



Research article

QUALITY BASIC EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT IN THE NORTH CENTRAL ZONE OF NIGERIA: IMPLICATION FOR STAKEHOLDERS

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Abstract

The paper examined quality basic education of public and private primary and junior secondary schools improvement in the North Central zone of Nigeria and the implication on stakeholders. Three research questions were answered. 406 respondents were selected from three states. Two instruments (QTH and QSB) were developed and validated for data generation. The data generated were analysed through a frequency count, percentages and means descriptive statistics to provide answers to the research questions. The results revealed a no disparity in the quantity and quality of teachers between public and private schools; however, disparity existed on quality teaching and learning of basic education with respect to infrastructure and facilities; funding and management of fund and involvement of stakeholders. Adequate supervision of teachers, well equipped laboratories and better structured statutory allocation formula were germane for the improvement of quality basic education. Having concluded that adequate planning, policy implementation and management would turn the tides through structured, systemic and cyclical approach, it was advocated among others that: UBE teachers' wages should receive prior clearance over other governmental expenditure; schools should be



equipped with technological driven environment; Local government authorities should be autonomously and constitutionally mandated to take total responsibilities of UBE from their allocations; and government and stakeholders should establish constructive interventions that are effectively delivered to the grassroots.
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Key Words: Basic Education, Learning environment, Schools, Stakeholders and Quality

1.0 Introduction

The Nigeria's philosophy of education views education as the great force for bringing about redress as well as the greatest deal that the nation can make for quick development of its economic, political, sociological and human resources (FRN, 1981; 2004; 2008). These views prompted Nigerians and Nigeria to aspire to be among the nations with strong economic development, stable political system and raise heads high with confidence by struggling for a solid educational foundation. Such a foundation becomes a reality only with proficient motivated and well articulated education system from the basic level.

The basic education level of the education system is considered to be the foundation to all the other levels in Nigeria, as such, there is the need for the level to be accorded sustainable preferential consideration in all spheres so crucial for it to receive the required solid foundation and accordingly, the achievement of the goals of Nigeria's philosophy on education. The success of basic education in North Central Zone of Nigeria, is assumed would involve the training of well articulated teachers, provision of funds, structured inspection, availability of resources and the supporting roles of stakeholders. This assumptions form part of the goals of the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004:39) that: "no education system can rise above the quality of its Teachers; Teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development".

The above point of view provides the evidence that quality educational foundation can only be built with proficiently motivated and well articulated structure, patriotically managed for the good of all. Since basic education has been the foundation upon which the secondary and tertiary levels are built, it is thus essential that this foundation level be well solidified in terms of the provision of human resources, material resources, effective supervision and inspection. It is on this premise that the study was proposed to identify the motivating factors for improving quality basic education in the North central zone of Nigeria with preference to: adequacy of teachers, adequacy of infrastructural facilities, adequacy of funding, regular supervision and inspection of schools, participation of stakeholders.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The state of the basic education in the North central zone of Nigeria has continued to be worrisome to all agitators of quality education. Such bothersome feelings have been manifested in the areas of inadequate and mismanagement of funds, poor administration via supervision and inspection of schools, dilapidated structures, inadequate human and material resources, continuous widening of the gap between public and private schools. The afore-stated irritants have continued to affect the quality of basic education in the North central zone of



Nigeria adversely. This was why the present study on “Quality Basic Education Improvement in the North central zone of Nigeria and its implication for stakeholders” was carried out.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine:

- a. The quality basic education improvement disparity between privately and publicly owned schools in the North central zone of Nigeria.
- b. The factors responsible for improving quality basic education products in the north central zone of Nigeria.
- c. The management of available human, fiscal and material resources (in quantity and quality) for the improvement of basic education in the North central zone of Nigeria.

1.3 Research Questions

This study was guided by three research questions:

1. What are the disparity existing between public and private schools’ in the improvement of quality education through quality teaching and learning in the North central zone of Nigeria?
2. What are the factors responsible for improving quality teaching and learning of basic education in the North central zone of Nigeria?
3. How can the available human, material and fiscal resources be effectively and efficiently managed to improve the quality of teaching and learning of basic education in the North central zone of Nigeria?

1.4 Scope of the study

The scope of this study covered Primary and Junior secondary education, specifically on the improvement of quality Basic Education in the North central zone of Nigeria with regards to facilities, funding, infrastructure, resources, and all stakeholders.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of this research would provide the means by which quality Basic Education could be improved upon in the North-central zone in particular and Nigeria as a whole. The findings would also reveal the factors responsible for improving quality basic education as well as the participatory involvement of all stakeholders in the business of Basic Education. The findings would also ensure that regular supervision of instruction in schools be enhanced, dilapidated buildings be renovated, school environment become more friendly, competent magnitude of teachers be assured in schools, allocated funds become better and judiciously utilized and capacity building of teachers be superior on a regular basis.

2.0 Literature Review

Education has been identified globally as a dynamic instrument of change. In fact, in recent years education has assumed an even more important positive link to the overall growth process of development while the lack of it is identified as a prime cause of persistent poverty and underdevelopment. This has been the cause for nations to strive in making education available to all citizens. Although, it has been noted by Agada (2002) that education may not do the magic overnight however, it would go a long way towards achieving global awareness whereby the populace would be aware of the dynamics that exists in their societies. Hence, both



developed and developing countries have adopted it as an instrument per excellence for ensuring national development (FRN, 2004; 2008; 2014).

Quality education has remained the most important factor that is needed by the populace to enable them contribute meaningfully to the development of the country. It is against this backdrop that the Federal Government of Nigeria is committed to the integration of the individual by the provision of equal educational opportunities for all citizens through the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme.

Nations that are being desirous of transforming into greatness are committed to providing sufficiently treasured teachers for their school system. This is because teachers are in most cases responsible for the translation and implementation of educational policies and curriculum for an all-round achievement of the child's development and the advancement of the societies. Becoming a teacher of good quality requires the attainment of some basic skills and certification. This was the position of Esobhawan (2012) who declared that to teach sometimes in the past in primary schools required one to be certified with a Teacher Certificate Grade II. This was phased out in 1988 when the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) became the required minimum qualification for all Primary and Junior Secondary School teachers. In like manner, teacher quality has been emphasized to be the most important school – related factor influencing student's achievement (Rice, 2003). In order to have quality teachers in the school system Omo Ojugo (2009) had advocated that both the Federal and State Governments should embark on Quality Teacher Programmes as a matter of urgency.

The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2008) has clearly stated that the Local Government Education Authorities (LGEA's) have responsibilities for the management of basic education within their local government areas. Also, they are responsible for the supervision and quality control in all primary schools in their areas in conjunction with Federal and State authorities. Kathleen (2006) maintained that supervision is not a simple task despite the claim of Onoyase (1991) that supervision of instruction has undergone a process of evolution since the colonial time. It is a process of overseeing the activities of the instructors and while supervision is the process, the supervisor is understood as any head or appointed official whose main function is to inspect, control, evaluate and or advice, assist and support headmasters/principals and teachers in the educational enterprise for the purpose of quality education.

Instructional and infrastructural facilities are the catalyst which dissolve learners' background differentials and provide balanced opportunities among the classes, gender and other socio-demographic structures of learners. In fact, while instructional conveniences serve as veritable sources of aid to learning, infrastructure provides the general and specific environment for the child's personal, social, vocational and educational expressions and recital.

The Nigeria government is quite aware that the education enterprise is an expensive commodity, but with limitless resources, endless educational expansion could be possible. Though, no African country is endowed with unlimited resources, not even the most prosperous ones in other continents (Edem, 2006). Nonetheless, Nigeria needed to focus on funding specific areas vis: free/compulsory UBE; infrastructure/facility needs, and services; availability of quality teacher resources; capacity building of teachers; and valued educational technology. These areas were chosen mainly because they symbolize the requirements of basic



education. In other words, basic education of high standard cannot be achieved with a gross inadequate availability of funding.

From the foregoing, it is clear by implication that the education sector is a big enterprise that the government alone cannot adequately fund singlehandedly. This precarious experience of the education sector especially in all communities informed the intervention of educational support groups. A variety of groups often engage in the promotion of the educational enterprise but according to Chris and Isaac (2013) the key stakeholders of education are: Federal and State Ministries of Education, Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEB's), Local Government Education Authorities (LGEA's), Parent Teachers Associations (PTA), Non-governmental Organizations (NGO's), among others. Usually, educational support groups are formidable and irresistible voluntary sector initiatives that have permeated most sectors of the society for the purpose of enhancing the living standard of the masses.

3.1 Research Methodology

This study adapted a comprehensive survey design. This design enabled the researchers to gather information available about the target stakeholders involved for the improvement of basic education in the North central zone of Nigeria.

The target population of the study include all institutions linked to Basic Education from all the six states in the zone. Both stratified and simple random sampling techniques were employed to select 406 respondents (177 and 133 from public and private schools respectively of principals and teachers and 96 inspectors from SUBEB).

Two instruments titled: Questionnaire for Teachers and Headteachers (QTH) and Questionnaire for SUBEB (QSB) on the improvement of quality Basic Education were drafted to comprise sections A for the demography of the respondents and B for four (4) subthemes on: quantity and quality of teachers; infrastructure and facilities; funding and management of fund and stakeholders involvement in ensuring quality basic education. A 4-point Likert scale format was adapted with responses ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) on each item. The drafted questionnaires were pilot tested on few sample selected from Niger state for their validity and reliability before administration. This was to comply with the views of Ali (2005) and Sambo (2008) that an instrument cannot be considered useful until certified valid and reliable by experts. Cronbach Alpha was used to estimate the reliability coefficient of QTH which gave .756 while Split-half was employed to estimate the reliability index of QSB which resulted in .569 to ascertain their usability for the study. The distribution and collection of the questionnaires were thereafter conducted to generate data. The Data so generated were analysed through descriptive statistics and interpreted using appropriate statistical analysis as contained in SPSS version 21.



4.0 Results

4.1 Research Questions

1. What are the disparity in factors existing between public and private schools' responsible for the improvement of quality basic education through quality teaching and learning in the North central zone of Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean difference between Public and Private Schools on factors for Quality Teaching and Learning

Factor	School			
	Public n = 177		Private n = 133	
	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD
1. Quantity and quality of teachers	9.59	2.349	9.57	2.38
2. Infrastructure and facilities	11.36	3.188	9.89	3.222
3. Funding and management of funds	12.77	3.101	12.26	2.516
4. Stakeholders involvement in ensuring quality basic education	11.68	2.972	10.68	2.557

The results on table 1 show that there was no mean disparity between public (9.59) and private (9.57) schools with regards to the quantity and quality of teachers for quality of teaching and learning in the North Central zone of Nigeria. The public school had a higher mean disparity in infrastructure and facilities with 11.36 over those of private school with 9.89. On the issue of funding and management of fund, the mean scores were 12.77 and 12.26 for public and private schools respectively. A slight mean score difference was obtained on stakeholders' involvement in ensuring quality Basic Education with a mean of 11.68 for the public and 10.68 for the private schools respectively. These results showed that the disparity existed between public and private schools on the factors responsible for quality teaching and learning of basic education in the North Central zone as related to infrastructure and facilities, funding and stakeholders' involvement at ensuring quality basic education.

2. What are the factors responsible for improving quality teaching and learning of basic education in the North central zone of Nigeria?

Table 2: Frequency and Percentage of Factor responsible for Improving Quality Teaching and Learning

I	t	e	m	S	A	A	D	S	D	Decision in %
There are enough qualified teachers for universal basic education				133(36.5)	103(34.5)	60(19.4)	30(9.7)	71.0A		
UBE teachers are regularly sent on capacity building programme				35(11.3)	123(39.7)	104(33.5)	48(15.5)	51.0A		
Translation and implementation of UBE policies provide all round achievement of the child's development				89(28.7)	159(51.3)	47(15.2)	15(4.8)	80.0A		



The quality of UBE teachers determines the quality of teaching and classroom learning	156 (50.3)	132(42.6)	18 (5.8)	4 (1.3)	92.9 A
Professional teachers development is a key element in improving students learning outcome	173 (55.8)	126(40.6)	9 (2.9)	2 (0.6)	96.4 A
You use interactive white board and projectors to improve manipulative skills in UBE	70(22.6)	111(35.8)	73(23.5)	56(18.1)	58.4 A
The supply of seat and writing desk is adequate and suitable for the success of UBE programme	85(27.4)	109(35.2)	68(21.9)	48(15.5)	62.6 A
Classroom space, adequate ventilation and furniture impacts on learning	119(38.4)	128(41.3)	32(10.3)	31(10.0)	79.7 A
Your school provides access to the use of library, laboratories and their facilities to your pupils/students	73(23.5)	85(26.5)	89(28.7)	66(21.3)	50.0A
Quality instructional materials enhance conducive learning environment	152(49.0)	121(39.0)	13(4.2)	24(7.7)	88.0A
Funding of UBE is an integral responsibility of the government, parents and private organizations	132(42.6)	141(45.5)	30(9.7)	7(2.3)	88.1 A
Support from Alumni Associations is necessary for improving UBE	98(31.6)	161(51.9)	41(13.2)	10(3.2)	83.5 A
The regular publications of UBE financial statement are always made available to the public	27(8.7)	64(20.6)	112(36.1)	107(34.5)	70.6 D
UBE programme provides opportunities and Finance for seminars and workshops regularly	37(11.9)	92(29.7)	114(36.8)	67(21.6)	58.4 D
The salaries and allowances of UBE are paid to time	13(4.2)	47(15.2)	100(32.3)	150(48.4)	80.0D
Teachers Union are part of change effort on UBE	85(27.4)	143(46.1)	55(17.7)	27(8.7)	73.5 A
NGOs influence UBE to underserved communities	48(15.5)	129(41.6)	105(33.9)	28(9.0)	57.1 A
PTA supports UBE school teachers by providing learning materials and service training	70(22.6)	149(48.1)	63(20.3)	28(9.0)	70.7 A
Religious groups engaged in delivery service and development of UBE curriculum	42(13.5)	151(48.7)	84(27.1)	33(10.6)	62.2 A
Community leaders show concern on adequate execution of UBE project	58(18.7)	133(42.9)	87(28.1)	32(10.3)	61.6 A

It is revealed from table 2 that there were high percentages agreements or disagreement by all the respondents on the issues raised on the factors responsible for improving quality teaching and learning of basic education in North Central zone of Nigeria. This result implies that these factors are all required for improving quality basic education in the North Central zone of Nigeria.

3. How can the available human, material and fiscal resources be effectively and efficiently managed to improve on the quality of teaching and learning in the North Central zone of Nigeria?

Table 3: Frequency and Percentage of resources management for improving quality Basic Education

I	t	e	m	S	A	A	D	S	D	Decision in %
Regular supervision of teachers enables them to modify their teaching methodology	65(67.7)	29(30.2)	1(1.0)	1(1.0)						97.9A
Supervision agencies do discuss with the teachers their conduct during routine inspections	36(37.5)	48(50.0)	9(9.4)	3(3.1)						87.5 A



UBE programme is mandated to equip schools with laboratories and technology driven environment	28(29.2)	56(58.3)	9(9.4)	3(3.4)	87.5 A
All schools are supplied with relevant printed and non printed learning material, vehicles for staff mobility	7(7.3)	25(26.0)	42(43.8)	22(22.9)	66.7D
The present statutory allocation formula is adequate in meeting the needs of UBE	2(2.1)	22(22.9)	41(42.7)	31(32.3)	75.0 D
The present multiple structures on UBE complicate proper coordination	2(2.1)	51(53.1)	36(37.5)	7(7.3)	55.2 A
Local government requires constitutional rights (autonomy) to oversee UBE programme all alones	33(34.4)	31(32.3)	22(22.9)	10(10.4)	66.7 A
Government and stakeholders build constructive partnership on quality UBE	25(26.0)	39(40.6)	16(16.7)	16(16.7)	66.6 A
Government and stakeholders establish effective lines of communication on UBE	19(19.8)	44(45.8)	18(18.8)	15(15.6)	65.6 A
Government and stakeholders incorporate value added innovations into policies on UBE	19(19.8)	43(44.8)	24(25.0)	10(10.4)	64.6 A

As revealed on table 3, 97.9% of the respondents agreed that regular supervision of teachers enabled them to modify their teaching methodology. Similarly 87.5% of the respondents agreed that supervisory agencies do discuss with the teachers their conduct during routine inspections. This implies that adequate supervision of teachers cum revelation of their conduct during inspections contributed to effective and efficient management of human resources that could culminate into improving quality of teachers for the teaching and learning of Basic Education in North Central zone of Nigeria.

Table 3 also shows that 87.5% of the respondents agreed that UBE programme is mandated to equip schools with laboratories and technology driven environment. However, 66.7% of the respondents disagreed that all schools were supplied with relevant printed and non-printed learning materials and vehicles for staff mobility. This implies that school laboratories were better equipped through UBE programme but the supply of relevant printed and non-printed learning materials and vehicles for staff mobility were not adequately considered for the improvement of teaching and learning of basic education.

Further extractions from the results on table 3 indicate a 75% disagreement among the respondents on the adequacy of the present statutory allocation formula in meeting the needs of UBE. However, 55.2% of the respondents agreed that the present multiple structures on UBE complicated proper coordination, while 66.7% of the respondents agreed that local government required constitutional rights (autonomy) to oversee UBE programme all alone. This implies that the present statutory allocation formula to meeting the needs of UBE was inadequate; the present multiple structures on UBE would require a reversal for proper coordination to be possible and constitutional rights would have to be granted all local governments to effectively oversee UBE programme.

Furthermore, 66.6% of the respondents agreed that government and stakeholders built constructive partnership on quality UBE; 65.6% of the respondents agreed that government and stakeholders established effective lines of communication on UBE and that 64.6% of the respondents agreed that government and stakeholders incorporated value added innovations into policies on UBE. This implies that a cordial association



of the government and stakeholders proved to entrench effective and efficient management approach to improving quality teaching and learning of basic education.

5.1 Discussion

The main disparity existing on the factors responsible for quality teaching and learning of basic education between public and private UBE Schools were related to infrastructure and facilities; funding and management of fund as well as stakeholders involvement at ensuring quality basic education. In all these three areas, the public schools had a higher mean score. This implied that the public schools stood a better chance to providing quality basic education to the learners, however, the reverse plagued the institutions. Despite the favourable chances for public schools, the respondents disagreed in totality about making available regular publications of UBE financial statement to the public. Similarly, UBE programmes did not provide opportunities and finance for seminars and workshops that public schools could benefit from, as well as most importantly, the salaries and allowances of UBE teachers were not paid to time. This revealed the fact that despite that there was no disparity in the quantity and quality of teachers in the public and private schools, the outcome of the teaching and learning in the private schools attracted accolades probably because those challenges were adequately addressed by the managers of those twin competitors in the education sector.

The financial challenges bewildering the public UBE schools as discovered in this study corroborated the findings of HincNiffe (2002) from a study on education expenditure by the three tiers of government practised in Nigeria who identified two endemic problems of financing education to include: imbalance of finance resources and financial responsibilities at governmental levels and equity across sub units of each level of government in financing education. This inadequacy cannot but remain a pitfall if the present statutory allocation on UBE is not adequately motivated to the grassroots. This exposes the more the position of Jaiyeoba (2007) that although government was sincerely devoted to funding UBE however, there was no transparency in the disbursement of the funds. Similarly the present multiple structures on UBE has not only complicated proper coordination but also constituted an avenue for corrupt practices. Of course too, if we must agree on improving quality basic education, the local government requires constitutional autonomy to oversee UBE programme all alone and be held accountable for any lapses but shares the glory with other tiers on account of successes or improvement.

It was revealed that some states showed prudence in funding and management than others just as in their involvement of stakeholders at ensuring quality basic education. To ensure the proper handling of these factors thus far, the Federal Ministry of Education in its one year strategy plan for the development of the education sector (FME, 2010-2011) had proposed a capacity building as important in order to ensure that quality assurance evaluation were conducted for the recognition of standards and results properly collated and analysed.

It was equally deduced that UBE programme would bring progress if schools were equipped with laboratories and technology-driven environment and all schools supplied with relevant printed and non-printed learning materials and vehicles for staff mobility. Likewise, it was found that government and stakeholders



would need to: Concretize constructive partnership, establish effective lines of communication and incorporate value added on UBE for the programme to be accorded required improvement. These findings fall-in-line with the expectations in the one year strategy plan of the Federal Ministry of Education between 2010 and 2011 which maintained that: to deliver on cure mandate, certain activities were just necessary for efficiency and effectiveness. Among such activities as proposed then include the collating of data for purposes of educational planning, projection and financing as well as controlling the quality of education in the country through the supervisory role of the Inspectorate Services Department within the Education Ministry.

5.2 Conclusion

It is our deduction that uniformity is of necessity. As such, the tenet of Nigeria vision 20-2020 Economic Transformation Blueprint which emphasizes that "education reform is fundamental to human capacity building" would be relevant and apt at the moment. This is the appropriate time when the intention of the vision document ought to come to reality; the intention of refocusing educational system in terms of access and equity, quality, infrastructure, teacher quality and development, curriculum pragmatic relevance, funding and planning. We are sure that adequate coordination of interventions by International Development Partners (IDPs) and local stakeholders, including Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) would effectively contribute to government's effort if located within well defined and articulated National Education sector plan. This would bring to rest the concern of GEFI (2015) that improper coordination of interventions on classroom facilities may worsen with the influx of learners within basic learning cadre.

5.3 Recommendations

In the event of the findings in this study, we made the following submissions for improving quality basic education:

1. Publications of UBE financial statement should be made available to the public quarterly.
2. UBE programme should provide opportunities and finance for schools to engage in seminars and workshops.
3. Salaries and allowances of UBE teachers should receive prior clearance before other expenditure monthly.
4. Statutory allocation on UBE should be adequately monitored to the grassroots.
5. Multiple coordinating structures on UBE should be dismantled while empowering the local government constitutionally to oversee the programme and held accountable in all respect.
6. Regular supervision of teachers with the aim of modifying teaching methodology and improving mastery should prick the attention of the inspectorate of agency of education.
7. UBE Schools should be equipped with laboratories and technology-driven environment as well as supplied with printed and non printed relevant learning materials with vehicles for staff mobility.
8. Government and stakeholders should concretize constructive partnership requirements on UBE for interventions to be efficiently and effectively delivered to and utilized by schools.

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