

22

Ibadan Journal of Educational Studies (IJES)

Vol 9 Nos 1 & 2 Jan/June, 2012

ISSN: 1596-5953



Changing Trends in Public Primary Education in Southwestern Nigeria 1995-2005

B.O. Lawal, Ph.D
*Department of Teacher Education,
Faculty of Education,
University of Ibadan, Ibadan*

and

E.K. Ola-Alani, Ph.D
*Department of Teacher Education,
Faculty of Education,
University of Ibadan, Ibadan*

Abstract

The Nigerian primary school system which is the cornerstone of economic and social development is yet to meet the expected goals of teaching pupils basic cognitive skills, as well as equipping them to develop attitudes and skills that are needed to function effectively. Various programmes, policies and regulations were made to bring about improvement in the school system. The study showed that remarkable progress had been made in that there was wide expansion in public primary education. More children were enrolled and great resources invested. Gender parity had been achieved and teacher-pupil ratio favourable. However, there was rising incidence of poor performance, parents were unwilling to patronize public schools while the number of functionally illiterate school leavers increased. Problems hindering functional education were identified, while stakeholders offered suggestions for solution. Appropriate recommendations to improve the school system were consequently made.

Introduction

Education, according to Lockheed and Vespoor (2003), is the cornerstone of economic and social development; while primary education is its foundation. It improves the productive capacity of societies, reduces poverty by mitigating its effects on population, health and nutrition and by increasing the value and efficiency of its labour force. Primary education serves several purposes. One is to teach pupils basic cognitive skills. Second

is to develop attitudes and skills which children need to function effectively in society. Third is to advance nation building.

For the Christian Missionaries who were the pioneers of western education, schooling was a means of teaching the Africans to read the Bible and of securing them to the faith (Crowder, 1968). For the European merchants and administrators on the other hand, it was meant to provide clerks and technicians for the administration and commerce that was either not profitable or impossible to fill with Europeans. With the introduction of colonial rule, western education was regarded as essential to the prosecution of the exploitation of West Africa (Osokoya, 1994). In 1938 Durkheim however argued that changing economic, social and political situations in both developed and developing countries had combined to create needs for constant innovations and reforms in education.

Within this context expanded and improved educational provision became a focus of development efforts. It is no wonder then that, in 1955 when the Awolowo government introduced the Universal Free Primary Education (UPE) in the Western Region, the objective was to lay a solid foundation for the future participation of all citizens in the task of building the nation. In spite of the many attendant problems, the programme was successful. According to Adesina (1983) the impact and effectiveness of the programme was sustained till the post-independent years. Decline in public primary education only began about the 1970s.

Beginning with the UPE, 1976, a number of changes were introduced. Other changes in programmes, policies and regulations that were meant to transform the primary school system were the National Policy on Education 1977, revised 1981, 1998 and 2004; 1979 Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) Free Education Programme, Decree No. 31 (1988) Decree No. 3 (1991) and Decree No. 96 of 1993.

The changes introduced were intended to bring improvement in the primary school system, especially those of the South Western area of Nigeria, where the most revolutionary step to develop primary education was first taken in 1955. Not much progress was made. By 1995 the experience of the past thirty five years in Nigeria indicated that educational strategies had not achieved desired goals or development, if development was interpreted to mean a process for improving the lives of the deprived majority of the people.

According to Pritchett (2001), though there had been significant growth in the education system, such growth were not on the average commensurate with growth in the standard of education. In the words of Simmons (1979), "such expansion proved to be expensive, inefficient and inequitable". Akinbote, Oduolowu and Lawal (2001) also surmised that various government programmes and policies aimed at improving the system failed and the huge financial and human investment wasted.

Statement of the Problem

This study therefore investigated some aspects of the programmes, policies and regulations on education with a view to showing the extent of their effectiveness and impact on public primary education system in South Western Nigeria, especially as they relate to enrolment, gender, teacher-pupil ratio, teacher quality, facilities, funding and community participation between 1995 and 2005. It also examined the issues that hindered the effectiveness of the changes that were introduced. Suggestions were consequently made to improve the system.

Research Questions

The study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What programmes, policies and regulations influenced public primary education between 1995 and 2005?
2. What were the influence of the programmes, policies and regulations especially as they affected enrolment, gender, teacher-pupil ratio, teacher quality, and funding?
3. In what ways did the changes improve the quality of primary education in line with the provisions of the National Policy on Education?
4. What major problems characterised public primary education during the period under study?
5. What suggestions did the stakeholders proffer as possible solutions to the problems?

Scope of the Study

The study covered five of the present six South Western States of Nigeria namely: Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo. The area inhabited by various groups of Yoruba people has long historical and political ties. It constituted the core of the old Western Region which happened to be the cradle of Western formal education in Nigeria. It was also the part of the country that first took the revolutionary step to transform the educational system of the country with the introduction of the UPE in 1955.

Universal Primary Education, 1976

The introduction of the UPE marked a new era in the history of primary education. Primary education became the full responsibility of the Federal Government. It also meant that every Nigerian child could regard basic education as his natural heritage, a right and no longer a privilege (Uchendu 1993, p. 47). In order to ensure the successful implementation of the UPE, the Federal Government was to lay down policy guidelines and provide funds for the implementation, while state governments would be the agents of the scheme (Tamuno and Atanda, 1980).

National Policy on Education

The important features of the National Policy Education (1981), especially for primary school system, were its outline of the philosophy for Nigerian education, and the teaching of Nigerian history, geography and cultural values in the all-embracing subject of social studies. Other innovative measures embodied in the National Policy on Education included the use of the mother tongue, provision of guidance counselors in primary schools, use of continuous assessment for purpose of promotion of pupils, introduction of libraries and provisions of basic health needs', specialist teachers in art, music, and Physical and Health Education (National Policy on Education, 1981). The National Policy on Education is considered to be the most outstanding effort at improving primary education in Nigeria (Osokoya 1987; Yolooye 1994).

Primary education, considered in the context of the National Policy according to Osokoya (1987), was to perform two major functions. It was intended as a complete form of education in itself as well as to prepare few top ones for secondary education. Unfortunately, however, primary education was "not vocationalised" and so could not "provide gainful employment for its graduates".

UPN Free Education Programme (1979)

In 1979, the Unity Party of Nigeria's free education programme became operational in the Southwest. The programme sought to eradicate illiteracy; create equal educational opportunities for all as well as improve the quality of education. (*Brochure on Free Education Programme, 1979*).

Unfortunately, the Federal Government which had earlier undertaken to bear the total cost of primary education could no longer continue to bear the cost alone. This was due both to constitutional change that placed education on the concurrent list and the political considerations that it was not expedient for the National Party of Nigeria led Federal Government to finance the UPN free education at all levels. The effect of the change was that in Southwestern Nigeria, where the UPN was in control, budgetary allocation for education was spread over all other sectors of education, especially secondary education which equally became free under the UPN government.

Military Decrees

Three military decrees were promulgated that greatly impacted primary education between 1988 and 1993. Decree 31 of 1988 was introduced by General Babangida to rescue the educational system, especially primary education, from collapsing as a result of inadequate funding and bad management.

Decree 31 which had received worldwide acclaim for its effectiveness was abruptly terminated by Decree 3 of 1991 which "aimed at taking the management of primary education to the grassroots" Akinbote, Oduolowu and Lawal (2001), (p94). The decree was seriously criticised by teachers, parents and the general public who could not trust

their destiny to local government officials. After a period of incessant strikes by primary school teachers over non-payment of salaries, the decree was abrogated, and Decree 96 of 1993 restored the 1988 system.

International Agencies

International agencies and development partners initiated projects and programmes that made significant contributions to the improvement of the education sector generally and primary education sub-sector in particular. The World Bank Book Project (1993) gave support for the production of primary education textbooks in the areas of English Language, Mathematics, Primary Science and Social Studies. World Bank Primary Education Project II strengthened development of human resources, while UNICEF undertook the Child Friendly School Initiative.

The Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE) ensured that day-care centres, nursery and primary schools were in the same premises. The establishment of pre-primary units in public primary schools pioneered by Oyo State in 1998, spread to Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo, and Osun States. The presence of older siblings in the primary classes were a good source of encouragement since parents did not have to worry so much about how to get the pre-school children to school. Their older brothers and sisters took them to school and brought them back from school at closing time (Ola Alani, 2000).

Universal Basic Education (1999)

The Universal Basic Education programme introduced in 1999 was not a brand new educational programme. Rather, it was an educational reform which tried to bring about increased access, improved quality and peoples' greater commitment and support to the primary education sub-sector of education. It was a policy reform measure embarked upon by the Federal Government of Nigeria to address the gaps and distortions that existed in basic education level in the 1980s and 1990 (Tahir; 2001, 2). The UBE is mainly concerned with early-childhood care and development, six years of primary education and three years of Junior Secondary Schooling. The responsibility for implementing the UBE is a collaborative one, a partnership involving Federal Government, states, local government, communities, civil societies and international agencies.

Community Participation

Local communities contributed immensely to the financing of primary education through self-help projects. They built and equipped schools and, at times contributed funds to assist the recurrent expenses of schools, but their contributions have not been properly evaluated in quantifiable terms (Nwagwu 1998 p.17). Other contributions included levies paid by parents or adults, donations in response to appeals and assistance from philanthropists and large corporations.

their destiny to local government officials. After a period of incessant strikes by primary school teachers over non-payment of salaries, the decree was abrogated, and Decree 96 of 1993 restored the 1988 system.

International Agencies

International agencies and development partners initiated projects and programmes that made significant contributions to the improvement of the education sector generally and primary education sub-sector in particular. The World Bank Book Project (1993) gave support for the production of primary education textbooks in the areas of English Language, Mathematics, Primary Science and Social Studies. World Bank Primary Education Project II strengthened development of human resources, while UNICEF undertook the Child Friendly School Initiative.

The Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE) ensured that day-care centres, nursery and primary schools were in the same premises. The establishment of pre-primary units in public primary schools pioneered by Oyo State in 1998, spread to Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo, and Osun States. The presence of older siblings in the primary classes were a good source of encouragement since parents did not have to worry so much about how to get the pre-school children to school. Their older brothers and sisters took them to school and brought them back from school at closing time (Ola Alani, 2000).

Universal Basic Education (1999)

The Universal Basic Education programme introduced in 1999 was not a brand new educational programme. Rather, it was an educational reform which tried to bring about increased access, improved quality and peoples' greater commitment and support to the primary education sub-sector of education. It was a policy reform measure embarked upon by the Federal Government of Nigeria to address the gaps and distortions that existed in basic education level in the 1980s and 1990 (Tahir, 2001, 2). The UBE is mainly concerned with early-childhood care and development, six years of primary education and three years of Junior Secondary Schooling. The responsibility for implementing the UBE is a collaborative one, a partnership involving Federal Government, states, local government, communities, civil societies and international agencies.

Community Participation

Local communities contributed immensely to the financing of primary education through self-help projects. They built and equipped schools and, at times contributed funds to assist the recurrent expenses of schools, but their contributions have not been properly evaluated in quantifiable terms (Nwagwu 1998 p.17). Other contributions included levies paid by parents or adults, donations in response to appeals and assistance from philanthropists and large corporations.

The various programmes, policies and regulations highlighted above individually and collectively impacted the public primary education system in South Western Nigeria. In the first stance there was remarkable expansion in terms of enrolment, especially after the enactment of Decree 96 of 1993; as shown in Table 1.

Table I: Pupils Enrolment in Public Primary Schools in South-Western Nigeria by State and Gender (1995-2005)

YEAR	EKITI			OGUN			ONDO		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1995	*	*	*	237820	220515	458335	297578	299518	582991
1996	134961	151537	286500	233022	221817S	453839	321190	327899	649089
1997	108206	114025	222231	222101	209927	432028	136990	148235	285225
1998	147304	160665	307969	230725	219674	450399	296873	295882	592755
1999	161545	180871	342416	234193	221523	455716	237735	241994	479729
2000	142137	136730	278867	235475	221962	457437	260248	266200	526448
2001	220237	242689	462926	198686	188846	387532	257316	264027	521343
2002	215663	241528	457191	224004	217908	441912	265008	274425	539433
2003	183247	199945	383192	196336	192143	388479	331014	339815	670829
2004	202961	232710	435671	195883	190268	386151	339272	347746	687018
2005	279315	308380	587695	210737	199076	40081	347754	356440	704194

YEAR	OSUN			OYO		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1995	313794	296971	610765	-	-	-
1996	256773	263242	520015	331144	330054	661198
1997	256773	263242	520015	345455	345284	691239
1998	256773	263242	520015	399295	399036	798331
1999	220368	224234	444602	399175	391430	790605
2000	226152	231320	457472	404474	405422	809896
2001	197325	202102	391430	350791	351836	702627
2002	257818	251766	405422	388417	385986	774403
2003	252114	230456	455570	426376	436208	862584
2004	235228	249583	484811	471965	471651	943616
2005	251184	258360	509584	469848	470072	939920

Source: FME, April 2003 pp 9-14. (No information on 37 schools in Ogun and 49 schools in Oyo in the year 2001). States' Offices of SUBEB (2007)

* State not then created

The table shows a marked improvement in the enrolment figures of girls in all the states, with the exception of Ogun State. The difference noticed in respect of Ogun State may be explained in terms of highly persisting negative attitude towards female education in some parts of the state bordering the Republic of Benin. It is common knowledge that most girls who serve as house-helpers in most parts of the Southwest, especially Lagos and Ibadan, come from the area. At no point in time did the female enrolment figures in Ogun exceed those of the boys. The Educational Sector Status Report, May 2003 report, however, indicated that in 1999, 2000 and 2001, the ratio of girls in the Southwestern was 50, 51, 51 respectively.

The National Policy on Education envisaged that by 1995 NCE should be the minimum qualification for teaching in primary schools. FME statistics, however, showed that the percentage of primary school teachers in the states in Southwestern Nigeria

who were holders of the NCE certificate and above in 1995 ranged between 21.0% in Osun State and 35.0% in Ogun and Ondo States. 56.0% were holders of the Grade II Certificate while a little over 10.0% had no teaching qualification at all. The period was consequently further extended to year 2000. The introduction of the UBE ensured that the quality of teachers in primary schools especially between 1999 and 2005 improved tremendously as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Number of Teachers by Qualification, 1999-2005

Year	Ekiti						Ogun						Ondo					
	Grad.	NCE	GD II	Others	NQ %	Total	Grad.	NCE	GD II	Others	NQ %	Total	Grad.	NCE	GD II	Others	NQ %	Total
1999	209	5633	1674	405	5	7921	639	10510	4613	1504	9	17529	386	7422	2951	1259	0.10	12008
2000	318	5942	1754	487	6	8434	757	11232	4455	1477	8	18199	484	7722	3052	1312	0.10	12573
2001	423	6180	1737	471	5	8811	1012	11679	4662	2159	11	19159	590	8448	3167	1588	0.09	15935
2002	517	6636	1959	543	6	9657	1111	11453	4659	1769	9	19042	630	8041	3291	1859	0.12	14821
2003	266	6372	1509	71	1	8217	878	10490	2912	359	2	15302	489	8897	3608	818	0.06	13812
2004	314	7160	1155	152	2	8781	3467	10179	3467	50	0	14328	489	8897	3608	818	0.06	13812
2005	294	5712	1142	114	1	9571	1543	10765	2317	267	0.01	21080	489	8897	3688	818	0.06	16566

Year	Osun						OYO					
	Grad.	NCE	GD II	Others	% NQ	Total	Grad.	NCE	GD II	Others	NQ %	Total
1999	321	11773	3042	728	0.46	1582	962	19129	6479	1776	6.2	28446
2000	427	12168	2468	712	0.05	15459	950	20433	3262	1938	6.5	29588
2001	581	11964	2172	938	0.0	15895	1353	21420	5866	2159	7.0	30798
2002	697	12549	1132	948	0	16326	1423	19769	5717	2157	7.4	29066
2003	50	3746	8575	-	0	13366	1001	10831	3579	19	0.1	15430
2004	61	8998	3200	-	0	12259	1025	10573	3543	15	0.09	15154
2005	520	12000	480	-	0	16540	1457	23121	3418	3	0.01	31377

Source: FME (2003) State Ministries of Education (2008)

*NQ – Not Qualified

Table 2 above further shows that almost over 90% of primary school teachers in Southwestern Nigeria were qualified. The table shows that in all the States with the exception of Ondo, the number of teachers without NCE certificates had largely reduced between 1999 and 2005. In Ekiti the number declined from 2079 to 1256, whereas in Ondo it actually increased by almost 300 to 4506. The most noticeable improvement was in Osun, where there were only 480 in 2005 as compared with the 1999 figure of 3768. The figure from Oyo had been reduced to 3421 as against 8255 in 1999. Indeed, the percentage of unqualified teachers had dropped to between 0% and 11.0% across the states in Southwestern Nigeria.

Reports from classroom research, according to Aarons (2003) however indicated that specific improvements were needed in the training that teachers received. Deficiencies were identified in teachers' knowledge and skills in the area of language. They were also found to need more skills in teaching initial literacy, number, and basic science concepts in the children's mother tongue, more ability to manage children's learning needs during the transition to English as a medium of instruction, and more awareness of the importance of language across the curriculum. It was also suggested that they needed additional training in the use of instructional time, in promoting active training, in promoting active learning, in assessment techniques, and in teacher team work (ESSR, 2003).

Over all, teacher quality at the primary level seemed to be low and that is reflected on the various part-time and sandwich programmes in which many were trained. There is need therefore to research into the quality or worth of the university degree held by some of the primary school teachers since most of the degrees were earned through sandwich programmes mounted at study centres which did not necessarily receive adequate supervision from the institutions that ran the programme.

Facilities

The 1993, SAPA report indicated that not all primary schools had what could be called normal accommodation for a regular school. Although most of the schools were constructed with durable materials, quite a number were old. Most of the pupils had no textbooks. The school furniture was inadequate and was sufficient for only about 50.0% of the pupils. Also, 36.0% of pupils had no writing materials. The provision of instructional facilities, too, was equally dismal. Two major areas of such deficiencies which the report highlighted were means of instruction relating to primary science equipment and availability of textbooks (SAPA, 1993). Not much improvement had been made since 1993. However the World Bank credit facility (1992-1998) to Nigeria for the primary education project was to be the main source of assistance in the supply of textbooks in English Language, Mathematics, primary science and social studies to primary school children.

The 2003 Education Sector Status Report noted that "instructional and learning materials such as textbooks, science equipment, chalk and chalk boards and charts are

generally inadequate, most especially in the rural schools, thus making effective delivery of curriculum difficult to achieve" (p.44). States' Government's political slogan of free education was not backed by any well defined strategy and plan to supply adequate textbooks. Meanwhile, parents and guardians had long forgotten due to heavy political propaganda that it was their responsibility to provide instructional materials for their wards. Most parents continued to live under the illusion that it was government's responsibility to provide free education for children at no cost to their parents.

The Primary School curriculum was too broad. On the average 16 subjects were offered. The large number of subjects meant that teachers could not do thorough teaching. There were no library facilities or laboratory in virtually all the primary schools. Access to basic health needs such as dispensaries, sick bay and medical personnel in the schools were hardly heard of; most schools however had first aid boxes, though most of these lacked basic drugs.

Specialist Teachers

The aspect of the *National Policy on Education* that says government will provide specialist teachers for some subjects, like Music, Fine Art and Physical and Health Education had not been implemented. There was practically no single teacher throughout Southwestern teaching a single subject because of his/her expertise in that area of study.

Teacher-Pupil Ratio

Between 1991 and 1995, all the states in Southwestern Nigeria satisfied the requirements of the national policy in respect of teacher-pupil ratio of 1:40. Since then, the ratio has continued to improve. In fact, Ondo State had met the requirement of 1:30 in 1991 but could not sustain it for long. International monitoring of EFA recognises Qualified Teacher-Pupil ratio (QTPR) as more closely rated to quality than the sheer number of teachers. The EFA figures indicated that Oyo and Ondo were in the range of states with QTPR of between 41-50; Ogun and Osun in the below 40 range. The EFA figures, however, showed that Oyo (North) was in the range of 81-90 and Ondo in the range of 91-130 (Obanya, 2004).

Mother Tongue

The mother tongue is considered an effective instrument for transmitting the cultural values and cherished traditions of a society. *The National Policy on Education* clearly acknowledges this fact. The policy therefore in Section 3 15(4) provided that: "Government will see to it that the medium of instruction in the primary school is initially the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community..."

The teaching of mother tongue, Yoruba, in the case of Southwestern Nigeria was not new. What was new about it was (is) "the use of the mother tongue for instruction in all primary school subjects" (Obidi, 1997: 6).

The government of the former Oyo State which had to adopt Yoruba as a medium of instruction in the primary school in 1986 did not succeed. There were no relevant textbooks for the subjects in the Yoruba language; neither were there sufficiently trained teachers who could teach the subjects, not to talk of teaching them in the Yoruba language. Above all, the average Yoruba parent would rather have their primary school children taught in English than in Yoruba. Competency in the English language was considered a mark of high intellectual capabilities even for the primary school pupils.

Guidance Counselling

No counseling services were provided, classroom teachers, however, continued to undertake the role of counsellors as their responsibility in addition to their normal classroom teaching.

Continuous Assessment

The use of continuous assessment for purpose of promotion had started at different times in the States. In Oyo State, continuous assessment as a basis for certification of completion of Primary Six began in 1993. In Osun, the practice started in 1995. The practice was very much in vogue but some states of the Southwestern Nigeria, as a means of checking pupil's poor performance, re-introduced the school leaving certificate examination in primary schools, as was the case even in Osun and Oyo States.

Funding

Table 3: States' Government Expenditure on Primary Education in Southwestern Nigeria (1999 – 2005)

STATE	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
EKITI	35,000,000	10t	10t	10t	135,000,000	112,000,000	165,557.00
OGUN	75,000,000	163,000,000	250,000,000	268,000,000	157,107,000	257,000,000	275,100.00
ONDO	60,000,000	10t	10t	10t	247,735,000	231,847,400	237,890,120
OSUN	78,000,000	81,500,000	81,000,000	137,000,000	142,500,000	149,000,000	175,000,000
OYO	110,500,000	261,950,000	496,000,000	502,000,000	509,700,000	345,000,000	523,000,000

Source: Extracts from Approved Estimates 1999 – 2005

Table 3 indicates that Ekiti and Ondo States governments did not categorically commit themselves to specific amount to be expended on education for the year 2000-2002.

Those were the immediate years following the launching of the Universal Basic Education Programme. It is posited that that line of action was possibly taken for political reasons.

The Federal Government launched UBE in September 1999, just about time when preparation most probably was in top gear for the making of 2000 budget. Could it be that the two State Governments decided to be silent on its budgetary provision, especially for primary education in order to know exactly what largesse was likely to accrue to the States? Could it also be a subtle way of keeping from the public exactly how much the state was to expend on primary education in order to strengthen its bargaining with the Federal authorities. All these are speculative. What is clear, however, is that the budgetary allocation in respect of education, especially primary education, has for long been a matter of intense political maneuverings.

It is generally believed that figures in respect of enrolment, number of schools, classes, as well as number of teachers were often manipulated in order to attract higher subventions from both the Federal Government and donor agencies.

It is an irony that what should have been a most effective means of ensuring equitable distribution of national income became the very conduit pipe through which national resources were dissipated through questionable documentation. Thus, it becomes very difficult to access reliable and authoritative data, both for planning and practical management purposes.

The annual increase in the amount of money spent by each of the state governments on primary education was often potentially reduced by the impact of rising inflation rate. Most of such increase were also not actually spent on education.

Furthermore, the allocation made to primary education specifically, when compared with the total figure of each year's budgetary figures continued to show a systematic decline in the percentage allocated to primary education, which had never measured up to the 26.0% budgetary allocation which UNESCO has recommended as the minimum for the developing countries.

Available figures in 1998 for Oyo and Ekiti States, for instance, indicated that Oyo spent 23.1% on primary education; 37.6% on secondary education, and 27.5 on tertiary education. Ekiti, on the other hand spent 10.4% on primary education; 66.2% on secondary education, and 13.0% on tertiary education. This, in essence, meant that primary education, over the years did not receive adequate financial support relatively to the other education sub-sectors.

Public primary education was faced with a number of challenges. These were summarized as follows:

1. Universalization of education was inadequate. This meant that there were not enough places as well as physical and instructional facilities
2. Provision of good quality education. This implied the relevance and appropriateness in curriculum provision and delivery.

3. There were gaps between policy provision and the reality in practice. The need for teacher's classroom skills to impact literacy and active learning at the primary school level was a challenge to teachers.
4. Funding continued to be a major hindrance in providing primary education. While government was unable to bear the cost alone, parents had become indulgent.
5. The post-1976 education programmes and policies lacked adequate planning. Schemes were also launched without proper statistical data base.
6. There was near total break-down of public confidence in the public primary education system due to the poor quality of the products.

Stakeholders in the public school system however proffered a number of suggestions to remedy the situation. These include

1. Regular and prompt payment of teachers' salaries and allowances.
2. Adequate provision of instructional and learning materials
3. Improved teacher working conditions
4. Increased opportunities for in-service training
5. More vigorous and co-ordinated community participation in school.
6. Increased funding by government and right balance between expenditure on teacher welfare and other input into primary education
7. Effective monitoring and supervision of schools
8. Depoliticization of education.

Conclusion

The study showed that remarkable progress had been made in that there was wide expansion in public primary education. More children were enrolled and great resources invested. The gender parity had greatly improved; and so was the teacher-pupil ratio. Surprisingly these noticeable improvements could not result in improved quality of education. There was rising incidence of poor performance, parents unwillingness to patronize public schools, while the number of functionally illiterate school leavers continue to swell. In spite of the huge investment, the seeming rhetorical question of Pritchett (2001) "Where has all the education gone?" remains pertinent."

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made as a means of improving public primary education system.

Free education should not only be quantitative, it must of necessity also be qualitative. Serious effort must, therefore, be made to address the inadequacies of infrastructural and instructional materials. Functional libraries must be established in schools, possibly

with the support of PTAs. The provision of materials and learning resources generally must also not be left in the hands of any agent. It is necessary for parents/guardians to supplement government's effort by providing their wards with necessary educational materials.

Primary school curriculum must be rationalized to meet community/local aspirations while it must also meet the demands of contemporary society at large. The professionalization of teaching service must be justified in terms of the quality of the professionals. Consequently, the welfare of primary school teachers must go beyond mere salary increases. Terms of service must be attractive enough to retain the best brains, especially in the rural areas.

Government's intervention at the pre-school level has until recently been too limited. The situation effectively restricted access to the relatively few who could afford the fees. A wider development of pre-primary units in public primary schools is considered appropriate in view of the cost effectiveness of the arrangement. Arrangement for training of specialist teacher Early Child Care and Education and subsequent professionalization of same is imperative and must be so treated.

Community involvement in managing community primary schools should be revived and greatly encouraged not only in terms of financial inputs, but also in their participation in assisting the schools to maintain discipline. Funds for implementing free education is crucial. All stakeholders must be mobilized in order to raise specified proportions of money required. Government must make effort to attain the UNESCO recommended 26.0% budget allocation to education. Alternatively, the percentage should be increased substantially. A review of the revenue allocation formula in a more progressive manner as to favour the states and local governments with emphasis on meeting the UNESCO budgetary allocation to education must be seriously examined. Mechanism should also be devised to improve the accuracy and promptness of publication of necessary planning statistics such as census data and annual statistics of education.

References

- Akinbote, O., E. O. Oduolowu and B. Lawal 2001. *Pre Primary and Primary Education in Nigeria: A Basic Text*. Ibadan: Stirling Horden Publishers.
- Durkheim, E., 1977. *The evolution of educational thought lectures on the formation and development of secondary education in France, 1938*; translated by Collins, P., London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Federal Ministry of Education 2003. *Education Sector Status Report*.
- FGN/UNICEF/UNESCO/UNDP 2000. *Comprehensive Education Analysis Project, Secondary Date Report*.
- Obanya, Pai 2004. *Educating for the Knowledge Economy*. Ibadan: Mosuro Publishers.
- Obidi, S. S. 1997. "Indigenous Education in Yoruba Society: The Teaching of Yoruba Language and Oral Literature". *Ife Journal of Educational Studies*, 4(10) June 1-8

- Ola-Alani, E. K. 2000. "The Attitude of Teachers and Parents Towards Government Involvement in Pre-School Education in Oyo State". Unpublished B.A. Project, Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
- Ola-Alani, E. K. 2012. Historical Analysis of Changing Trends in Public Primary Education in South Western Nigeria 1976-2005. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Faculty of Education University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
- Osokoya, I. O., 1987. 6-3-3-4 Education in Nigeria: History, Strategies, Issues and Problems. Ibadan: Laurel Educational Publishers.
- Pritchett, L. 2001. "Where Has All the Education Gone?" *The World Bank Economic Review*, 15(3), 367-391.
- Simmons, J. 1997. "Education for Development, Reconsidered". *World Development*, 7, 1005-1016
- Tahir, Gidado 2003. Basic Education in Nigeria. Ibadan: Stirling-Hordan Publishers.
- Tamuno, T. N. and J. A. Atanda (Eds) 1989. Nigeria Since Independence: The First 25 years, Vol. III: Education. Ibadan: Heinemann.
- Uchendu, P. K. 1993. Perspectives in Nigerian Education. Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension.
- UNICEF/FGN 1993 Situation and Policy Analysis of Basic Education in Nigeria, National Report FME. Lagos.
- Yoloye, E.A. 1994. "Primary Education" in Akinkungbe O. O. (Ed.) Nigeria and Education: The Challenges Ahead. Proceedings and Policy Recommendations of the 2nd Obafemi Awolowo Foundation Dialogue. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd.

ISSN 1596-5953



Printed At
Badian University Printery