



Assessing the Extent of Public Education Policies and Rural Educational Development: A Study of Sagbama Local Government Area of Bayelsa State

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Abstract

This study investigates the extent of Public Education policies and rural educational development: A study of Sagbama Local Government area of Bayelsa State. The poor state of the rural schools and their challenges accompanied by unfavorable government education policies towards the rural areas was the sole purpose that provoked this study. Three research questions guided the conduct of the study a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts in psychology, measurement and evaluation and Economics of education. Test for reliability was conducted to ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument and a coefficient of 0.77 was realized using Cronbach Alpha. The urban bias theory was adopted for the study. The study made use of an exploratory and survey design. A Population of 225 was sampled for the study. The mean and standard deviation were used for the data analysis. The study revealed that Government Educational policies are not geared towards the development of the rural education sector as almost all the rural human and materials education resources are poor and unattended to. The study recommended an urgent need for special educational policy to be formulated for the development of the rural schools.

Keywords: Education, Education Policies, Rural Education, Educational Development, Rural School.

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INTRODUCTION

The problems of education in Nigeria is perceived to be general, it is said to be more severe in the rural areas. Anyaebu (2015) noted some of these challenges as; Lack of zeal and interest by teachers due to poor and delayed salary and poor condition of work, Frequent strike action by teachers, Lack of curricular and other materials such as textbooks, libraries, instructional materials and at times classrooms, desk and chairs. According to Dike (2016), about 2000 (mostly primary) schools existing in the rural areas in Nigeria are said to have no classrooms, lessons are received under trees or (thatched houses). Instability of the government institutions and infrastructure that is transportation, communications, and utilities. Many primary schools in the rural areas are not even connected to the power supply grid and are therefore unable to take advantage of new development in educational technologies. Low community participation in education planning and policy implementation.

Due to this situation and personal reasons, many teachers reject posting into rural areas while those that do not, treat their presence in such areas as a part time assignment. Yet, effectively educating the rural population that make up over 60% of the country is a necessary precondition for national development. Education is one of the key strategies for rural development since it propels that development of desirable attitudes that are favorable to change and for technical progress. Anyeabu (2015) thus opined that rural education is key to rural development and an essential building block of national development; that poverty cannot be eradicated without eliminating illiteracy among the rural populace and without finding a systematic way to raise their level of knowledge. According to Olayide (cited in Fabunmi 2016), there is the general consensus that the rate of agricultural development and rural transformation is directly related to the educational standard of the rural communities. Such rural education programmes will widen the rural populace's horizon and predispose them to greater receptivity of new ideas.

The need thus arises for appropriate reforms and policies to address pertinent issues affecting the development of our educational system especially as it concerns education in the rural areas. Noting this need for reform, the World Bank (2006) asserted that; „over time, as the political economy of the country worsened, much of the educational system of Nigeria appeared to stagnate and, during some periods, contract. Teachers have few materials with which to complement their skills, and there is no produce and distribution of additional materials”. It is on the above problems that this research work is being carried out to look at the situation in Bayelsa state using rural schools in Sagbama local government area as our focal point of study.

There are various forms of formal educational facilities in rural Nigeria. These include (a) informal out-of-school education offered to rural families by experts in agriculture, home economics, health, small-scale industries, etc. This type of education is often known as extension education. (b) Semi-formal literacy education organized for adults who had no opportunity to acquire formal education at earlier age. This is known as adult education. (c) Formal education offered at the primary and secondary levels to rural children and adolescents. At the primary level, two main types of education can be identified in Nigeria. These are the western type of education and the koranic type of education with the later being more prevalent in the Moslem areas of the country. Since Nigeria had grown up under the influence of the western world, there has been the tendency for people to underrate Koranic education generally. Thus for instance, 4 years of western education is equated with 15 years of koranic education. Until recently, most parts of rural northern Nigeria had only koranic schools whereas western-type schools have always predominated in the south Aghenta (2006). Furthermore, Abidogun (2014) pointed out

that Primary school education in Nigeria can be obtained in western-type schools or in koranic schools. Nearly all villages in the present day Nigeria has a western-type primary school as a result of the Federal Government's Universal Free Primary Education Scheme instituted in 1976 and the UBE in year 2000. This consists of a graded system of education which starts with the teaching of basic literacy at the lower primary levels (1-2) to the teaching of other specialized subjects like history, geography, civics, integrated science etc. Nigeria prepares the pupils for entry into post-primary institutions. Those who cannot enter post primary schools drop out and either learn some trade, migrate to urban areas in search of jobs, or remain on the farms. The inability to go on to the secondary schools in most states is free paying and is often located outside the village. Although there is no reliable statistics to show the drop-out rate from rural primary schools, it is estimated that in the southern part of the country this may be 40 per cent while in the northern part of the country it might be up to 60 per cent. In the north however, drop out is not mainly a direct result of inability of parents to pay school fees since generous scholarships are often available for those who want to go beyond the primary school level, but a reflection of the lingering resistance of some rural parents against westernization. Also rural Fulani children particularly, assist their parents to herd cattle right from the age of 7. This fact coupled with the unsettled nature of their lifestyle account for the unwillingness of parents to encourage their children to remain in school to the extent that in 1977, the Governors of some states in the northern part of Nigeria had to issue threats on parents who withdraw their children from school. Nomadic education system was introduced in Nigeria in the late 80's to afford Cow Fulani children in the north and riverine area dwelling children in the south the opportunity and facilities to have some basic literacy Ijaduola (2002). Koranic schools are found mainly in the northern part of Nigeria and some Muslim areas of the south. Generally, the school holds either in Mosques, private homes of the teachers or in open spaces under tree sheds. It might have 10 to 40 pupils and is strictly privately owned and run by the teacher (Umma). The instruction itself consists mainly in memorizing verses of the Koran, learning Arabic alphabets, reading and writing Arabic. Usually, the pupils can memorize verses of the Koran and can write Arabic, they hardly understand the meaning of what they are reciting at the primary stage of the curriculum. Also, when the child is old enough to go and learn a trade, the hours of schooling are reduced and afternoon sessions cancelled. The teacher charges small fees at regular intervals and also receives gifts such as grains, meat, and food, pieces of cloth or prayer mat and free labour from his pupils. Although steps have been taken to upgrade Islamic education in the country generally, the Koranic schools in rural areas are not controlled by the Ministry of Education (Adamu, 2014).

In the south, efforts have been made to retrain some of the Islamic teaches so that they can incorporate subjects like English and Arithmetic in their curriculum. However, since the country uses western standards, koranic school education is hardly recognized as useful beyond the Moslem community. Still, Okoh (2002:14) stated that, generally, pupils attend primary schools from home hence the distance of school from home may also affect attendance. Moreso, he stressed that according to a 1981 Rural Infrastructures Report in Nigeria by Idachaba, there are great variations from state to state and rural to urban area within states with respect to the number of primary schools, proportion of trained teachers, size of class per trained teacher and average walking distance to school.

Secondary School is the intermediate step on the educational pyramid in Nigeria. Although they offer a variety of subjects they are not structured to train pupils in specific skills but to prepare them for entry into higher institutions of learning. Most secondary schools in

southern Nigeria were originally founded and run by Christian missions, other voluntary agencies and private proprietors hence they were often located close to rural areas. On the contrary, most secondary schools in the northern parts of the country were government owned and were located in urban centres (Adamu (2014)). On the whole while the UBE schemes are aimed at eliminating illiteracy in the country eventually, rural Nigeria is still largely populated by people with very low levels of education. Studies involving farmers from different parts of the country consistently show that an average of about 60 per cent is non-literate. This proportion is even higher for women. In addition, as noted by Adewole (2015:64), literate children do not tend to affect the general level of education in rural areas as these invariably migrate to towns thereby leaving the proportion of non-literate persons almost unchanged over the years.

In a similar vein, Arikewugo (2016:32) opined that the structure of primary and secondary education in Nigeria has consistently betrayed the unnamed objective of selecting the best from the rural areas to join the elite class in urban area after these must have gone through the university which is so far the apex of the Nigerian educational pyramid. Historical antecedents have impact on how educational policies are formulated and implemented in Nigeria. The Lagos Colony, Southern and Northern protectorates were British colonies, which were amalgamated in 1914 and named Nigeria. The territory remained a British colony till 1960 when it attained independence. The colonial administrators introduced an indirect rule policy. Indirect rule was an administrative system, which Lord Lugard introduced into Nigeria. It was a system of administration in which the tutelary power recognized the existing traditional administrative structure, and used such for the administration of the Lagos Colony, and the Southern and Northern Protectorates. The indirect rule policy recognized the Islamic education in the Northern Protectorate; hence the Christian missionaries were restricted from spreading both Christianity and Western education to the region. This accounts for the gap in the level of educational development between the North and the South. This has a lot of implications for the planning of education in Nigeria. Of recent, the Federal Government has put in place several educational policies (such as the quota admission, the educationally disadvantaged and less disadvantaged areas policies etc.) with a view to reduce the gap in North-South level of educational development, Lawal (2016).

The colonial administrators adopted British form of education in Nigeria, hence the following school systems: primary, secondary, sixth form and higher education were introduced. Consequent upon the attainment of independence, it was discovered that this system of education did not meet the aspiration of Nigerians; hence the current 6-3-3-4 educational policy was introduced in 1977. The policy sought to introduce a functional technology-based education, which could sustain the economy. The colonial administrators administered education through the use of certain education ordinances and education codes, such as the 1882, 1887, 1916, 1926, 1946 and 1926 Education codes, (Ijaluola, Ogunu, 2015). These codes and ordinances were used as guidelines to administer education in the colony. They served as the basis for the modern day educational policies, education laws and techniques of educational administration in Nigeria. The Macpherson Constitution of 1951 put education in a concurrent list; hence both the central and regional governments could legislate on education. This has a lot of impact on the present arrangement. There are thirty-six state governments and the federal government in Nigeria, each of which could legislate on education.

Theoretically, the Urban Bias Theory by Michael Lipton was adopted in this study. According to Lipton, urban bias was evident in the provision of education and health-care resource and in the broader geography of public spending decisions. As he puts it in his work;

“The rural sector contains most of the poverty, and the sector contains most of the low cost sources of potential advance; but the urban sector contains most of the articulateness, organization and power. So the urban classes have been able to win most of the rounds of the struggle with the country side; but in doing so they have made the development process slow and unfair” (Lipton 1977:1).

Given the higher rates of poverty, illiteracy, poor health etc. in the country side, than in the city, urban biased policies (Government policies) transfer resources from poor rural areas to the urban centres instead of the other way round. Lipton further stated that, these policies harm the formation of human capital in rural areas (the development of better educated and more healthy rural workers), and has led to the draining away of such talents and wealth as could be accumulated in the country side (the rural skills drain of educated younger workers), and represented poor value for money (at the margin, Lipton strongly maintained, a given sum of government money would earn higher returns in the country side-specifically in the small agriculture sector and via rural off-farm employment creation-than in cities or large-scale urban-based industries).

Applying this theory to our work it is obvious that almost all the educational and other policies made by federal and state governments are policies that have benefited the urban centres rather than the rural sectors. For example well equipped schools built by state governments and federal governments are mainly cited in developed cities, teachers in the urban schools received more updated trainings than those in the rural areas. From the millennium development goal reports, it is clear that the enrollment and completion of students in the rural areas is still very poor. This is as a result of invisibility of schools in some rural towns, lack of teachers in the rural areas, poor educational infrastructures in the rural areas etc. when reforms and policies are made about education in Nigeria; it appears that the rural areas are excluded from it, its implementation stops at the cities. This makes the little talents found in the rural areas to migrate to the urban areas for a better development of their talents.

In other words, the rural areas still suffer a multiple of disadvantaged policies from the government. Whereas in the urban centres there are policies prohibiting the accumulation of more than 40 students per class, in the rural areas you find even more than 100 students in a class room learning under a poor environment i.e. if there are even teachers). All these have made the rural areas to continue to remain underdeveloped in Nigeria at a time when developed countries like the United Kingdom, North American countries etc. are proclaiming the disappearance of their rural areas.

Statement of the Problem

The current state of rural schools in Bayelsa is not different from other parts of the country. Schools in the rural areas lack teachers, even when teaches are posted to the rural areas they fail to report and no penalty is administered to them. The teachers that reports for duties are either NYSC members or students on industrial training or teaching practice and a minute number of permanent staffs (some unqualified).The conditions of the rural schools in Bayelsa are nothing to write home about as some don't even have seats, while some buildings are even collapsing. It was recently that some selected schools in the rural areas of the state were renovated. In terms of academic infrastructures (textbooks, scientific equipment, etc.), rural schools seem not to be part of governments plan to provide such. In fact meager percentage of the student produced in the rural areas are half-barked students who can hardly compete with those who schooled in the

cities. This could be seen in admission list of various schools in the state where most students offered admission seem to be from the city.

There has not been any meaningful legislation or policy to improve the plight of rural education. The current policies in the state are still those of the national and international bodies to improve education in the world; such as the UBE, national policy on education and the Millennium Development Goal. The implementation of these policies seems to be more favorable to the cities. However, there are two policies made by the state government that is yet to be implemented in full that would have benefited the rural areas. Firstly, is the policy of posting about 70-80% of NYSC members to rural areas to teach. The government gives also more state allowances to these corps members posted to the rural areas. However, these policy has not been properly supervised if it is been implemented or not. Majority of the NYSC members still serve in the cities. Most of them influence their posting to places of convenience in the cities, other rejects their posting to rural areas and they are reposted to the cities. This deprives rural schools of the little help they would have gotten in teaching. Secondly, there is a policy that no teachers in the state will teach in an urban school for more than five years. But this policy has not succeeded due to corruption and lack of strict implementation as almost all teachers influence their posting to remain in the cities. Even the ones who accept their posting to rural areas, connive with principals in rural areas or with an official in the ministry of education to be covered up while, they fail to report at their work place at all. All these have continued to make education in rural Bayelsa state to remain underdeveloped.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the extent of Government Education policies and rural Educational development in Sagbama L.G.A. Specifically, The researcher sought to find:

- The extent of Government policies on education towards rural development in Sagbama L.G.A.
- The extent of Academic performance of rural schools in Sagbama L.G.A.

Research Questions

- To what extent has Government policies on education impacted on rural educational development in Sagbama L.G.A.
- To what extent has Government policies on Education impacted on Academic performance of rural schools in Sagbama L.G.A.

METHODOLOGY

The study is an exploratory survey and was carried out in sagbama local Government Area of Bayelsa State. Using 8 rural community secondary schools which includes CSS Agoro, CSS Kabama, CSS Elemebiri, CSS Asamabiri, CSS Osekwenke, CSS Obuetor, CSS Agorogbene CSS Egbepuluama and Sagbama Local Government Education Authority. The population of the study consist of 225 persons representing 0.15 percent of the population of the rural Schools of sagbama LGA were selected and the findings will be generalized on the entire population. The study employ the simple and stratified random sampling techniques in selecting 8 communities

in the study area and stratify the respondents into two clusters; Sagbama Education Authority, Rural Teachers and Rural Students.

A self structured Questionnaire developed by the researcher that is guided by the research questions which consist of two sections was used as the instrument for data collection. Section A is made up of Demographic data about the respondents while section B comprising of two clusters of 8 items sought information on rural based students, teachers and staffs of the Education Authority. The two clusters are rated on a 4-point likert scale of Strongly Agreed=SA, Agreed=A, Disagree=D, Strongly Disagree=SD. Three experts from relevant areas of specialties namely, psychology, measurement and Evaluation and Economics all in the faculty of Education Ignatius Ajuru University of Education validated the instrument. The final draft of the instrument was developed in consideration of the suggestion, criticisms and corrections made by those experts. The instrument was subjected to a trial test by administering it to 20 rural based students and teachers in Ekeremor LGA located outside the study area to ascertain its reliability of which a co-efficient of internal consistency of 0.77 was established using cronbach alpha. This means that instrument is reliable. The instrument was administered to the students from rural schools, teachers and staffs of Sagbama Education Authority. The direct delivery and retrieval method were applied in distributing the questionnaires to ensure 100 percent return rate and all were collected back over a period of five days. The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation in line with the research questions. Responses with mean score rating of 2.5 and above will be accepted, while mean score rating below 2.5 will be rejected.

RESULTS

Research Question 1. To what extent has Government education policies impacted on rural educational development?

Table 1: Mean response on the extent Government policies on education has impacted rural educational development.

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	Govt. policies on education towards rural educational development in Sagbama LGA unsatisfactory	3.2	1.7	Agreed
2.	Govt. policies on education towards rural educational development in sagbama LGA favourable	2.3	1.5	Disagree
3.	Rural schools face more challenges than urban schools in terms of infrastructural development	3.9	2.0	Agreed
4.	Govt. face challenges in implementing policies to improve rural education in Sagbama LGA	2.6	1.6	Agreed

Table 1, above shows the extent Government policies on Education has impacted on rural educational development. Items 1,3 and 4 with mean rating 2.8,3.9 and 2.6 have high means. Item 2 with mean rating of 2.3 and standard deviation of 1.5 have low mean response on the extent Government policies on education had impacted on rural educational development.

Research Question 2: To what extent has Government policies on education impacted Academic performance of rural schools?

Table 2: Mean response on the extent Government policies on education has impacted Academic performance of rural schools

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
5.	Academic performance of rural schools in sagbama LGA is poor	3.1	1.9	Agreed
6.	The state of rural schools in sagbama LGA is very poor	3.6	1.8	Agreed
7.	Teachers in rural school in sagbama face more problems than those in urban schools	3.5	1.9	Agreed
8.	Teaching material/infrastructures in rural schools in Sagbama LGA Adequate.	2.2	1.2	Disagree

Table 2. Shows the extent Government policies on education has impacted on Academic performance of rural Schools. Item 5,6 and 7 with mean of 3.1, 3.6, 3.5 and standard deviations of 1.9, 1.8, and 1.9 had mean rating above 2.5 were accepted. Item 8 with a lower mean rating of 2.2 and standard deviation of 1.2, implies that Government polices has no impact on the Academic performance of rural schools.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of the result of research question one which sought to know the extent to which Government education policies impacted on rural educational development revealed the respondents Agreed that Government education policies has much impact on the development of rural schools since the average mean score of the responses have exceeded the 2.5 benchmarks. The results depicts that Government policies in improving the quality of education in the rural areas in Sagbama LGA has not been favourable. And the 2.3 mean score implies that government education policies towards rural educational development is at a low level. The findings of this study agrees with the report of Edurance, Ogbanga and Jack (2014), who noted that government polices on education has influence on rural educational development.

The results to research question two which sought to know the extent to which government policies on education has impacted on Academic performance of rural schools also shows a high agreement level by the respondent the mean score response exceeded the rule of 2.5. which implies that government policies on education has positive impact on the Academic performance of rural schools. By implication, shortage of teachers, teaching facilities and government biased education policies affects Academic performance of rural schools.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, it was concluded that government policies on education has positive impact on rural educational development in Sagbama Local Government Area. The rural schools in Sagbama L.G.A students and teachers inclusive face more challenges than schools in the urban centres due to government biased policies that is skewed towards benefiting the urban centres. It was also discovered that shortage of teachers, inadequate teaching and learning materials, over-crowded classrooms etc are the key factors that affects poor Academic performance in rural schools.

Recommendation

In line with the findings made in the study, the following were recommended to improve the extent of Government policies on education on rural educational development in Sagbama LGA.

- Special educational policies directed to improve the rural areas should be formulated, monitored and implemented with proper supervision.
- Extensive awareness creation/parental programme for rural dwellers, on all aspects of rural education.
- Development of adequate capacity for initiating, planning and implementing sustainable innovations/reforms programmes in the rural education sector.
- Provision of an improved reward scheme for teachers in rural areas. The rural inducement allowance can be enhanced or improve in order to attract the best hands to the rural areas.
- Involvement of non-governmental bodies in providing and supporting rural education, the way they have succeeded in tackling the numerous health problems found in the rural areas.
- Equipping the libraries and laboratories of the rural schools to the same or near the standard with those in the urban schools
- Deployment of qualified teachers to manage, use and teach the students the use of these facilities, so that they can meet-up with their counterparts in urban centres.

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