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JOINT SCHOOL SECTION PRACTICE OF PRIVATE SCHOOL UNDER UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION: A THREAT TO ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

This study examined the threat pose by schools operating a joint section under UBE to academic activities of both the pupils and students. The research method adopted for this study is the qualitative descriptive design of survey type. Upper basic school I, II, and III students of 15 purposively selected schools operating joint section Universal Basic Education System in Ilorin metropolis were selected for the study. Researchers-designed structured interviews with content validity and 0.77 reliability index of the instrument was the only instrument used to elicit the needed data from the respondents. The findings of the study revealed that: upper basic school students were seriously distracted the students it is meant to cater for in many ways. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that; the same time should be allocated to both sections for both school activities since they use the same compound to decrease distraction and confusion of the students or better still, sections should be structured in different locations to reduce overpopulation in the compound thereby making teaching and learning more effective.

Keyword: Double, Joint system, Lower, Middle, Upper basic and School activities

Introduction

The National Policy on Education (NPE) was developed to eradicate illiteracy at all levels of human existence and provide affordable education for all Nigerians irrespective of class, religion, ethnic origin or physical appearances. The policy was driven by a desire to eradicate poverty, increase indices of

National Developments, increase political consciousness and encourage issues of National Integration. These basic objectives of the National Policy have not been realized. In pursuance of the aforementioned objectives of the National Policy, the Federal Government under the Federal Ministry of Education have from time to

time introduced different educational reform programmes with the hope of realizing their objectives. One such programme for educational reform is the Universal Basic Education.

According to Yoloye (2004), the concept of Basic Education is not a relatively new concept to the Nigerian Educational System. Within the last decade, it has assumed global significance and its meaning has assumed a wider dimension. The expanded vision of Universal Basic Education (UBE) comprises the universalizing of access and promotion of equity, focusing on learning and enhancing the environment of learning and strengthening partnerships. The Universal Basic Education Act of 2004 represents a significant educational reform that addressed the lapses and loopholes of the Universal Primary Education (UPE).

Universal Basic Education formulated to be the bedrock of lifelong learning that will impact reading, writing, and acquisition of the other relevant skills for sustenance and development. This education comprises of formal and non-formal acquisition of basic skills. The objectives of Universal Basic Education (UBE) include the following:

0. Provision of free and compulsory education for the first 9 years or level of education beginning from the primary to the junior secondary schools.

1. The sanction for parents who fail to send their children to school.
2. For the policy to succeed, there should be public enlightenment, social mobilization, students recruitment and training, provision of infrastructural facilities, review of the then existing curriculum, adequate budgetary provision and Basic Education and skills acquisition programmes

Since 2004, efforts made to implement the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme has not been without some difficulties and challenges. In recent times, the Universal Basic Education Act has been reformed to emphasize 9 basic compulsory education for all. This means that the first 3 years of a child will be spent in the Lower basic, the second 3 years in the Middle basic school (primary 3-6) while the last 3 years will be spent in the upper basic school (junior secondary 1-3). The upper basic schools have been merged with the lower and middle basic schools to make up the 9 years of compulsory continuous education. It is hoped that this will consolidate the objectives of the 9 years of Basic Education.

Issues have continued to arise around the workability of the Universal Basic Education Act in the organization, maintenance, and structure of schools in the nation. However, dividing schools into the lower, middle and

upper basic tends to constitute a very serious challenge to head-teachers and proprietors. This is because most school owners do not want to release their pupils to other proprietors or school owners immediately after the completion of their six years (lower and middle basic) in school. Also, the popular demand by most parents of these children prompted most school owners to operate the two systems in the same compound for two main reasons. One either to cater to the needs of the parents or secondly to manage their available physical and human resources.

This is what is referred to as double-systems schooling, it is a system of schooling whereby the school provides education for two different categories of the school-age population in the same compound of the school day (London, 1993). This system of schooling is a characteristic of developing countries where human and material resources are very scarce and where finance for the education sector is very limited (Bray, 2008). Many developing countries Nigeria inclusive adopted the policy to cater to the increasing enrolment in schools resulting from educational policies geared towards improving access to education, such as the abolition of school fees in public schools in many African countries. Policymakers also adopted the policy so that schools could use the existing and very scarce educational facilities such as classrooms,

playgrounds, sporting facilities, and library, among others, to cater to both pupils at the lower and middle as well as the students at the upper basic section. It is also a school system whereby the same subject teachers of particular subjects teach across the section. A civic education teacher in the middle basic is also the social studies teacher in the upper basic class. In all developing countries introducing this system, policymakers adopted it initially as a temporary measure because of financial constraints, but it tended to become permanent policy for addressing resource constraints on access to public schools

However, having these two categories together in the same compound might have some influence on the pupils and students in questions, either positively or otherwise. It is on this basis that the researchers investigated from the students (that is upper basic) that are attending this type of schooling system to know whether having these two categories together has any influence on their academic activities?

Purpose of the Study

The study assessed the threat which joint school section practice of private school under universal basic education poses students to academic activities in the school. Specifically, the study examines;

1. Upper basic Students' assessment of the threat which joint school

section under Universal Basic Education possessed

2. Students' assessment of how the school operating system under Universal Basic Education affects the academic activities of pupils.

Research Questions

- 1 What is the students' assessment of the challenges facing the school operating system under Universal Basic Education?
- 2 What is the students' assessment of how the School Operating System under Universal Basic Education influences the school academic activities?

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative form of descriptive design, with a target population of private school operating joint school system of UBE. 321 private schools are operating a joint school system in Ilorin metropolis. Upper Basic School one, two and three students of 15 out of 312 private schools operating Universal Basic Education System in Ilorin metropolis were purposively sampled for the study. A simple random sampling technique was used to sample 1,176 respondents out of with a total population of 4,281 in 15 purposively sampled private Basic schools in Ilorin metropolis. This is in line with the research advisor (2006) who maintained that the appropriate

sample for a population of 5000-7500 at a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error 2.5% is 1,176.

A 10 items researcher's designed structured interview with content validity and 0.77 reliability index of 0.71 was the instrument used to elicit the needed data from the respondents. The researcher visited the schools during the school hours to interview the respondents.

Results

1. Only 948 out of the total of 1,176 respondents from the sampled schools had younger ones in the lower section of their schools. This represented 80.6% of the sample while 19.4% did not have younger ones. This is an indication that many of these students have younger once that will need their attention at one time or the other even despite the difference in their timetable and programmes.
2. Only 12.3% of those students with younger ones in the lower basic section stated that their younger ones did not come to their class during break time while the remaining 68.3% showed that their younger ones came to them during break time thereby constituting distraction to them in class.
3. Closing times for both lower and upper basic differs which poses

challenges in terms of distraction to the upper basic. They all confirm the fact that the lower and middle basic classes much earlier than the upper basic and since most of them have younger ones in the school. These younger ones move round to play and check on their senior siblings who are still in class attending to the lesson. In most cases, the last subjects slated lastly on the class timetable suffer low concentration from the students. More so, most parents of those students with siblings don't come to pick them up until the school closes for all the sections. This gives the pupils that close early ample opportunity to play around the school while waiting for their senior siblings.

4. Ninety-six percent of the total respondents testify to the fact that the school bell indicating a change of lesson from the lower section always constitutes a serious distraction to them. Most at times teachers leave their classes before the expiration of their official time due to distraction from the sound of the bell for change of lesson. This was the case in 60% (9 schools)of the private sampled.
5. Sporting of the lower and middle basic classes is always on Wednesdays' on the school calendar while upper basic classes

are on Thursdays' respondents see this variation in the sporting activities as a distraction, they always felt attracted to the sporting activities and lost focus in class.

6. Usage of some school facilities like the library, computer room, laboratory both for Science and home economics were shared by the two sections. This was the comment of the student, that at times the two sections cannot be made use of the facilities at the same time.
7. A sum of 925 respondents affirms the fact that combining both sections of the school system in the same compound with the same school gate, the same facilities constitute a serious distraction and a threat to concentration in the class.

Discussion

Findings from the study revealed that students in the upper basic under the universal basic education in substantial numbers had younger ones in the middle as well as lower basic sections of their school. This implied that the younger of these students would always have one or two businesses with their elders ones during their break period. Just like the common practice that most parents have, once a parent is having more than a child in a school, it is obvious that the

eldest once are always saddled with the responsibility of taking care of their younger ones, including attention even before break period among others.

The break period of these two categories of schools is usually not the same, therefore, 68.3% of the respondents attested to the fact that their younger once always showed up in their classes or waited at their classroom windows to make their request especially when the lesson was ongoing. This act they complained caused a distraction to them.

A meaningful sum of the respondents also attested to the fact that they got distracted in the middle of an interesting lesson when they heard the sound of a bell. At first, they will think the lesson had come to an end. After some time they would realize that it was not theirs, so they could continue with their lesson. This caused the loss of attention and concentration to the majority of these students.

Also during the lower level extracurricular activities like games and sports, they experienced a lot of distraction of attention and mindset. They felt very disturbed; this became possible because, in most private schools in Kwara State, the early hours of Wednesdays are always dedicated to sport most especially at the middle and lower basic school level. This seriously distracted students' attention in class and lesson. They disclosed that they were attracted to the sporting activities going on outside the class and lost focus

in class. As for the upper basic students, their sports days are always on Thursdays. This is an indication that during the upper basic students' sporting period, the lower and middle basic students would experience the same thing.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The result of the study showed that the school operating joint system under the universal basic education, (the six years of lower and middle basic and three years of upper basic) in the same compound affected the students it is meant to cater for in many ways. The distraction of those who had their younger ones as well as those who did not have in the other section of the school, when their younger ones came to their class during lesson periods, due to the difference in the period allocation to the daily activities of each section. Given this study, the following recommendations were hereby made:

- a. The same period should be allocated to both sections since they use the same compound to reduce the level of distraction and confusion in the school.
- b. The sporting activities should be scheduled for the same day and period to mitigate disturbance and lack of concentration of those who will be in class when others are outside in the compound playing.

- c. The structures of the two sections should be sited in different locations to make teaching and learning conducive and in a well planned. This will eradicate distractions and confusion of the students as well as reduce overpopulation in the compound.

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