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Constraints on Access to Basic Education for Out-of-School Children in Anambra State

Dr. Gladys Uzochina

Lecturer, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus, Nigeria

Abstract:

The study was undertaken to investigate access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State. The purpose of the study was to investigate factors that constrain access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State of Nigeria. Three research questions were posed for the study. Two null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 14611 respondents made up of teachers and Parents Teachers Association (PTA) chairmen and secretaries of all the schools under study. Out of this number, 1,530 respondents were sampled and used for the study. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. Out of 1,530 copies of questionnaire given out, 1510 copies were returned duly completed and this represented 98.7% return rate. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions and t-test statistic for the hypotheses. The result of the analysis showed that government policies, funding and community factors constituted major constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State. The study revealed no significant differences in the mean responses of teachers and PTA on fund and community related constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State. Based on these findings the study recommended among others that government should improve the funding of basic education programme in the State to encourage and woo out-of-school children back to school.

1. Introduction

Education is a potent force for all round development of an individual and a nation. Without education, efforts towards sustainable development will be completely void. Education provides the base for the preparation of an individual to face the realities of life and to work towards being useful to himself and the society. The important and indispensable roles of education in the individual and societal development could explain why the Federal Republic of Nigeria (F.R.N 2004) states that education is an instrument par excellence for affecting national development. FRN (2004) further maintained that for the benefit of all citizens, the country's educational goals shall be clearly set out in terms of their relevance to the needs of the individual and those of the society for all round development.

The recognition that education is the key that opens every door of development has made countries of the world to strive hard at making qualitative education accessible to all irrespective of sex, age and physical challenges. The 1948 United Nation's declaration of human rights which emphasized that education is a basic right of every citizen and international conferences on education for instance: the 1990 Jomtien declaration and framework for action on education, the New Delhi 1991 declaration of the E.9 countries of Brazil, Egypt, Bangladesh, Mexico, India, China, Nigeria, Pakistan and Indonesia (countries with highest number of illiterates), the Amman 1996 Affirmation of the pursuit of the goals of Jomtien, the Durban 1998 state of commitment on inter-African collaboration for development of education, the Dakar 2000 recommendations on the pursuit of the Jomtien goals, all signify affirmations and commitments which emphasize access to education for all at international levels (Obanya, 2002). Nigeria as a signatory to all these international declarations have shown serious commitment to making education particularly basic education accessible to all. According to Alumode (2010), in 1955, 1957 and 1976, Universal Primary Education (UBE) programmes by the Western, Eastern Regions and the Federal Republic of Nigeria respectively, the free education programme of the UPN (1979-1983) and the current Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme launched in 1999 are all national initiatives aimed at achieving access to basic education which is sinquanon to the eradication of illiteracy.

Although the world in general, Nigeria and Anambra state in particular have made significant strides in improving access to basic education, a lot of concern in this direction still persists. For instance, by the latest UNESCO (2011) data, 57 million children lack classroom access worldwide. Nigeria being a country with a large population is noted as having 10.542 million children lacking access to school. It stands to reason that out of this number, a significant percentage is from Anambra State because of her educationally disadvantaged position (Ocho, 2007). Recent studies by the National Agency for Protection Against trafficking in persons (NAPTIP)

lend credence to the assertion above. NAPTIP (2012) revealed that Anambra state accounts for a whopping 75% of the total number of children involved in hawking and child slavery in the South-East region of Nigeria. NAPTIP (2012) report further proved that there is high incidence of child abuse in Anambra State. Most parents do not send their children to school instead, they send them to beg, hawk items, work in quarries and rice mills and as house helps in many cities across the country.

The situation in Anambra State is particularly alarming considering the fact that she was among the first states that keyed into the UBE programme immediately after its launch in 1999. The acclaimed premium importance which the past and present civilian administrations in Anambra state placed on education makes the situation even more worrisome. However, there is no gain saying the fact that Anambra State government has tried in her efforts to ensure that Anambra children of school going age have unhindered access to basic education. But in spite of her efforts, there seems to be some factors limiting access to basic education particularly for out of school children in Anambra State. This study is therefore inspired by the need to find out factors that hinder access to basic education for out of school children in Anambra State.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Anambra State is among the states of the federation that keyed into the Universal Basic Education programme immediately it was launched in 1999 in Nigeria. But despite the much orchestrated implementation of the programme, observation shows that in the major cities of Anambra namely – Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi, children of school going age are seen in the streets hawking during school hours and youths who are supposed to be in schools are seen as shop attendants. By this scenario it seems that EFA goals are being negated in Anambra state and this quite worrisome. It is therefore the problem of this study to find out factors that constrain access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to investigate access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State. Specifically the study aimed at finding:

- i. government related constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State
- ii. fund related constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State.
- iii. community related constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State.

1.3. Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are government related constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State?
2. What are fund related constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State?
3. What are community related constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State?

1.4. Hypotheses

The study was guided by two null hypotheses formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- HO₁: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of teachers and PTA on fund related constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State.
- HO₂: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of teachers and PTA on community related constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State.

2. Method

This study was conducted in Anambra State. The study employed a descriptive survey design. This design was considered appropriate because the study did not require the manipulation of any variable as there was already existing data for the study. The population of the study consisted of UBE teachers and Parents of the students who are members of Parents Teachers Association (PTA) but are not teachers in the schools. The total population was 14,611. Stratified and multistage sampling techniques were used to select the sample size of the study which was 1530 teachers and PTA chairman and secretaries of all the sampled schools.

The instrument for data collection was researchers' designed questionnaire titled: Constraints on Access to Basic Education for Out-of-School Children (CMABESCQ). The instrument was developed to elicit responses from the respondents for the purpose of data collection. The instrument was made up of two sections A and B. Section A sought information on the personal data of the respondents while section B contained item statements that answered the research questions. The instrument was rated on a 4 point scale type of Strongly Agree SA (4), Agree A (3), Disagree D (2) and Strongly Disagree SD (1). The face and content validity of the instrument was assured by three experts – two from Educational Foundations Department and one from Science Education Department all of Anambra State University, Uli. The instrument reliability was established using Covariance Matrix and the analysis yielded a coefficient index of 0.78 which was adjudged high enough to enable the continuation of the study. The researcher employed the assistance of 10 research assistants. These assistants were trained by the researcher on the mode of administration and collection of the instrument. However the researcher remained the overall supervisors. Out of the 1,530 questionnaires distributed, 1,510 were returned duly completed and this represented 98.7% return rate. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions while t-test statistic was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule was that any mean value that was 2.50 and above was accepted while those that fell below 2.50 were rejected for interpretation.

3. Presentation and Analysis of Data

In this chapter, the data collected from field for answering research questions and testing hypotheses are presented in tables to highlight the findings of the study.

3.1. Research Question 1

What are government related constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State?

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
1.	The nature of government policies on UBE programmes is ambiguous	226	231	550	503	2.11	Not accepted
2.	There is insincerity on the part of government officials in the implementation of UBE programme.	130	371	261	748	1.92	Not accepted
3.	Lack of political will on the part of government to enforce UBE laws.	729	417	292	72	3.19	Accepted
4.	Inadequate provision of infrastructural facilities	811	460	148	91	3.31	Accepted
5.	Inadequacy of information on existing programmes	642	555	231	82	3.16	Accepted
6.	Lack of food in schools	491	593	304	122	2.96	Accepted
7.	Inadequacy of learning materials	365	606	347	192	2.75	Accepted
8.	Lack of allowances in schools.	387	563	167	393	2.62	Accepted
	Grand mean					2.75	Accepted

Table 1: Government-related Constraints on Access to UBE

Results in table 1 showed that each of the items 1 and 2 obtained mean values below 2.50 which was the criterion mean set for the study. While items 3, 4, 5, 6 7 and 8 each obtained mean values above 2.50. With a grand mean of 2.75, it implies that the respondents agreed that the above factors which are government related factors constitute constraints on access to basic education for out of school children in Anambra State.

3.2. Research Question 2

What are fund related constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State?

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
9.	Funds are not provided for basic education programmes in Anambra State.	219	89	670	532	2.00	Not accepted
10.	Funds provided for basic education programme is grossly inadequate	350	620	320	220	2.73	Accepted
11.	Funds allocated to the basic education programme are not released on time.	468	522	422	98	2.90	Accepted
12.	Funds meant for the basic education programme are mismanaged	640	501	321	48	3.14	Accepted
13.	Funds meant for the basic education programme are misappropriated	453	434	603	20	2.87	Accepted
14.	Funds meant for the basic education programme are diverted	324	287	499	400	2.35	Not Accepted
	Grand mean					2.67	Accepted

Table 2: Fund-related Constraints on Access to UBE

Result in table 2 showed that items no 9 and 14 obtained mean values lower than the criterion mean of 2.50 set for the study showing that the respondents refused that funds are not provided for basic education programme in Anambra State and that funds provided for basic education programme are diverted. However, items 10, 11, 12 and 13 obtained mean values above 2.50 the criterion mean set for the study. With a grand mean of 2.69, it implied that the above factors constitute fund related constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State.

3.3. Research Question 3

What are community related constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State?

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
15.	Negative attitude towards education by the community	230	324	614	142	2.69	Accepted
16.	Gender discrimination by parents	312	643	300	255	2.67	Accepted
17.	High incidence of poverty in the families	596	563	138	213	3.02	Accepted
18.	Insecurity in areas around the school	110	85	609	706	1.73	Not Accepted
19.	Cultural barriers	532	552	208	218	2.92	Accepted
20.	High expectation on the male child to be rich.	481	706	211	112	3.03	Accepted
	Grand mean					2.67	Accepted

Table 3: Community-related Constraints on Access to UBE

Result in table 3 above showed that beside item 18 that obtained mean value of 1.73 which is far below the criterion mean set for the study, all the other items 15, 16, 17, 19 and 20 obtained mean values above the set mean. The grand mean of 2.67, obtained implied that the above factors are accepted by the respondents as community related constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State.

- HO_1 : There is no significant difference in the mean responses of teachers and PTA on fund related constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State.

Variable	No	X	S.D	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
PTA	180	0.92	0.26	1508	0.22	1.96	
Teachers	1330	0.93	0.24				

Table 4: Mean Ratings on Government-related Constraints on Access to UBE
Not significant at $P < 0.05$

Result in table 4 above shows that the calculated t-value of 0.22 is less than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance with a degree of freedom of 1508, (i.e. $0.22 < 1.960$). This null hypothesis HO_1 is not rejected. This implies that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of teachers and Parents Teachers Association (PTA) on fund related constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State.

- HO_2 : There is no significant difference in the mean responses of teachers and PTA on community related constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State.

Variable	No	X	S.D	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
PTA	180	0.94	0.29	1508	0.12	1.96	
Teachers	1330	0.84	0.28				

Table 5: Mean Ratings on Community-related Constraints on Access to UBE
Not significant at $P < 0.05$

The result in table 5 shows that the calculated t-value of 0.12 is less than the t-critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance with a degree of freedom of 1508 (i.e. $0.12 < 1.960$). This null hypothesis HO_2 is not rejected. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of teachers and PTA on community related constraints on access to basic education for out of school children in Anambra State.

3.4. Summary of Findings

The findings of the study are hereby summarized thus:

1. Government related factors constitute constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State.
2. Fund related factors constitute constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State.
3. Community related factors constrain access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State.
4. The study revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of teachers and PTA on fund related constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State.
5. The study revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of teachers and PTA on community related constraints on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State.

4. Discussion of the Findings

4.1. Research Question 1

Results of the study in table 1 showed that the respondents disagreed that the nature of government policies on UBE is ambiguous and that there is insincerity on the part of government officials in the implementation of UBE programme, but however, accepted that there is lack of political will on the part of government officials in the implementation of UBE laws. This finding agreed with NAPTIP's (2012) report that many Anambra children of school going age are seen during school hours hawking in the major streets, working in quarry and rice mills. This finding is very plausible because if parents and guardians of these children have been fined or punished as stated in the UBE laws, the rate of indulgence in such acts would have greatly reduced. The other findings that there is inadequacy of infrastructural facilities, inadequacy of information on existing programmes, lack of food in schools, inadequacy of learning materials and lack of allowances in schools all support the earlier views of Aibunomo (2008) that government actions make or mar educational programmes implementation. Government is a major stakeholder in the provision of education in Nigeria. It is therefore not surprising that the above government related constraints militate against access to basic education for out of school children in Anambra State.

4.2. Research Question 2

Results of the study in table 2 showed that items 9 and 14 were rejected by the respondents as fund related constraints because their mean values were below 2.50, the set mean for the study. This finding that funds are provided and that funds provided are not diverted truly gives hope that creating access to basic education for out of school children in Anambra State will be a reality because fund is the

livewire of any venture including education. Availability of fund will help in planning and implementation of programmes and policies. But the fund related problems of inadequacy, late release of fund, mismanagement and misappropriation of fund as found by the study constitute a major challenge on access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State. This finding strongly aligns with Ocho's (2005) report that poor funding pose serious challenge to the UBE programme in creating real access to basic education in Enugu State. Eze (2009) described fund as the lubricant of the education industry machinery. Without adequate funding little or nothing can be achieved in making basic education accessible especially for out-of-school children in Anambra State.

4.3. Research Question 3

Results in table 3 showed that it was only item no 18 which dealt on insecurity around the school that was rejected by the respondents as a community related problem on access to basic education. This finding is good because in this period that Nigeria is challenged by insecurity in most states of the federation particularly the Northern part of the country. This finding that children go to school freely without fear of harm makes it quite interesting because it is a soothing balm. This finding unlike Migosi, Nanok, Ombuki, and Melek (2012) finding that insecurity in areas around the school constitute hindrance to pupil's access and participation in primary school education in Kukuma and Lokidchoggio, Turkana county in Kenya is very interesting. The results of the study further showed that: Negative attitude to education, gender discrimination by parents, high incidence of poverty cultural barriers and high expectation on the male child to be rich constitute community related problems in access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State. These factors obtained mean values above 2.50 the criterion mean set for the study. This finding is supported by earlier separate studies by Offorma (2009) UNESCO (2011) and NAPTIP (2012). Offorma (2009) reported that too much expectation on the male child to get rich has pushed the male to leave school for apprenticeship works and other petty trading businesses. UNESCO (2011) found that high rate of illiteracy is responsible for low access to education in Nigeria. NAPTIP (2012) reported that high incidence of poverty in Anambra State is responsible for parents abuse of their children through child labour. The finding of this study is very plausible because Anambra State is one of the educationally backward states. The people of Anambra State are predominantly illiterate farmers and their understanding of the importance of education is still very low.

4.4. Null Hypothesis 1 (H_{01})

Result of the study on table 4 showed that the null hypothesis was not rejected. This was so because the t-calculated value of 0.22 was less than the t-critical value of 1.96. This is an indication that both the teachers and PTA have the same view in their responses to the items on fund related constraints. By implication, fund is a constraint to access to basic education. If government don't provide adequate funding of the UBE programme, out-of-school children's coming back to school may remain a pipe dream.

4.5. Null Hypothesis 2 (H_{02})

Result of the study on table 5 showed that the null hypothesis was not rejected. The non-rejection of the hypothesis was due to the fact that the t-calculated value of 0.12 was less than the t-critical value of 1.96. This indicated that both teachers and PTA did not differ in their responses to the items on community related factors as constraints to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State. The implication of this finding is that poverty is not alleviated in the lives of the members of the communities in Anambra State, bringing back out-of-school children to school will be very difficult.

4.6. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of data for this study, the researchers concluded that access to basic education for out-of-school children in Anambra State is constrained by the following factors: government, fund and constraint. These factors need to be urgently addressed to make the dream of ETA in Anambra State come true.

4.7. Recommendations

Based on the findings, analysis and discussion that followed, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should improve the funding of basic education programme in Anambra State.
2. Government should ensure that UBE laws are implemented to the letter.
3. Government should ban street hawking for school aged children and also apprenticeship of children who have not finished their basic education programme.
4. Government should ensure that information on existing UBE programmes are readily available to all the nooks and crannies of the communities that make up the state.
5. Government at the Local Government Areas should intensify awareness campaign to the hinterland on the importance of education to individual and societal development.
6. Government should put in place deliberate efforts to address the issue of high incidence of poverty among the people of Anambra State.
7. Government should introduce such incentives as launch breaks and allowances in schools as this will induce out-of-school children back to school.
8. Parents should be encouraged to treat all their children equally and avoid discrimination in all its ramifications.

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