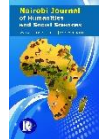




Awareness and compliance of the universal basic education acts on school enrolment of pupils in Barkin Ladi local government area, Plateau State, Nigeria



Research article



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Abstract

The study assessed the awareness and compliance of the Universal Basic Education Act on school enrolment in the primary section of Barki Ladi local government area of Plateau state. The study was instigated by prevalence of problems in the educational sector, especially in the areas of pupils' enrolment and poor awareness policy, *inter-alia*. The specific purpose was to assess the awareness of UBE Acts among stakeholders in the local government and also assess the compliance of UBE Acts on pupils enrolment in Barki Ladi Local Government. The research was guided by four research questions. The study adopted descriptive research and survey research methods. The population of 188 respondents in Universal basic schools in Barki ladi local government area was used for the research. Data were collected with the administration of questionnaire and records of pupils' enrolments. Using the descriptive statistical tools, the study revealed that the level of awareness of UBE Acts among stakeholders has improved, and that there was improvement in the enrolment of pupils in the local government under the UBE Acts. The research recommended that there should be UBE awareness and enrolment campaign related to that of the national immunization programme, general election dates and national census in the country.

Keywords: awareness, compliance, school enrolment, universal basic education act



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Public Interest Statement

Findings of the study would clarify contentious issues raised as well as contribute to knowledge and literature on the subject. It will expose teachers to the extent to which their efforts would help to achieve the UBE goals. The study would be of immense benefit to the government, programme planners, school administrators, teachers and the general public in their bid to actualize UBE educational policies. The study would also be of immense importance to the general public especially the parents to enroll their children to basic education since it would expose them to the need of availing themselves the opportunity for free and compulsory education for their children and wards, at least to the basic education level.

Introduction

The role that education plays to any nation cannot be over stressed. The recognition of this important role is that the governments and international comity of nations all over the world have been the commitments to their citizens' welfare of affording them equal access to education. Education will continue to be a human right that will be given to all citizens. In modern times, there are number of international human rights instruments that afford education as basic fundamental right to all citizens. Many of the instruments of United Nation General Assembly (1948) include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of Organisation of African Unity (1981).

Right from 1960, in Addis Ababa, during the continental conference, all countries in Africa have been dedicated to Universal Primary Education. During the conference, the year 1980 was agreed upon as the target year for the attainment of Universal Primary Education (UPE). Though this objective could not be realised, enrolment of pupils was much more than the predictions of what had been suggested to be. In the year 1976, the Government of Nigeria devoted herself to Universal Primary Education (UPE), an attempt that was meant of working towards the equalization of educational opportunities of giving a minimal level of which every child would be educated. Though, UPE programme was successful, in that, millions of children were able to receive a basic education, but, over a period of twenty-year, the UPE programme faced a lot of problems. Tahir (2000) included overstressed school facilities and congested classrooms, over-population of enrolment into schools, disparities in educational accomplishment, unqualified and inexperienced classroom teachers, meagre remuneration in teacher' salaries resulting to poor incentive and low morale. Others were little or unplanned career development for classroom teachers, rigid curricula and insufficient supervision of Nigerian schools (Ejere, 2011).

From the time Nigeria gained independence, there were many Education laws, edits that have been established, contingent on the kind of government that had ruled the Nigeria. Education was put on the concurrent list in the Nigerian's Constitution of 1979 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979), meaning that the duties and roles in education would be shared among the tiers of government of federal, state and local governments. Within 1983 and 1999, a military regime, Decree No 16 of 1985, Decree 26 of 1988, also Decree 36 promulgated in 1990, which were set up to regulate the management of educational sector in Nigeria. The major policy was set up by the Federal Government in 1977 named the National Policy on Education. The set-up policy was as a result of the organised seminar in 1973 at the end National Curriculum Conference, which was later revised three times, that is, in 1981, 1998 and 2004.

From the time of independence therefore, the overall principles guiding education in Nigeria have been the training of every citizen with the attitudes, knowledge, values and skills that will give such citizens the required opportunity to come up with maximum gains from the society's membership. The beginning of spreading education for all citizens in Nigeria was at the time of premiership of late Obafemi Awolowo, in Western Region government, when the citizens of the region enjoyed the free education (Eddy & Akpan, 2009). In responding to the Universal Primary Education's (UPE) programme in the Western Region, the Eastern region launched its UPE. The overall goal of the various programmes was fundamentally to increase access to basic education for the benefit of school children. As the UPE programme became successful in the west, the reverse is the case in the Eastern region as it was marred with lack of planning leading to numerous problems.

As seen from the discussion above, the universalisation of Nigeria's basic education originally was a regional project. Meaning, every region of the country attempted to improve its educational programme and better the lives of the citizens in those regions. UPE programme that initially began for the first time in the history of Nigeria as regional project was reformed by the Federal government of Nigeria to offer basic education for every citizen by transforming the contents and programmes of UPE (Eddy & Akpan, 2009). To embed this philosophy of education as entrenched in the Nigeria's National policy on Education, the philosophy would emphasise the development of its citizens into a wide-ranging and active citizen. It will also offer complete incorporation of all citizens into the mainstream of the society and making available equal access to educational opportunities for every citizen operational at basic, secondary and tertiary levels of education, in every sphere of school system (Aluede, 2011).

Right from 1977, the policy of education specified that every child had a basic right to equal educational opportunities, regardless of any real or imagined disabilities. The policy also stipulated that education was required to give equal rights and educational opportunities, in

that any citizen could achieve success regardless of the citizen's background. Federal Ministry of Education (2004). Schools were required to offer vocational and occupational training in preparing for future specialised skills. Schools were required also to launch the citizens to activities that are unconnected to the development of interest and interests, work appreciation of arts, the disposition and abilities to involve in the recreational activities. In essence, the crux of giving right education to every citizen was for manpower development, aiming at national growth and development (Oni, 2009). This was the reason Nigeria designed the policy on education to revolve round the goals and philosophy of the nation.

From the foregoing, it was discovered in Nigeria that the UBE programme had its distinctive qualities UBE (2006). The Scheme made it obligatory for all children in Nigeria including children in Barki Lardi Local Government Area to offer compulsory, free basic education for all children up to secondary school level. Also, it ensured that parents together with the guardians allow their children and wards enrol and complete their basic education up to junior secondary schools as stipulated in the UBE Act of its Section 2, in which some fines for any breach of the Act were provided (Oni, 2008). It is against this background that the researchers assessed the awareness and compliance of Child Right Acts on the school enrolment in Barki Lardi Local Government Area of Plateau State.

Problem Statement

Over the years, Nigerian governments have been confronted with a lot of difficulties in the educational sector, especially in the aspect of pupils' enrolment, among others. As a result of the importance of education in all facets of human development, government at all levels had determined in making policies and programmes for educational development. Every policy and programme of government always experience limitations and at times abandoned, most especially at the time the desired goals become unrealizable and difficult to attain. The Universal Basic Education programme cannot be an exception, The Universal Basic Education enacted act encourage pupils' enrolment which has hitherto not been completely complied with in many states of the country despite the penalties meted to the parents or guidance. Also, awareness is not created enough to sensitize the populace on the need to enrol every school age children, as enacted in the law. It is always opined by many scholars of education that implementation is the graveyard of many worthy policies in Nigeria, particularly at a time the objective of the policy designers are possibly undermined mostly by politics, corruption, lack of human and material resources, *inter -alia*. Therefore, this study assessed the awareness and compliance of the Universal Basic Education Act on the school enrolment in the primary section of Barki Ladi local government area of Plateau state.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the level of awareness of UBE Acts among stakeholders in Barki Ladi local government of Plateau State?
2. To what extent has UBE Acts compliance on pupils' school enrolment in Barki Ladi local government of Plateau State?
3. What is the level of pupils' school enrolment in the local government under UBE Acts?
4. What is the level of school enrolment of girl child in the local government under UBE Acts?

Methods

Research Design

The study adopted descriptive research and survey research methods. In order to get an adequate result, a survey research design was used in which an equal number of questionnaires were administered on all the stakeholders in all the UBE schools in Barki Ladi local government area. The research method specified the nature of the given phenomena. It is concerned with the collection of data for the purpose of describing and interpreting existing conditions. Descriptive research gives a clear picture of a situation. A consideration of a phenomenon according to Osaula (1987), generally begins with a full understanding (description) of the phenomena.

Population and Sample

The entire population of Universal basic schools in Barki ladi local government area was used for the study. Moreover, all the stakeholders that included the school principals, head teachers, parents, teachers, the LEA desk officers in the local government were used. The schools comprised all the 131 public primary schools in the local government. The samples were the selected school principals, head teachers, LEA desk officers, parents and class teachers in the selected UBE schools in the local government. The study covered 188 respondents, comprised the 1 desk officer in the LEA, 22 head teachers, 62 parents and 103 classroom teachers, representing the entire 131 UBE primary schools.

Sampling Technique

Simple random technique was used in identifying respondents in all the UBE schools in the local government. The respondents from the selected schools were school principals/ head teachers, parents, school teachers and the desk officers in local government LEA. They were randomly selected.

Instruments for Data Collection

The study employed both primary and secondary data. The primary data was obtained through the administration of questionnaire while the secondary data was obtained from available records of pupils' enrolments from the Barki Ladi Local Government Local Education Authority (LEA). All the items in the questionnaire were based on the testable assumptions postulated in the research questions. Each questionnaire item required an answer the opinion of the stakeholders on the awareness and compliance of UBE Acts among stakeholders in the local government. Also available records of pupils' enrolment were required and used for data analysis from the school administrators and the desk officers in the LEA.

Procedures for Data Collection

The headmasters and headmistresses, who agreed in being involved in the study, were contacted. Bearing in mind that many of the schools are scattered in what one might consider very remote areas of the local government, the researchers sought for audience to speak in a meeting of academic staff which took place in the sampled schools during the time of the study. Those who were not reached at the meeting were later handed out questionnaires to fill and return. The researchers also used school records to gather more data especially in order to elicit details of pupils' enrolment and with regard to the replies to some items in the questionnaire. For example, the researchers wanted to know the usual number of pupils in each class and how this impacted on teachers' tasks.

Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis was gathered through the use of simple percentages and was presented in tables. This is a form of descriptive research, which Rubin and Babbie (2010) argued has the capability of putting into perspective, the context in which a problem exists. Illustration of the findings was done using Microsoft Excel application software or SPSS. The researchers analyzed all the data using the descriptive statistical tools such as frequency distribution tables, and simple percentage. Charts were presented using the 2007 Microsoft Excel XP Version 10 package.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of awareness of UBE Acts among stakeholders in Barki Ladi Local Government of Plateau State?

Table 1: Awareness of UBE Acts and Pupils' Enrolment

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i>
1.	I am aware of the UBE Acts on the pupils' enrolment in the UBE schools	80	43	108	57	188
2.	Parents are aware that the UBE Acts encourage their pupil enrolment in schools.	58	31	130	69	188
3.	The government is campaigning the awareness of importance of pupils encouragement in the LG	54	29	134	71	188
4.	The politicians and school administrators made the pupils' admission easy	78	41	110	59	188

In the awareness of UBE Acts and pupils' enrolment, 80 of the respondents representing 43% agreed that they were aware of the UBE acts on the enrolment of pupils in UBE schools, while 108 respondents representing 57% disagreed. Also 58 of 31% of the respondents said yes that parents were aware of the UBE Acts, while 130 (69%) said no. Moreover, on item number 3, 54 (29%) respondents that the government are campaigning the awareness on the UBE Acts in the LG, while 134 (71%) disagreed to the claim. Also, 78 (41%) agreed that school administrators made the pupils' admission easy and 110 (59%) disagreed to the claim.

Research Question 2: To what extent has UBE Acts compliance on pupil school enrolment in Barki Ladi local government of Plateau State?

Table 2: Compliance of UBE Acts and Pupils' Enrolment

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i>
1.	Admission to UBE schools is free at no cost	136	72	62	28	188
2.	The school admission procedure is easy and it allow pupils' enrolment	64	34	124	66	188
3.	The minimum of teacher/pupils ratio has been met by the school administration in the schools	129	69	59	31	188
4.	Parents are hugely responding to enroll their children	79	41	110	59	188

On compliance to UBE Acts and pupils' enrolment, 136 of the respondents representing 72% agreed that the admission to UBE schools was free, while 62 respondents representing 28% disagreed. Also 64 of 34% of the respondents said yes that the school admission procedure was easy for enrolment, parents, while 124 (66%) said no. Moreover, on item number 3, 129 (69%) respondents that the minimum of teacher/pupils ratio has been met by school administration, while 59 (31%) disagreed to the claim. Also, 79 (41%) agreed that parents were responding to pupils' enrolment, and 110 (59%) disagreed to the claim.

Research Question 3: What is the level of pupils' school enrolment in the local government under UBE Acts?

Table 3: Level of Enrolment in Schools

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i>
1.	The level of pupils' enrolment has increased in recent times	100	53	88	47	188
2.	The pupil enrolment has increased at least 50% since its enactment of the Acts	104	55	84	45	188
3.	The numbers of pupils enrolled are not adequate for the facilities on ground	104	55	84	45	188
4.	The numbers of pupils enrolled are getting overcrowded	104	55	84	45	188

On the level of enrolment to schools, 100 of the respondents representing 53% agreed that the pupils' enrolment had increased in recent times, while 88 respondents representing 45% disagreed. Also 104 of 55% of the respondents said yes that pupil enrolment had increased at least 50% since its enactment of the Acts, while 84 (45%) said no. Moreover, on item number 3, 104 (55%) respondents that the numbers of pupils enrolled were not adequate for the facilities on ground, while 84 (45%) disagreed to the claim. Also, 104 (55%) agreed that numbers of pupils enrolled were getting overcrowded, and 84 (45%) disagreed to the claim.

Research Question 4: What is the level of school enrolment of girl child in the local government under UBE Acts?

Table 4 Girl-Child Enrolment

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i>	
1.	Girl-child enrolment in the school is more experienced than before in the schools	150	80	38	20	188	
2.	Parents are more aware to enroll their girl-child than before	128	68	60	32	188	
3.	The ratio of boy to girl in the school enrolled is about 70:30	128	68	60	32	188	
4.	The girl-child are willing to enroll and attend schools	130	69	58	31	188	

On Girl-child enrolment, 150 of the respondents representing 80% agreed that the girl-child enrolment in the school was more experienced than before in the schools, while 38 respondents representing 20% disagreed. Also 128 of 68% of the respondents said yes that parents were more aware to enrol their girl-child, while 60 (32%) said no. Moreover, on item number 3, 128 (68%) respondents that the ratio of boy to girl in the school enrolled was about 70:30, while 60 (32%) disagreed to the claim. Also, 130 (69%) agreed that the girl-child are willing to enrol and attend schools, and 58 (31%) disagreed to the claim.

Discussion

The study revealed that there were low levels of awareness of UBE Acts among stakeholders in Barki Ladi Local Government of Plateau State. The study agreed with the opinions of Anaduaka and Okafor (2013) and Utibe (2001) that stated that there were parts required by all stakeholders. These parts are required in carrying out the tasks of education in the UBE scheme. Most stakeholders do not recognise these duties, as they are meant to be carried out under the UBE Acts. The existing law of UBE recommended punishment for parents and guardians that do not allow their children and wards to be enrolled in school. Up till now, children are still seen hawking and begging for alms on the streets during school hours and nobody is doing anything about it. With this breaking of this Act, offenders are punished with payment of fine or imprisonment.

The study also found that there was low UBE Acts compliance on pupil school enrolment in Barki Ladi local government of Plateau State. The study also found that there was low parents' response to pupils' enrolment. This negates the provision of The National Policy on education that recommends that the teacher-pupil ratio shall be 1:40 at the secondary school level, while that of primary school shall be 1:35 (Section 19), which has not

be met in the urban and rural areas. The present study recommended that state and local governments should put up more schools to achieve the stipulated ratio in order to avoid overcrowding, which is inimical to effective teaching and learning.

The study revealed the increased level of pupils' school enrolment in the local government under UBE Acts in recent times. The study identified increased pupil enrolment and that the numbers of pupils enrolled were getting overcrowded. This increase was due to the implementation of Acts that will allow the project of UBE to enjoy a wide coverage. The Act offers punishments for erring parents and guardians. Also, to ensure that poverty is never an obstacle pupils school enrolment, the UBE made provision for free textbooks in core subjects. The programmes also abolished tuition fees at the basic and junior secondary school levels. The legal implication of the UBE Act, made education compulsory and free at all levels (Folorunso, 2009).

The study also found that there was increase in the girl-child enrolment in the school than before. The studies reported that parents were more aware to enrol their girl-child, and are willing to enrol and attend schools. This finding was in response to the philosophy guiding the Nigerian policy of "sound and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the basic, secondary and tertiary levels" (FME, 2004, 2006), the perceived gender gap may not be as a result of inequality of educational opportunities, by implication. In fact, the government implementation of the free Universal Basic Education (UBE) that covers primary and junior secondary education could be an attempt to equalize educational opportunities throughout the country. For example, the proportion of female enrolment at the secondary schools in 1980 and 1999 were 13% and 30% respectively, whereas they were 25% and 36% in 1980 and 1999 respectively for the male (Population Reference Bureau, 2000). Similarly, female enrolment at the primary education level ranged between 43.2% and 44.5% between 1990 and 1998. It ranged between 42.7% and 47% during the same period at the secondary education level. At the tertiary level the overall percentage average was 29.8% during the same time for the female.

Conclusion

Like the rest of the countries of the world, Nigeria has sturdy yearning for development. Today, more than ever before, it has become an indisputable fact that any nation that wants to achieve progress and development must of necessity pay serious attention to the development of its human resources. The key is education. The launching and kicking off of the UBE programme in Nigeria were set to provide free quality basic education to all Nigerian citizens that do not have it. All hands should therefore be on deck to ensure the effective implementation and consequently the success of the programme. The study has confirmed that the level of awareness of UBE Acts among stakeholders like the school administrations,

heads of schools, teachers and parents in Barki Ladi Local Government of Plateau State has increased. There was awareness creation for the public by the various government officials, politicians, and head of schools on the needs for parents to enrol their children in basic primary schools. Moreso, the parents are equally aware of the UBE Acts in the local government, which led to the increase in their children' enrolment.

The study also confirmed that the UBE schools have complied to the admission procedure in almost all schools, hence the free school fees. This led to the mass enrolment of pupils in basic schools, and the minimum of teacher/pupils ratio stipulated by the UBE Acts has been met by the school administrators in the schools. Even though, there are still complaints of overpopulation in the classrooms. The study has confirmed that there is increase in the enrolment of pupils in the local government under the UBE Acts, from the response of the stakeholders. The pupil enrolment has increased at least 50% since its enactment of the Acts, even though the increase numbers of pupils enrolled in UBE schools is more than the facilities on ground, as government could not provide facilities especially, classroom accommodation for meet the enrolment. The study showed that the level of school enrolment of girl- child in the local government under UBE Acts is more than the school enrolment of boy-child. This might be as a result of statewide awareness campaigns embarked upon to sensitize the masses on the need to educate the girl-child. This led to the girl-child enrollees in the local government under the UBE Acts willing to enroll and attend schools, compared to the enrolment before the UBE Acts in the local government. There was also confirmation that school enrolment of pupils in the local government after UBE Acts was more than before the Acts.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made in order to make the pupils' enrolment under UBE programme more effective:

1. Since many people including the parents in the rural areas, even the school teachers have poor awareness on the compulsory pupils' enrolment, public awareness campaign needs to be designed on sensitizing the parents, and community heads, religion organizations for educate their members or wards to enrol their children in the compulsory free basic education.
2. In similar vein, there should be a nationwide UBE awareness and enrolment campaign similar to that of the national immunization programme, general election dates, national census and even the awareness created for the on-going national conference.
3. The politicians and school administrators should make the pupils' admission easy be for the enrollees. Basic education should be made to be free as contained in the UBE

Acts. This will further encourage the large turnout of parents to enrol their children in basic primary schools.

4. Teacher/students ratio has been the major obstacle to the implementation of this programme, therefore, it is recommended that more qualified teachers should be recruited and special salary structure should be designed for them, by doing that at least stakeholders will have confidence in the public schools and that will increase pupils' enrolment.
5. The numbers of pupils enrolled should be commensurate with the facilities provided, especially the classroom accommodation, learning materials and the number of teaching and non-teaching staff provided, and also to avoid overcrowded classrooms. This will boost the quality of the primary education provided encourage enrolment of pupils and make teaching – learning environment for conducive for learning.

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Authorship and Level of Contribution

The two authors investigated the study with much vigour after they had conceived the research problem. They searched and reviewed the related literature and came up with gaps which they attempted to fill. The authors prepared the questionnaire, administered, and collated it for data analysis. The authors approved the final version of the manuscript. It was the joint efforts of the authors that made the manuscript published.

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