism. To renew liberalism a group of 25 liberals organized the Walter Lippman Colloquium, an international meeting that took place in Paris in August 1938.

The neo-liberal economic theory that came out of the Colloquium was generally in line with Rüstow's theories of 'turning away from conceptions of *laissez-faire* towards a market economy under the guidance and the rules of a strong state' (Hartwich, 2009). In fact, the theory was an attempt to formulate an anti-capitalist, anti-communist 'Third Way'. While these liberals demanded state's intervention to correct undesirable market structures, others, like Mises (2011), had always insisted that the only legitimate role for the state was to abolish barriers to market entries. Since the 1980s, the theory was used primarily by critics of the resurgence of ideas associated with *Laissez-faire* economic

liberalism, beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, whose advocates support reductions in government spending in order to enhance the role of the non-state providers in the economy.

Although theorists from different backgrounds and different milieu have presented this theory in different perspectives, but it is within the perspective of the 'True Neo-liberal theorists' such as Rustow's, that we place this study. Just like Eucken and Armack, Rustow agreed that there is the need for a modern economic policy with state intervention. This suggests that despite the fact that the state is regarded as pre eminent in the provision of public goods, it is equally expected that the state reduce its spending on public goods. This is expected to produce two outcomes. One, it is expected to enhance the roles of the non-state providers, and two, it is expected to allow the state concentrate its so scarce resources on other more prioritized goods and services. Against this background, we can therefore, state that the theoretical explanation for the emergence and sustainability of the non-state provision of public goods can be accommodated within the Neo-liberal Economic Theoretical framework.

Though, the Neo-liberal theory is not without its own pitfalls, but we must be apt at accepting the fact that its good outweighs its defects. One clear manifestation of the pit-fall of the theory was the financial crisis of 2007-2008, which was a resultant of the acceptance of the theory in the 1970s. However, in spite of this defect, the theory as presented by its exponents, undoubtedly, classically remains a theoretical tool for explaining the emergence of non-state provision of public goods alongside state provision of same; it also explains the reason why these non-state providers cannot operate in isolation of the state's control and regulations.

Methodology

This research employed the use of primary and secondary data for its investigation and analysis. The secondary data for this research are sourced from books, online articles, journals articles which are relevant to the realization of the research objectives. However, primary data are elicited via the use of questionnaires, distributed across the selected schools in the three senatorial districts of Kwara state in adherence to the rule of representative-ness.

A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted in selecting an appropriate sample size for the study. In the first stage, the state is divided into three senatorial districts for representative-ness, placing the sixteen local government areas as they exist under their senatorial districts. The total number of all public schools engaged in the provision of basic education in the state is determined. Following-on to this is the determination of the same category of schools in each LGA. Under each senatorial district, the local government areas with the highest and lowest number of schools were selected, translating to two local government areas from each senatorial district, making a total of six local government areas in all, out of the sixteen local government areas in the state. The rationale behind the choice of the local government areas with the highest and lowest number of schools is that accessibility is assumed to be varied by number of schools available.

The local government areas with the highest number of schools in each of the three senatorial districts are: Ilorin West with 289 schools, Edu, with 287 schools and Ifelodun with 256 schools; while Ilorin East, Kaiama and Oke Ero are the three local government areas with the least number of schools in each senatorial districts, with 206, 138 and 58 schools respectively. At the second stage, all schools in each of the six local government areas selected are clustered into two categories of clusters. This is necessary because we have two different categories of schools with quite distinct features under public basic education sector. Therefore for adequate representative-ness, the need for clustering arises. The different clusters are:

- i. Public Primary Schools
- ii. Public Junior Secondary Schools

From the above clustering system, we have 12 clusters from the six local government areas selected. In each of these clusters we selected one big school and one small school, which give us a total of 24 schools selected from the 12 clusters. The choice of one big school and one small school is also premised on the fact that size of school is presumed to vary accessibility.

In the third stage, we determined the sample size from the total population. The respondents are the parents of pupils and students in these selected schools. Also included are members of Parents Teachers Association, PTA, and some of their executive members. The choice of parents as respondents is premised on the fact that it is the parents who know whether basic education services are available and affordable, since they are the ones who seek admission for their children and pick bills on educational charges. The total population of parents and guardian for the two identified clusters is presented below in table 1.

Table 1: Total Population Calculated Through Cluster Population

S/N	Cluster	Population
1	Public Primary Schools	143,609
2	Public Junior Secondary Schools	152,315
Total Population		295,924

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2019

Kwara State Ministry of Education

From table 1 above, the total population of our targeted respondents is 295,924. To arrive at our sample size, the study adopted the use of the Yamane formulae. The Yamane formula for determining the sample size is given by:

$$n=N/(1+Ne^2)$$

Where

n= sample size, N= population size, and e = Margin of error (MoE), e = 0.05

Therefore, $n=295,924/[1+295,924(0.05)^2]$

$n=399.46$ approximately, $n=400$.

The 400 questionnaires were distributed in the 24 schools selected in proportion of their populations. In all, a total of four hundred (400) questionnaires were administered across the six local government areas selected.

Universal Basic Education Policy Guidelines

In order to achieve success in the implementation of the universal basic education program, the federal government of Nigeria put in place some policy guidelines. Section 9, sub-section (c) of The Compulsory, Free, Universal Basic Education and Other Related Matters Act, 2004, otherwise known as the UBE Act of 2004 provided that the UBE Commission is to “prescribe the minimum standard for basic education throughout Nigeria”.

Among so many other policy guidelines, the Nigerian Policy on Education stipulates that schools are to be located in such a way that the average number of pupils does not walk more than two kilometers [2km] to get to the nearest school, provided that, there are pupils within the radius of 2km to fill a two-stream school (12 learning groups of 40 pupils for semi-urban schools and at least a total of 60 pupils for small rural schools.

The guideline also classified schools into three categories. These are:

- i. Rural schools- these are small schools with less than 200 pupils but a minimum of 60 pupils.

- ii. Semi-urban schools- relatively big schools of not more than 1000 pupils in small towns.
- iii. Urban schools- these are big schools of more than 1000 pupils, usually in big towns or cities.

The National Policy On Education equally stipulates that the Teacher- Pupil ratio should be 1:40, which is the mandatory, however, 1:35 is regarded as optimal and ideal for pupils to receive maximum attention from teachers. On teachers' qualification, the guideline state that minimum entry requirement is NCE and registration with the Teachers Registration Council Of Nigeria [TRCN]. In addition to these, at least one capacity training course in every two years. For the Junior secondary school, the minimum standard is a degree in education, as mandatory, while the ideal is a Master degree in education. The maximum number of pupils per class for pre-primary, primary and secondary schools, according to the guidelines, stand at 20 pupils, 40 pupils and 45 pupils respectively.

For quality assurance, Quality Assurance Manual is designed to aid three to four years routine monitoring cycles for each school. Follow-up monitoring (one month/annual cycle) for school/LGEA/SUBEB. Workshop to take care of technical and vocational skills should not be less than 140meter square, big enough to accommodate light fabricating machines and equipment for acquisition of technical skills, since the philosophy behind the 9 years basic education is the graduation of students who are well grounded in technical and vocational skills into the labor market at the end of their junior secondary school years. Also as stipulated by the guidelines, the area covered by the school science laboratory should not be less than 140 meter square. These guidelines among others are expected to guide and make the implementation of the UBE program more successful.(UBEC, 2010)

Analysis of Data From Questionnaires on Access to Basic Education in Kwara State

The issue of access remains very pivotal to the success and sustainability of the Universal Basic Education. This is not without prejudice to other aspect of the policy guidelines. Since UBE policy is a strategic policy to actualize Education For All [EFA], the question of access must therefore remain cogent towards the realization of this goal. In realizing the basic objectives of this study, data elicited via questionnaires are presented below:

Summary of Data Solicited Via Questionnaires

(Access to Basic Education)

Question 1: On the average, how long does it take, walking from your house to your child's school?

Table 2

Question 1 Response	Public Primary Schools		Public Junior Secondary Schools	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Below 500m	29	16.7%	22	11.1%
Between 500m & 1Kilometer	52	30.3%	42	21.2%
Between 1Kilometer & 2kilometers	73	42.8%	50	25.6%
Above 2 kilometers	17	10.2%	83	42.1%
Total	171	100%	197	100%

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2019

The above table indicates that 200 questionnaires were distributed across the 12 public primary schools across the three senatorial districts, for which 171[85.7%], were returned. The same number [200] of questionnaires were also administered across the 12 public junior secondary schools, for which 197[98.5%] were returned. This suggests that respondents [parents] from public junior secondary schools in Kwara State seem to be more serious about their children and wards when compared to their counterparts in the public primary schools.

Concerning access to basic education, the above table shows the distance covered to get to school by pupils. The table shows that most pupils cover less than 2 kilometers to get to their schools, which is within the distance stipulated by the education policy guidelines that schools are to be located in such way that the average number of pupils does not walk more than two kilometers [2km] to get to the nearest school. For the public primary schools, 89.8% of the respondents children or wards covers less than 2kilometers to get to school, while just 10.2% covers above 2kilometers to get to school.

However, there is a noticeable change in trend with respect to the public junior secondary schools, with as high as 42.1% (83 respondents)' children covering above 2kilometers to get to school. This suggests that on the average, the policy implementation outcome on distance of school has a relative success, since the success story recorded in the primary sector is not found in the public junior secondary sector of the state. The result clearly shows that while public primary schools are available within walking distance, the same cannot be said of public junior secondary schools, as most students (42.1%) walk above 2km before getting to their schools.

Question 2: By what means does your child go to school?

Table 3

Question 2 Response	Public Primary Schools		Public Junior Secondary Schools	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Walking	98	57.6%	31	15.7%
School bus	0	0%	3	1.5%
Private vehicle	18	10.6%	61	30.7%
Public transport	55	31.8%	102	52.1%
Total	171	100%	197	100%

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2019

From the above table 3, it is clear that 57.6% of the pupils in the public primary go to school, walking, this also reinforced the fact that public primary schools are available within walking distance, which further suggests that it is affordable enrolling pupils in schools that are of walking distance, than schools that pupils must either go on public transport, school buses or private vehicles. However, the case is not the same with the public junior secondary schools, very few pupils walk to school, just 15.7%, while most pupils in this category of schools, 84.3% [1.5% +30.7% +52.1%], go to school either in school buses, public or private vehicles. This suggests that relatively, in terms of affordability, some students, especially the children of the poor may not have access to public junior secondary education, because of the costs of transportation.

Question 3: Which of the statements below best describe your situation?

Statement 1: I pay my child's school fees in installments.

Statement 2: I have never paid my child's school fees in installments.

Table 4

Question 3 Response	Public Primary Schools		Public Junior Secondary Schools	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Agree with statement 1	32	18.8%	128	65%
Agree with statement 2	137	80.0%	69	35%
I Don't know	2	1.2%	0	0%
Total	171	100%	197	100%

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2019

Table 4 presents responses to question 3, which bothers on affordability. From the table, it is obvious that most parents of pupils in public primary schools [80.0%] never paid schools fees of their children in installments. This suggests that fees in public primary schools are affordable to most parents. However, the situation is different with the public junior secondary schools, which had 65% of respondents claiming they pay their children's school fees in installments. What this suggests is that school fees in public primary schools are relatively affordable, when compared to what is obtainable in the public junior secondary schools, given the economic situation of the country.

Question 4: Which of the statements below best describe your situation?

Statement 1: In some cases, I have had to put-off other important expenses to pay my child's school fees.

Statement 2: I have never put-off any expenses to pay my child's school fees.

Table 5

Question 4 Response	Public Primary Schools		Public Junior Secondary School	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Agree with statement 1	75	43.7%	149	75.8%
Agree with statement 2	96	56.3%	48	24.2%
I Don't know	0	0%	0	0%
Total	171	100%	197	100%

Source: Researcher's Survey, 2019

From table 5 above, it is evidently clear that for both public primary and public junior secondary schools, most parents had to put-off other important expenses to pay their children's school fees. For the public primary schools, 43.7% of the parents had to put-off important expenses to pay the 'affordable' fees as suggested under the responses to question 4 above. If we look at the statistics in the above table 5, we can deduce that affordability is relative, because despite the tuition free status of the public schools, 43.7% of the parents still have to put-off important expenses to pay the other fees, though, most parents [56.3%] from public primary school claimed that they had never put-off important expenses to pay their children's school fees, which are tuition-free though. However, in contrast to the above situation, majority of the respondents, [75.8%] from public junior secondary schools agreed that they had to put-off important expenses to pay their children's school fees. In summary, these responses have reinforced the earlier claims under question 3 that fees in public junior secondary schools are not affordable to most parents, while in the same token, it puts relativity to the affordability claims of parents of pupils in public primary schools.

Discussion of Findings

It was discovered that in terms of availability, both public primary and public junior secondary schools are available within walking distance of not more than 2 kilometers in most communities in Kwara state, as stipulated in the basic education policy guidelines. However, this is not without prejudice to the fact that there exist few pockets of places in the state where we have pupils walking long distance of over 2 kilometers to schools, especially public junior secondary schools in some rural communities, where students may have to walk many kilometers to another community to access basic education.

It was also discovered through the study, that though schools are available within the stipulated guidelines in most communities, but are not really affordable, especially the public junior secondary schools; and that even for the public primary schools that are seemingly affordable, most parents still find it difficult to pay the other school charges such as PTA fee and developmental fees.

The study equally discovered that, though there is the availability of schools within walking distance of not more than 2 kilometers, as stipulated in the UBE policy guidelines, this could only be said of public primary schools. The same cannot be said of public junior secondary schools. Public junior secondary schools are still in short supply in the state. Statistics shows that there are one thousand, four hundred and eighty-six (1,486) public primary schools as against four hundred and three (403) public junior secondary schools in the State (KWASUBEB, 2017).

And finally the study discovered that though primary schools may exist within this walk-able distance, some operate with inadequate number of teachers, especially in core subjects, most especially in public primary schools in rural communities. This remains a serious challenge to accessing basic education in the state.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Though, the study discovered that in terms of availability, both public primary and public junior secondary schools are relatively accessible to pupils willing to acquire basic education within the state, going by the education policy guideline that stipulates 2 kilometers radius of walking distance from every pupils home, but the issue of affordability, especially with respect to public junior secondary schools in the state remains a challenge. This accessibility challenge, raised in the course of this study is a serious challenge facing the implementation of basic education policy in Kwara state. This study equally concludes that the small number of public junior secondary schools available in the state in comparison to public primary school remains a serious challenge to accessibility with respect to upper basic education in the state.

However, to improve on the state of accessibility of basic education service delivery in the state in the face of the aforementioned challenges, this study suggests the following as panacea to this perennial problem in the state's education sector:

1. The government of Kwara state should introduce the 'School Voucher System'. This will help solve the problem associated with affordability and availability faced by public junior secondary school pupils' parents. An education voucher is a certificate of government funding for a student at a school chosen by the student or the student's parents. It should be for tuitions in private schools, especially for parents with low-incomes. Since the number of public junior secondary schools available in the state in comparison to public primary school remains a serious challenge to accessibility with respect to upper basic education in the state, the school voucher system can help bridge the gap. Parents can help their children access upper basic education in private junior secondary school through the voucher scheme.
2. There is the urgent need for the establishment of more public junior secondary schools by the state government to complement the existing ones, since one of the major challenges of access to basic education in Kwara State is the relatively small number of public Junior secondary schools compared to the number of public primary schools in the state.

3. In addition to the above, the state should employ more teachers, since basic education cannot be accessed in schools without adequate number of teachers. Many schools in the state, most especially the public schools within the rural communities operate with lack of teachers in critical subjects such as English, Mathematics and Sciences.

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