

Equity, Accessibility and Quality: Emerging Issues in Nigerian Education

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Abstract

The paper examined the issues relating to equity, accessibility and quality education on Nigeria as an emerging issue for consideration in the modern Nigeria. However the study defined the concepts of equality, accessibility to quality educational system. Also the paper find out the causes of in equality and reasons for low accessibility to quality education in Nigeria and the associated problem from the unequal distribution of educational opportunities and methods of ameliorations was examined. It was however recommended that all efforts to provide equal education opportunities to Nigeria should be explored. That the learning environment should be made attractive and encourage the students to have equal accessibility to quality education emerging issue of quality should be improved up by all and sundry by means of moderate school fees, improved teachers conditions of service and adequate provision of educational facilities and welfare services in the school system.

Keywords: Equity, Accessibility, Quality Emerging Issues and Nigerian Education.

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Introduction

It is undisputable fact that education is an instrument for any national transformation and development. It is an essential tool for socio-economic, political and cultural development of every human society. Education generally develops individual skills and competencies, imparting knowledge and intellectual capability right from the schools and colleges and to aid individuals and personal and professional development and make them relevant to the society in their later years. Inequality and inaccessibility to Nigeria educational system manifested itself in the distribution of educational resources. The educational resources include human and physical resources which are not evenly distributed for effective teaching learning process and towards achieving educational goals. However education is very important to any nation, as Ogundele (2008), pointed out that any nation that toyed with educational provision for her citizens, such nation will not be ranked high among other developed nations at the global level. This is therefore to say that without education, socio-economic activities in the societies will remain stagnant, ignorance, and poverty will set in among the citizens and human society will not progress. Despite this fact, several societies in the world are still far from providing the basic necessities like education, employment and social welfare to their citizens. The problem of the inability of the government to provide quality education to her citizens therefore, resulted to ignorance, poverty, mass illiteracy, and social economic crises at global level. Ojedele (2000) described mass illiteracy as the bane of productivity in any nation.

In Nigeria, equalities challenges in the education sector had created a lot of gaps and marginalization among different groups, regions, genders, religion and culture. Yusuf (2003) opined that the classification of many states in the north as educationally disadvantages states have affected quality education in the northern states. This resulted to discrepancies in the equity and accessibility among the regions genders, ethnicity culture and socio-economic states. Yusuf however stated that the issues of inequity and inaccessibility problems should be in the interest of the sustainable national development and productivity.

Jimba, Ogundele and Damal (2015) observed the need to encourage accessibility and equalities in Nigerian education system and that the efforts will in order to solve future national security problems and the country will be adequate secured. It should be noted that all efforts require a lot of initiative, zeal and quality education in the country. It was

noted that there is the need for the stakeholders, schools, and teachers and to do away with the issues of unequal educational opportunities in Nigeria. The authors regard the inequity and inaccessibility to education as discrimination to one birth right. Ogundele (2008) also described unequal and accessibilities to education are systematic ways of waging war against birth right, progress and productivity. Education is an essential tool for development of any society. It is in recognition of this importance that the international community and government, the world has been committed to encourage equal accessibility to quality education in the developing countries like Nigeria.

Mohammed (2011) sees inequality and inaccessibility to quality education as a stump, hurdle and threat that weaken the process of imparting knowledge and skills and the general administration of the entire education system. Equality and accessibility to quality education had been in existence ever since education was institutionalized. Today, the issue of inequality and inaccessibility to quality has become more glaring, especially in the modern time where equality and parity is the issue of concerned. Although politicians, government and education stakeholders have been doing something to minimize the issue of inaccessibility inequality to quality education, however, the situation seemed do not improved, but only become more obvious than before. The issue therefore became concern of Nigerian citizens. This paper however looked at concept of equality, accessibility, causes and method of improvement towards quality in Nigeria educational system.

Concepts of Equity, Accessibility and Quality Education

Sofoluwe (2010) noted that issue to access of quality education deals with the degree or extent to which the education sector obtain/achieve excellence and standard in the services rendered. The author stated that the issue of achieving quality in all levels of the education sector has always been a great challenge to the sector. Sofolowe further stated that, for sustainable development and continual progress of individuals in Nigeria, the issue of quality education needs to be addressed urgently. However access to quality education include the level to which achieving higher degree of excellence in teaching-learning process; teaching and non-teaching staff, excellence in provision of educational resources e.g. equipment infrastructural development and maintenance, resources e.g. equipment infrastructural development and maintenance, instructional materials, excellence in proper administration of special education and

excellence in the entire education process, general administration and management are achieved. However the citizens need to be given ample educational opportunities to benefit from the governmental efforts of making education to reach all and sundry in the society.

Causes of inequity and inaccessibility to quality education in Nigeria: The following are the factors that lead to the inequality and how accessibility to Nigerian education:

Unequal distribution of educational resources: Educational resources include human and material resources that aid proper administration and effective teaching and learning process are inadequate. The human resources includes both teaching and non-teaching staff while material resources include both financial and non-financial material resource includes such as money, classroom, instructional materials, buildings, infrastructure, ICT electronic gadget, libraries, laboratories etc. all which are not adequately made available for enhancing quality education especially in Nigeria.(Ogunsanya, 2007). Observations have shown that these educational resources are neither adequate nor provided sufficiently in the school for effective teaching and learning. Due to lack of funds, leads to inequalities in the education sector. Inequalities of human resources entail in the shortage of teachers in Nigeria demand for effective use of professional in subject areas (qualified teachers) in school. Material resource the imbalance manifested in lack of physical facilities text books, technological equipment like computers or learning software and other important facilities as libraries and audio-visual,(Olehebie,2013).

Disparity in salary structure: The salary structure in which the education sector does not recognize or pay well teachers who make effort to initiate, innovate or become creative in their teaching methods and affect the issue of quality in Nigerian education. Ogundele (2015).

Disparity in the subject areas and courses offered: Less attention is paid on key areas like science courses, agricultural, entrepreneurship, vocational and technical courses. The problem of the disparity in coursed allocation leads to high rate of unemployment in the society. The rate of unemployment is the bane of quality education. However, the problem of unemployment made the society to look down on the quality education provided by the schools.

Disparity in school location in rural and urban: There is a great disparity in terms of school attainment and school achievement between urban and rural dwellers. This cannot be unconnected with the fact the distribution of educational resources are not evenly done by the government. For instance, most of the qualified teachers are posted in the

urban are while the unqualified are equally posted to the rural areas. Also the placement of the value system on education differ greatly among the groups. Hence, bringing about educational imbalance in the education system between the urban and rural. (Adeyemo, 2015).

Gender inferiority: Educational inequality as a result of Gender difference is one the major factor or issue that encourage male dominance in access to educational opportunities. The opportunity cost of foregoing school for female children is very high due of female roles and society preference for male children. In some communities the female children are not sent to school like their male counterparts due to some cultural/religions practices. Omoregie and Ihensekhien (2009) equally identified that the Nigerian women and their counterparts in other African countries have been disregarded and dishonored by the thought that every women is supposed to consider motherhood as the principal purpose of her existence. Woman is expected to produce children, look after them, and wash clothes and take care of men and be subordinate to male authority. According to Ogundele (2012), there is still much gender imbalance in Nigeria education in spite of all steps taken by the Federal Government. The reason is because the Nigeria culture opined that the women office is in the kitchen and bedroom no more, they were deprived and marginalized in the society.

Poor educational policies and curriculum implementation: Nigerian government's policy planning documents have the view that education generates human capital the national development, yet a lot of inequalities occur in implementing sustainable educational policies and curriculum that will equip individuals with enough competencies and skills to face societal challenges.

Historical factor: There is no imbalance between South and north which is owing the problems of past education developments, colonial administration and history in Nigeria has brought in with it existence of educational gaps between these two regions. Equally highlighted that the educational disparity between the South and the North was a common sense of fear and conflict the Littleton constitution of 1954 officially fashion Nigeria as federation. The rate of imbalance between South and north should not be surprising because out of the six (6) earliest universities in the country, only ABU was in the North. The educational disparity between the South and the North led to educational inequalities and educational marginalization in most regions.

High cost of education: Durosaro (2013) opined that the pattern of budgeting allocation to education revealed that Nigerian governments (both state and federal) did not consider education expenditure as a

matter of priority. The budgetary allocation in the country may not sustain the target education as a prime source for sustainable development.

Problems Associated with Quality and Accessibility of Nigerian Education

The dangers of educational result the education sector whose end result if not solved will lead to the following problems:

Mass illiteracy: There will be high illiteracy rate in the country and the international commenter will not be able to recon with the certificate issued.

Inadequate qualified experts: Poor quality of teaching workforce especially at lower levels of the education sector. No wonder Ogundele (2012) noted that lack of quality education in Nigeria reflected on the inability of Nigerian mechanical engineers to repair their cars themselves proliferation of many corrupt practices in the education sector.

High cost of education makes the educational system not to be at the reach of the average Nigerian. It however leads to low accessibility to the quality education.

Conclusion

The goal of achieving quality, excellence and improving the Nigeria education system lie on improving equity and accessibility for all the citizens. Hence this paper tries to draw the attention of the stake holders on the need to encourage equity, accessibility in Nigeria education. Creating awareness among the stakeholders to evenly distribute education to entire citizens of the country. Sensitizing the audience who are would be administrators on the need for equal for equal distribution of educational opportunities to the entire populace planning a functional education for all.

Recommendations

In a bid to salvage the educational in the country, the following recommendation should be adhered to:

In the area of financing of education sector, budgetary allocations should be increased and the funds must be expended appropriately.

Girl-child education should be improved and encouraged. The extension of educational opportunity to the girl child has been a cornerstone of every development plan. This is in view of the role of women of the development of their community.

The federal Government should promulgate laws against early marriage, unfavorable cultural practices against women/girl-child and using hawkers on the streets which expose them to dangers that affect their education.

Efforts should be made in the area of science and technological education in order to boost the area. According to Yusuf (2003), science and technology is one major tool of development of any nation, society or region. They are the pillars of the well-being of every nation as well as the source of economic and social development.

There should be proper implementation of effective policies and curriculum that will improve all education sectors.

Review of school curriculum to promote critical and relevant learning needed by the society.

Proper harmonization of activities at all levels of education sector which includes salaries, entry requirements, staff development etc.

Improving access to quality education at all levels of education. Through universal Basic education, No made education and series of education for the disadvantaged groups in Nigeria.

Massive investment in infrastructures in all levels of education. Through ETF, stakeholders, school based management committees.

Improvement of teach quality through employment of professional and qualified teachers, in-service training and implementation of the teacher salary structure.

Promoting good governance in schools and strengthening leadership at all levels of school etc.

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