

EDUCATION 2030: SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT: *Education has evolved over time in content and practice to meet the ever changing demands of society. With this, has come several goals with accompanying deadlines to ensure its' execution as exemplified by the Education 2030 SDG 4 goal derived from the Incheon declaration. While this is a laudable goal, how well it will be executed in Nigeria is yet to be seen. This study seeks to establish the relationship between physical infrastructure and the actualization of this goal in Rivers State. The research used the sample survey method and questionnaires with a reliability coefficient of 0.68 as instruments for data collection. Data obtained were analyzed using analysis of covariance, and the results indicate that there is a relationship between physical structure and the actual implementation of Education 2030 goal of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The researchers recommend partnerships between the educational sector and host communities to create a smooth channel of communication and collaboration.*

KEYWORDS: Education, Development, Social implication

INTRODUCTION

Modern societies are fast changing in nature to adapt to the realities of science and technological in the advancement. These changes which are geared towards the development of society through education are initiated with the sole aim of ensuring that everyone is carried along in the wheels of change as development occurs. 'Education for All' (EFA), an international agreement adopted in Jomtein, Thailand in 1990 (WEF, 2015:5), reaffirmed in Dakar 2000 came aboard with the primary aim of ensuring that every child had access to quality education. This vision is being pursued by many nations of the world, Nigeria inclusive. Although, much progress is being achieved by many countries like the Republic of Korea, Nigeria, and many other sister African nations have not fully exploited the limitless opportunities the EFA had presented. Nevertheless, with the adoption of Education 2030 in Incheon themed 'Towards Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All', signifies the emergent of a new vision for education. This notwithstanding, Osorio-Vargas (2016) asserts that universal access to quality education has not been achieved. However, Ainscow (2016) asserts that universalizing access would mean being proactive in identifying the different barriers and hurdles different groups of people encounter in attempting to access educational opportunities. Hence, it is necessary that a global stance and line of action be taken in ensuring that all children, irrespective of their individual differences, have unhindered access to educational provisions. This position attracts a major line of thought on how best a nation that could not fully meet the demands of EFA effectively execute the emerging laudable vision for education, especially, as this new vision involves equal access, equity, inclusion and quality learning outcomes for life.

The Sustainable Development Goals for education (SDG 4) was derived from the Incheon declaration and stated thus: “Ensure Inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (UN, 2015:2, WEF, 2015:6). Consequently, the vision of Education 2030 as captured in the SDG 4 is of utmost importance if all children should have feelings of inclusion in the educational system. This demands for certain changes to accommodate all categories of people whose rights to quality education which is inclusive in nature that has been overlooked or ignored over time. Heick, (2015) sees equity in education as a matter of fairness, access and inclusion. However, this stance will likely be true, if the educational system is fluid, responsive and dynamic in nature and as such meets the ever-changing needs of a global society.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study seeks as its aim, to establish the level of inclusive educational practices in the educational system of Rivers State, and seeks the following objectives:

- i. To determine the level of influence of social class on the implementation of inclusive education.
- ii. To determine the extent to which parents’ literacy level influence the practice of inclusion in education.
- iii. To establish the difference in rural/urban students’ residential location on the delivery of inclusive education.

Research Questions

The following research questions will be addressed in the course of this work in Rivers State:

- i. What is the difference in the implementation of inclusive education, based on social class?
- ii. What is the difference in the practice of inclusive education, based on parental literacy level?
- iii. What is the difference in the delivery of inclusive education, based on students’ rural/urban location?

Hypothesis

- i. There is no significant difference on the implementation of inclusive education, based on social class.
- ii. There is no significant difference on the practice of inclusive education, based on parental literacy level.
- iii. There is no significant difference on the delivery of inclusive education, based on students’ residential location.

Theoretical Framework

Talcot Parson’s structural functionalism and Vygotsky’s social development theory form the basis for this study. Parson’s structural functionalism recognizes the interrelatedness of

different institutions in society, especially in their functions which must be in place for every society to develop (Turner, 1991). These functional prerequisites, simply written as 'AGIL' include the following: (a) Adaptation (b) Goal attainment (c) Integration (d) Latent pattern maintenance

The foregoing therefore demands that every society should have capacity to interact with the environment for a better understanding of the needs of that society per time, set and ensure that predetermined goals are met, including adequate harmonization of the system and an unyielding urge to succeed at all cost.

On the other hand, Vygotsky social development theory believes that social interaction plays an important role in the development of consciousness and cognition (Wertsch and Tulviste, 2005, Mcleod, 2014). Mcleod (2014) opines that Vygotsky places more considerable emphasis on social factors as contributing to social development. Since, cognitive development stems from the interactions between peers and with teachers in the classroom and the surrounding environment in which students find themselves when knowledge is transmitted. Hence, the internalization of the language of learning produces cognitive development. This is in line with collaborative learning, which assumes that children with different levels of abilities and or physical attributes will likely benefit from each other. By so doing, more advantaged students can help less advantaged classmates operate better within the zone of proximal development.

Inclusive Education

Among other things, education involves the training of young minds to position them better for the future. Okeke (2002) asserts that this involves the transmission of culture and social change, hence, demands that education should play an active role for every change in society to be a reality. However, these roles are dependent on existing educational policies of individual nations. In Nigeria, for example, the national policy on education (NPE, 2013:1) clearly states:

Education is compulsory and a right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, colour, ethnic background and any other peculiar individual challenges; and that education is to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the needs of society.

The foregoing excerpt upholds the provision of equal educational opportunity to every Nigerian in the country's educational policy. As Okeke (2016:140) rightly recommends, all hands should be on deck "... to provide every opportunity for the citizens to make choices of different types of educational provisions, in order to develop their capabilities and potentials in every sphere to be fully equipped for their effective contributions to national development". There is no gainsaying therefore that, education plays an important role in the overall development of society as the school is a major avenue for initiating any relevant development in society.

Education 2030, an initiative of the World Education Forum held in Incheon, Korea in 2015 addresses issues of inclusion in the educational sector. Simply put, the term 'inclusion' provides ample opportunity to accommodate all categories of persons in the educational activities and benefits in the country. UNESCO (2009) recognizes the need to reform the educational sector with clear emphasis on the inclusion of all categories of students' in the general mainstream classrooms, without minding their divergent characteristics. As such, the Incheon declaration, "Towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all" demands, that all children be fairly treated and allowed access to school, equitable

quality education, equality of educational opportunities, equity in school enrolment and ensuring that all children have quality learning outcomes. To Egron-Prak (2016), the vision no doubt, shows that it is comprehensive and may appear too ambitious due largely to the fact that education 2030 has major implications for the educational sector as a whole. He therefore questions the ability of countries to plan best for the implementation of this ambitious and comprehensive education vision, which largely demands that the right infrastructures which would promote inclusion and ensure access, equality and quality learning outcomes are put in place.

Based on the foregoing, inclusion in the education sector is the highpoint of this lofty vision. Norwich in Nind (2014) asserts that inclusion is a contemporary mix of equal opportunity to education, social respect for one another and solidarity. This is particularly important as equal opportunity could be translated as equal rights. Omordu and Okoh (2013) assert that providing equal educational opportunity would in turn necessitate the provision of same facilities, curriculum and quality of staff and these provisions should be made accessible to all users of available educational provisions. Armstrong (2016) opines that schools should place more emphasis on equal opportunity, as the practice of inclusion and equity which forms an integral part of the daily running of the school demands because equal access to educational opportunity deals with fairness and the way all children are allowed to participate in educational opportunities.

Equity, on the other hand, seeks to provide the best platform that allows all children to reach their full potentials in order to properly position them to better address all issues which had restricted them. These restrictions could be in the form of gender, ethnicity, location of the home and socioeconomic background of the family, among other.

Education 2030: The Nigerian challenge

In Nigeria, the National policy on education (NPE) has been in constant review as a result of new opportunities, issues and challenges. The Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN, 2015:5) reveals that “these issues such as access, equity, inclusion and quality learning outcomes are all addressed on paper”. The ESSPIN document indicates that inclusion in education calls for the education system to make the necessary changes in line with the needs of individual children, rather than demanding the child to meet the requirement of the system. This implies therefore that all the necessary forces which will most likely propel the wheel of positive change begins from the policy formulation to execution, after which the sector could begin to enjoy the desired change. It is not a process which begins with the child. Instead, the child is supposed to be the recipient of the dividends of the entire process.

When a distinct group in society faces new problems, innovative ideas are introduced to ensure this identified problems are solved. This in turn calls for the creation of new practices with corresponding set of rules. It therefore becomes necessary that certain required structures and conceptual apparatus be put on ground. This requires both the financial and human resources to be mobilized for effective handling of the new situations or challenges as they present themselves. Shaddock in Loreman, Forlin, Chambers, Sharma & Deppeler (2014) assert that mainstream thinking is needed for expansion to effectively provide opportunities for students in the face of the new policy.

These notwithstanding, the realities of the Nigerian educational system as reflected in the schools today is a far cry from the picture it tries to portray. While current data on school

enrolment in many southern states like Rivers, Edo, Bayelsa, Delta and Cross Rivers show gender parity at the primary level, there are more girls than boys in school at the secondary level (UBEC, 2015). Uchem and Ngwa (2014) opine that while western nations advance in the practice of inclusion, equity, access and quality outcomes, Nigeria, alongside other African countries are yet to move beyond policy formulation to full scale practice and execution of such policies. For true inclusion to exist in the mainstream schools, there has to be equity in access to ensure that no particular gender is at a disadvantage at any time. In addition, access and equity in education require that the same provisions for education be put in place for all children irrespective of their home locations. Armstrong (2016) posits that schools would need to have on ground active policies that oppose discriminatory practices of all sort, and the provision of proper information. This information backed by the enactment of right policies, provision of physical structures, staff and personnel, student interactions and other external links amongs others as asserted by Winter and O'Raw in Loreman et al (2014) would ensure the ease of execution of the education 2030 vision. This is particularly necessary as the quality of educational outcome is dependent on the quality of education received, all things being equal.

METHODOLOGY

The study population comprises all the public secondary school teachers under the Universal Basic Scheme in Rivers State with an estimated population of 12650 (UBEC, 2014:184). The demographic variables being considered are literacy level of parents, home location and social class of the students. The researcher used the sample survey design and random sampling technique to select 2 Local Government Areas (LGA's) from each of the three senatorial districts which make up Rivers State. Taro Yamane's model of determining sample size was used to obtain a sample size of 388 respondents. However, to make the study more generalizable, the sample was increased to 600. Data for the research was obtained through the use of questionnaire. The researcher made instrument for data collection was submitted to experts in the field of sociology and educational management and evaluation to ensure face and content validity. The reliability of the instrument was established, using test-retest method and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was calculated to be 0.78. The data obtained were analyzed using Mean, Standard Deviation and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). Of the 600 questionnaires, only 582 were valid for analysis.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

Table 1. Summary of the rural/urban home location on the delivery of inclusive education

Item	N Urban	N Rural	N (Total)	Urban X	Rural X	N X	Standard Deviation
The place of the Residential location in Inclusive educational practices.	398	184	582	2.28	1.05	3.33	0.68

Table 2. Summary of Mean and Standard deviation.

Item	N	Grand mean (X)	Criterion mean	Standard deviation	Remarks
Social class influence on Inclusive education	82	3.33	2.5	0.67	Positive
Influence of parental literacy level on Inclusive education	582	3.40	2.5	0.53	Positive
The place of the Residential location in Inclusive educational practices.	582	3.33	2.5	0.68	Positive

From table 2, the social class, parental literacy level and the home location all had significant Influence on the implementation of inclusive education. However, table 1 indicates that responses from the rural areas were influenced by cultural myths and fears about the notions of including their normal children with those with major disabilities in the same general mainstream classroom.

Table 3. Summary of Analysis of Covariance for testing hypothesis

Dependent variable	Type III sum of squares	Df	Mean square	Significance	F ratio	F tables	Remarks
Social class	42.962	3	14.321	0.031	2.985	2.605	Reject
Literacy level of parents	4.632	3	1.544	0.789	0.350	2.605	Accept
Residential location	29.957	3	9.986	0.214	1.498	2.605	Accept

From table 3, there is obviously a significant difference on the implementation of inclusive education based on social class. In addition, there is no significant difference in the delivery of inclusive based on parental literacy level and rural/urban home location.

DISCUSSION

From the data analyzed, it was observed that the both the home location and parental literacy level does not impact significantly on the implementation of inclusive education, but the same could not be said of parental social class which data indicates has a significant influence in the implementation of inclusive education. However, requisite training is needed to ensure capacity is built and maintained in schools where it is lacking, and new instructional materials need to be developed to position the educational sector in Rivers State at its optimum. This reveals the unpreparedness of the state to handle the needs of the educational sector in the face of global trends and position on education. Osorio-Vargas (2016) asserts that current times demand creative and sustained responses on the part of key players to achieve prosperity in the education sector. When there is no knowledge that an action is possible, then the required push

that would make happen the expected result or success will not be exerted. Hence, Nigeria, having adopted the Incheon declaration and SDG 4 of education 2030 will have to exert the needed force to ensure its success by putting up the necessary facilities for the achievement of this laudable goal.

Also, existing school structures will have to be adapted to make them accessible to all the disabled and children from low socioeconomic backgrounds inclusive. This would in turn call for the elimination of all bias which could potentially affect access of all students into school. Ivowi in Unachukwu (2015) assert that these bias which could represent discrimination do not satisfy equality of access, equity in education and quality relevance in education. Inclusion is a must if the ambitious vision of education 2030 is to be realized, this is because inclusion relates to making educational environments suitable for all learners irrespective of the unique characteristics that set them apart, and taking into considerations their individual needs (ESSPIN, 2013). More so, as there are several disproportionalities inherent in the prevailing educational practices like inequality in school enrolment for both gender, cultural and religious stance on inclusion, exclusion from school due to communal clashes or natural disaster among many. This notwithstanding, a good knowledge and understanding of the peculiar nature of each factor at play would help produce a way out of the predicament. Dyson in Gallanaugh (2008) posits that inequalities in education can be controlled when all underlying processes and structures of educational inequalities are removed.

Implication to Research and Practice

With the level of unpreparedness on the part of the Rivers State government, there is bound to be outright failure in the bid to achieve the internationally set goal in the education sector. While schools are yet to be adapted to cater for the needs of learners, they will continue to operate curriculum and programmes that do not promote inclusion, access and equity. Also with the establishment of private schools with purported inclusive ideologies in the city, one wonders how inclusive these schools really are, with the high fees which will be charged for this service. This basically questions the idea of equality and access to these schools since only a few will have access to these facilities. Thus we must arise to ensure that a practice which is supposed to be offered to the populace in general mainstream schools is not limited to a few.

Furthermore, the nation should rise and address the realities of the day as there are hurdles which must be addressed if the SDG 4 goal for education is to be achieved with only thirteen years left to the deadline for the actualization of education 2030. Therefore, the government would need to put in proper educational infrastructures on ground for the smooth implementation of this vision. This will aid the effective movement from policy adoption to actual policy execution.

CONCLUSION

In the face of lack of structural facilities to ensure the smooth take off and operations the vision of Education 2030, it behooves on government to ensure staff provisions and relevant staff development and training. Also, the resources and finance needed to effectively push this noble vision which will translate to better classroom practices would have to be made available. This would demand collaboration on the part of all key players and require shared responsibilities and the achievement of better educational outcomes.

Partnerships between the education sector and host communities of school facilities should be promoted to ensure ease of communication and collaboration which would promote the notions of inclusion. This in turn will require that existing educational facilities be remodeled and adapted to create a conducive atmosphere that is inclusive in nature and allows for effective teaching and learning, with resultant quality educational outcomes as end product

Recommendations

1. Town hall meetings should be carried out to sensitize people on the benefits of inclusive education and that its merit outweighs its perceived demerits.
2. Parents whether in rural/urban areas should be allowed to visit their children in school in order to make informed decisions on the impact of inclusive education.
3. Major work on the curriculum is needed to come up with a curriculum that would be better suited for a class practicing inclusive pedagogy..
4. Periodic training and retraining of staff and personnel should be carried out to ensure the programme is sustained.

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