



# Household Costs of Education in Public Upper Basic Schools in Edo State Nigeria: Implications on Educational Planning

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## Abstract

This paper focused on households costs on education in public upper basic schools in Edo state and its implications on educational planning. The population was the 318 upper basic schools in Edo state while the 318 principals were the respondents. The sample size was 90 upper basic schools selected from the three senatorial zones of the state. The multi stage sampling technique was used to select the sample size while the 90 principals were the respondents selected using convenient sampling technique. The result revealed that household costs on education has been burdensome for households and have become more burdensome with the provision of school uniforms, school sandals and medicals among others, especially with government not fulfilling her promise of providing adequate school furniture and learning materials to students as embedded in the UBE Act 2004 and UBE Law 2005 of Edo state, thereby making households to add these to their already burdensome household costs. These have led to reduced access to upper basic education and the completion of it with high failure, repeater, and dropout rates which are indices of wastages. The paper therefore recommended among others that government should take over the household costs on education if they want to truly make UBE free and increase the literacy rate of Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Household Costs Education, Upper Basic Education, Wastages, Government.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is capital intensive to both the suppliers and the consumers. This is because of all the resources required for quality education delivery is on the part of the suppliers while the consumers have to pay for not only services rendered but also for other variables required to make learning effective which are provided by parents or guardians. To this end there are two types of suppliers of education in Nigeria, Edo state inclusive. They are the public (government) and private suppliers who can be termed proprietors of schools. On the other hand, the consumers of education are the pupils or students who go to schools to be educated through the resources provided by the proprietors, which is not totally free on either side. The private proprietors charge more for services rendered while the government who are proprietors of public schools subsidise the cost of education at any level and even declare free education as the case may be.

In Nigeria, the public upper basic school (junior secondary school) also known as basic 7-9 education which is for three years according to the National Policy on Education (NPE) in Nigeria is meant for ages 12-14, under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) which is universal compulsory and free education according to the UBE Act 2004, since 1999 when UBE was launched by President Olusegun Obasanjo. The aims among others are to ensure every child, especially those from poor backgrounds who live mostly in rural areas and cannot afford the cost of primary education hitherto can go to school up to the basic level thereby increasing the literacy rate of Nigeria which is one of the indices of national development and achieve one of the philosophies of Nigerian education, that education is the instrument per excellence for self and national development (FRN, 2014). So, students are not expected to pay for anything, Government said they will provide furniture, learning materials. and midday meals among others as stipulated in the UBE Act 2004 which was replicated in the Edo State UBE Law 2005, that teachers or schools managers caught extorting money from students for the purposes of providing any learning material or facility under any guise will pay a fine of #10,000 or three months imprisonment or both. The parents and guardians invariably are to bear other costs of education which are required for access to public upper basic education and effective teaching and learning experiences, such as uniforms, school sandals, transportation medicals and other sundry items, required for high learning outcomes.

It has however been observed that government seem to have reneged on her promises as furniture, learning materials and midday meals have been mirages with government inadequately providing for or not providing for them at all. As a result, it appears parents and guardians have inherited what the government said they will provide, to make basic education truly free in her terms of being free. If education is really free in the sense of it according to stakeholders in education, why are these materials seemingly not provided for; thus the suspicion that parents and guardians are the ones now providing for them in addition to their household costs on education.? This scenario appears to have further increased household costs on education. It is not an uncommon observation to see students carrying furniture on their heads and trekking to schools; that is, for students/wards whose parents/guardians could afford them with barely few notebooks and writing materials, especially in rural areas where most poor households live. This according to students and the public appears to have made many students to drop out of schools because their parents/guardians could not provide them and that there are some other students who they said come irregularly to school because of these. These can lead to failures, repetitions

and dropping out of school which are wastages considering the amount of money government is putting into basic education in public schools. These are corroborated by Ogunduri and Awudu (2014) who posited that the disposable income of households determines their spending on education,

Suffice it to say that household costs on education, even when it is assumed that government plays her part, appears burdensome enough for parents/guardians because most students in public basic schools are observed to be from poor backgrounds who can barely afford three square meals a day, yet they are expected to provide school uniforms, school sandals, transportation and midday meals and medicals to the students among others. These aforementioned household costs on education seem to be barely met by parents and were observed to be affecting the enrolment of their children into basic schools, and when they manage to enroll them as observed the students hardly complete basic education that is, they drop out of school or they keep failing and repeating classes which are indices of wastages (Labo-Popoola & Bello, 2009).

The students on enrollment, require school uniforms, school sandals, transport fares to and fro school, midday meals during break times, then of course medicals when they fall sick in order for them to get well fast and return to school. How many Nigerian parents can comfortably afford these when according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2023) 71 million Nigerians are extremely poor and Nigeria has been declared the World's capital for poverty. Ucha (2020) said that about 71% of Nigerians live on less than \$1 per day while in 2007, 70% lived below poverty line. World Bank (2018) Report said almost half of Nigerians live below \$2 per day and the United Nations for Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (2018) said 58% children from poorest homes are out of school in Nigeria.

Nigeria's GDP according to NBS (2023) has fallen from 3.3% in 2022 to 2.4% in the first quarter of 2023. When GDP is low per capita income will also be low thereby making households disposable incomes even for education, highly inadequate. In the light of these, access to education may be reduced. Research shows that rural income is low with 75% having an average of less than #7,500 a month with only 0.2% earning #60,000 per month, he concluded that there is high level of poverty in the rural areas, so rural children may be worst hit with access to upper basic education with the prevalent household costs on education, even when government assumedly play their part (Olaniyi, 2011).

Onwuresi (2015) similarly found that, in 2012 and 2013 in Sapele local government area of Delta state Nigeria, out of 33,689 and 34,657 children expected in basic one (primary one) respectively, only 2,169 and 2,455 representing 1.03% and 1.13% of the population were in primary one respectively. Famous-Izedonmi and Momoh (2015) found out that in Benin Metropolis, out of 208,780, 215,829 and 221,736 children expected in primary one in 2013, 2014 and 2015 respectively only 18,218, 13,338 and 16,017 which were 1.4%, 1% and 1.2% respectively were the actual number of children enrolled into primary one. The causes of these very low enrolment were because house hold costs on education has become so weighty on parents that some prefer their children to remain at home, go hawking goods or better still learn a trade, engage in bus conducting (for the boys) to eke a living for their parents and for the girls, they go for early marriages, prepare for prostitution or engage in it, partake in human trafficking while the boys also engage in all manner of vices, including internet fraud and so on. These do not augur well for national development (Famous-Izedonmi & Momoh, 2015). This is confirmed (Labo-Popoola & Bello, 2009).

The additional costs of education borne by households in Nigeria because government refused to provide services promised such as furniture and learning materials among others, especially furniture is said to be as a result of state governments' inability to pay their counterpart funds to the federal government meant for basic schools because they seemingly prefer to spend such money on frivolous activities to having the political will to pay their counterpart funds. If this trend of not accessing basic education, especially completing the upper basic education which is the terminal basic education level, a lot of wastages will continue to take place. One, more or all of these aforementioned variables when not adequately provided can cause absenteeism, failure, repeating a class or and even dropout of students.

This is because of the observation that households pay for the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) of their children who are in the upper basic 9, the terminal class for basic education. Stakeholders in education are worried and some are doubting these trends, thereby asking if truly government has reneged on providing her promised services to basic schools with upper basic 9 being the terminal class. This they say if found to be true can reduce access to education possibly the literacy rate which are the reasons for proclaiming the UBE and also increase household costs on education which have hitherto become unbearable not to talk of this period of removal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria, increase in other consumables and high rate of inflation. To this end stakeholders in education in Edo state have become so worrisome and asking; is this the prevailing situation in Edo state? What then is government providing to really make basic education free as promised in public upper basic schools?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are:

- To find out if it is households that provide school uniforms to students in the public upper basic schools in Edo state;
- To find out if it is households that provide school sandals to students in the public upper basic schools in Edo state;
- To find out if it is households that provide school medicals to students in the public upper basic schools in Edo state;
- To find out if it is households that provide school furniture to students in the public upper basic schools in Edo state; and
- To find out if it is households that provide school learning materials to students in the public upper basic schools in Edo state.

### **Research Questions**

To guide this paper the following research questions were raised;

- Is it households that provide school uniforms to students in public upper basic schools in Edo state?
- Is it households that provide school sandals to students in public upper basic schools in Edo state?

- Is it households that provide medicals to students in public upper basic schools in Edo state?
- Is it the government that provides school furniture to students in public upper basic schools in Edo state?
- Is it government that provides learning materials to students in public upper basic schools in Edo state?

## METHODOLOGY

The descriptive research survey design was adopted for this paper. The population is the 318 public upper basic schools in Edo state and the 318 principals were the respondents. The sample size was 180 public upper basic schools in Edo state selected using the multi stage sampling technique. The first stage was the stratification of Edo state into her three senatorial zones. The second stage was to stratify the three senatorial zones into the 18 local government areas in the State. The third stage was to select three local government areas each from the 18 local governments areas using simple random sampling technique making sure the three senatorial zones were represented. The fourth stage was the selection of 30 upper basic schools from each sampled local government area that is 10 from each local government area making 90 upper basic schools. The 90 principals were the respondents. A questionnaire named “Household Costs on Education Questionnaire (HCOEQ)” was used to collect data. Discrete numbers and percentages were used to analyse the data. The analyses are presented in Table 1.

## RESULTS

### Research Questions 1-5

Table 1: Some Costs on Education in Public Upper Basic Schools in Edo State by Household and Government

RQ S/N	ITEM	RESPONSE				
		N	HOUSEHOLDS	%	GOVERNMENT	%
1	Provision of school uniforms?	90	90	100	-	-
2	Provision of school sandals?	90	90	100	-	-
3	Provision of medicals for students?	90	90	100	90	100
4	Provision of school furniture for students?	90	75	82.3	25	17.7
5	Government provides learning materials?	90	85	83.4	15	16.6

Source: Researcher’s Fieldwork

Table 1 revealed the responses to research questions 1-5. The Table revealed that households provided school uniforms, school sandals and medicals 100% to the students in public upper basic schools. It therefore revealed that government did not provide school uniforms neither school sandals nor medicals to students in public upper basic schools. Table 1 also revealed that government provided school furniture and learning materials to only 25% and 15% of the students respectively while parents provided 75% and 85% of school furniture and learning materials to students respectively to the students.

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

It was found that it was only households that provided school uniforms, school sandals and medicals to the students. It is pertinent to note that government did not include these as part of their responsibilities in the UBE Act 2004 or and in the UBE Law 2005 of Edo state. However it has been observed that costs of these school items were not easy for parents/guardians to meet. This is because many students in public upper basic schools are mostly from poor backgrounds, especially those in the rural areas who can barely afford three square meals (Ogunduri & Awudu, 2014). These identified items are very crucial in order to start basic education at any level, especially the upper basic schools which is the junior secondary schools. New school uniforms and school sandals are required because their school uniforms are different from those used in the lower (primaries 1-3) and middle basic schools (primaries 4-6). Furthermore, the school sandals used in the lower and middle basic schools for six years may have worn out or and that they may have overgrown them. So, for them to start the public upper basic schools (basic 7), there must be school uniforms and school sandals for them to put on to school so as to be identified as students in the schools.

Many households, especially the poor ones have been perceived to find it difficult to afford the school uniforms and school sandals and so do not enroll their children in upper basic schools or when they enroll them, they cannot provide school uniforms and sandals after sometime, they drop out of upper basic education, which is the terminal level for basic education after the lower and middle basic education (UNICEF, 2018; Ogunduri & Awudu, 2014). This is wastage to government and do not achieve the aim of government to ensure every child especially from poor backgrounds is educated to the basic level in order to decrease the illiteracy rates of Nigeria; the reason for UBE. These could be the reason why upper basic school going ages from 12-14 years are seen hawking goods on the streets, some with unwanted pregnancies, some getting involved in early marriages for the girls and the boys becoming apprentices in recent times to internet fraud “masters” who mostly are drop outs from schools at any level and engage in all manner of vices. Some of the girls engage in prostitution and become vulnerable to human traffickers. These activities do not augur well for national development and is not helping to achieve the universal free and compulsory basic education (Famous-Izedonmi, 2015; Onwuresi, 2015; Labo-Popoola & Bello, 2009).

Stakeholders are wondering what is free about basic education when some variables needed to actualize it are pushed to the parents, especially the poor. When some parents borrow money for these variables and the students fall sick, it is still the parents that take care of their medicals. During this period the students cannot go to school causing absenteeism, missing classes and so on, resulting in failures, repeaters and even dropping out of school if the sickness takes a long to get cured. Where the parents cannot afford the medical bills, some die, wasting human life and money already spent by government and parents in schools, which are wastages (Ucha, 2020).

In terms of provision of school furniture and learning materials to the students which are some of the items listed as their responsibilities, they have not met up with their promises. It is a common sight to see students in upper basic schools carrying chairs and tables to school. Parents who do not have money for these may not allow their children to go to school or continue to go to school as the case may be. Some of these children sit on bare floors or on cement blocks to learn which is highly uncomfortable and may make learning outcomes very bad. In addition, it

will not attract and retain them in schools thereby reducing access to education (World Bank Report, 2018).

Government's attitude towards providing adequate number of learning materials as promised has also pushed this responsibility to parents/guardians (Ogunduri & Awudu, 2014). Parents who cannot afford to buy these learning materials because of poverty tend to withdraw their children from schools because of failures and repetitions as a result of no or inadequate learning materials (Ucha, 2020). The few supplied by government cannot meet the demand or the quest of the students who are eager to learn and whose parents managed to enroll in schools with the hope and expectations that government will do their parts as promised. Some stakeholders in education viewed these seemingly insensitive attitude of government whose top officials are supposed to do the needful, as an aftermath of corruption in all ramifications after all their children are not in public schools. It can be seen that government has added her own responsibility to those of households and this in increasingly become highly burdensome to many households and as a result causing wastages and reducing access to schools, making the achievement of the UBE a mirage. It is high time government realised these issues and truly make UBE free in the real sense of it and in all ramifications by taking households costs on education as part of her responsibilities in order to reduce wastages and increase access to basic education thereby increasing the rate of literacy in Nigeria and so, achieve the goals of UBE. It is pertinent to say that, one, more and even all of the aforementioned variables can cause some children to be out of the upper basic school if they are not adequately provided.

### **Implications on Educational Planning**

When educational planners project the number of school age children expected in public schools, including public upper basic education, government also projects the amount of money to be spent on each child among other resources so as to increase the literacy rate of that nation, including Nigeria. When a child is unable to access education at this level because of inadequate or non-provision of resources needed, such as, furniture, learning materials as well as parents and guardians inability to afford school uniforms, school sandals & medicals for their children especially because of poverty, the expected increase in literacy rate will not be met and so the nation remains among developing or underdeveloped nations, as the case may be. Similarly when the children fail and thus repeat a class or dropout out of the upper basic education as a result of the aforementioned variables, there will be wastages on the part of the government, parents and guardians, the society and even on the part of the students. Suffice it to say in some cases one, more or all of these variables when not adequately provided can cause a child to repeat that class or drop out completely and so, be out of the upper basic school. These do not help to achieve the goals of basic education and national development.

### **CONCLUSION**

It is concluded that household costs on education has led to wastages in public upper basic schools. This is because households can no longer comfortably bear the costs of education because of the poverty levels of Nigerians; that government has not adequately met her promises of providing for school furniture and learning materials to students in upper basic education as embedded in the UBE Act 2004 and UBE Law 2005 of Edo state. These have made many

households to withdraw their children from public upper basic schools. The cry and groaning of households are that, what they have to provide for their children such as, school uniforms, school sandals and medicals so as to access basic schools and complete it have been burdensome not to talk of adding government's responsibilities of providing school furniture and learning materials

## Recommendations

It is therefore recommended that, government should take over households costs on education by providing free school uniforms, school sandals and medicals to enable the expected access to and completion of upper basic education. These should be added to their own promised responsibilities of providing free school furniture and learning materials adequately as enshrined in the UBE Act 2004 and the Edo state UBE Law 2005. These will increase access to upper basic education and enhance learning outcomes in the schools. Medicals for students at this level of education should be free in all government hospitals on production of their school identity cards. This is to enable them live healthy lives and be always ready for school with very minimal cases of absenteeism as a result of falling sick and no money by households to take appropriate medical care. These will go a long way in eradicating wastages to the barest minimum, increase the literacy rates of Nigeria and invariably national development, all other things being equal.

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