

Assessment of the Application of Access Principle of Social Demand Approach in the Management of Basic Education in Edo State.

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Abstract

This study assessed the Application of Access Principle of Social Demand Approach in the Management of Basic Education in Edo State. To this end, the researcher outlined one purpose, one research question and one hypothesis tested at 0.05 level of significance. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The entire population of 331 participants was not used. The sample used consisted of 166 participants (157 Principals and 9 Chief Inspectors of Education) selected through proportionate stratified random sampling technique. Data was collected using a questionnaire of 10 items titled "Assessment of the Application of Social Demand Approach Principles in the Management of Junior Secondary Schools Questionnaire (AASDAPMJSQ)" which was validated by three experts from the faculty of education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. A reliability index of 0.72 was obtained using Cronbach's alpha. Data analysis was done using mean and t-test. The findings revealed that there was a low extent of the application of the access principle of social demand approach in the management of junior secondary schools in Edo State.

Keywords: Basic Education, Social Demand Approach, Access, Educational Management.

Introduction

Education has been seen by many as the backbone of sustainable development. It stimulates and empowers people to participate in their own development. A plan for sustainable development must address the issue of education because it plays a critical role not only in expanding further educational opportunities, but also in fostering basic intellectual abilities such as literacy that are crucial to success in a world where power and survival is closely linked with knowledge (Rossiter, 2016; United Nations 2015; world vision, 2016). Basic education must receive a high level of attention in developing nations for this reason.

Basic education is the bedrock upon which other levels of education are built. By implication, whatever happens, at this level can either make or mar the entire education enterprise. This is why its access has received serious attention in recent times. Access to basic education means making basic education to be within the reach of all including the challenged ones. As one of the social demand approach principle, access is concerned with enrolment, completion and affordability of basic education to children regardless of gender differences, special needs, disabilities/physical challenges, diseases such as HIV/AIDS or children afflicted by armed conflicts (Biermann, 2016; Vayachutala, Archanya and Weerachat 2016). UNICEF (2015) made it clear that access to basic education is not a privilege that society grants to children. It is a duty that the society fulfills to all children. African Union (2014) described basic education access as making basic schooling sufficiently available to enroll each child. Ahmed and Carron (2014) described that access warrants nothing short of adequate provision of basic education to be within the reach of all citizens.

Access is embedded in the human rights and development aspirations which are the progressive vision and goals of Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) which presently is known as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS). Although the conceptual framework of Education for All is broad in terms of envisioning education beyond imparting information, its implementation is greatly reduced to access. The access principle stresses the need to plan education to be accessible to all, based on the needs of the people and the society at given place and time under prevailing cultural, political and economic circumstances (Jalbout, 2015; Haque, Nasirin, Yesmin & Biswas, 2013)

In this principle, some levels of education considered to be basic are made available to anyone who is willing. Access principle is applied when the government decides that education should be provided to all those who wish to attend schools and who are likely to benefit and have ability to do so. In such countries, basic education is considered as a right of every child and that all children of school age will demand for education that is meant for their ages. Schools and facilities have to be supplied to satisfy the demands.

In Nigeria, access is the mainstay of the junior secondary education part of basic education. The Blue print of the Universal basic education and the UBE Act (Federal Ministry of Education 2000) stipulated that all Nigerian children should have access to compulsory basic education of good quality. Access to basic education is considered a fundamental human right in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2009). All these policy documents suggest that investing in basic education has proven benefits of greater economic growth, improve public health and more resilient and peaceful societies. However, translating access principle into the basic education management practices remains a challenge.

Statement of the problem

It is expected that with the application of the principles of access of the social demand approach that every child of school age would enroll in as well as complete quality basic schooling irrespective of gender, place of domicile ,age, physical challenges and special needs.

However, the increasing number of junior secondary school age children seen hawking in the streets especially that of Edo State during school hours, those enrolling but not completing junior secondary education and other out of school children involved in various forms of child labour has attracted the attention of the professional groups, members of the academia, parents, government and society at large. Researcher have also found that junior secondary school completion rate in Edo State is low and that many parents do not send their children to public junior secondary school because they doubts about the quality of education provided in such school.

These situations imply that Edo State has a large gap to fill in terms of access of junior secondary education in the state. One therefore begins to wonder the extent to which the access principle of social demand approach is being applied in junior secondary schools in Edo State.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the application of the principle of the social demand approach in basic education management in Edo State. Specifically, the study seeks to determine the application of access principle of the Social Demand Approach (SDA) in the junior secondary schools management in Edo State.

Research question

The following research question guided the study

1. To what extent is the access principle of Social Demand Approach applied in the management of junior secondary schools in Edo State.

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was also formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of the chief inspectors of Education and principals on the extent to which the access principle is being applied in the management of junior secondary school in Edo State.

Literature review

The issue of access to basic education has attracted the attention of scholars over time. Most of the literature focuses on the need to make basic education not only fee free but also to eliminate other hidden costs and barriers that hinder access. This was supported by Huisman & Smith (2009) who simply stated that eliminating costs is probably not enough to promote universal access and that other obstacles like cultural and economic that keep some groups out of school even if access is truly free must be tackled through policies and advocacy.

Other authors have pointed out that to meet the demand for access in basic education, educational planners and managers must provide several elements of access to school and work with researchers to continue to develop new ways to identify obstacles to access (Biermann, 2016; Jalbout, 2015; Nicolai & Hine 2015). In addition several areas of concern has to be identified in relation to participation in basic schooling such as its financial cost to families, the perceived limited value of education in adulthood (FME, 2014; Taole, 2014). In this respect, United Nations Development Group (UNPG, 2013) stipulated that other costs associated with schooling, including the in position of levies (for example Parent – Teacher Association fees, examination fees etc) and the cost of uniforms and textbooks that deter poor students from regularly attending schools should be eliminated so that they do not make access to basic education a mere illusion. Also of concern for all education managers, are the following issues contained in the Standard Action Plan for Universal Basic Education;

1. The access between each school to the central school must be good and schools to be established within a maximum radius of 3-4km of clusters of houses.
2. Providing adequate transportation methods on the basic of transit time, cost, and safety must be a priority.
3. Intensify efforts to make children more willing to come to school through nutrition, school feeding and health initiatives
4. Avoiding indirect eliminations systems such as disrespect for pupils and their parents, suspensions, expulsions, corporal punishment, bullying and other threats to emotional well-being.
5. Make school environments to be architecturally aesthetic, ornamentally decorated and safe to entice students to attend and want to continue attending.
6. Engage casual workers to keep schools neat, secured, clean, hygienic and free from unwanted animals
7. Launch an aggressive national campaign on access in order to intensify sensitization, advocacy and mobilization for student enrolment, retention and completion of secondary schooling.
8. Conduct sensitization meetings, seminars, workshops, advocacy visits, enrolment drive, campaigns, etc.
9. Review and update the UBE Act to enforce the provisions that stipulate compulsory enrolment and retention of children in schools.
10. Enforce sanctions on parents, guardians and any other persons that hinder children from gaining access to schools,
11. Implement inclusive education policies to ensure access by special needs and physically challenged people,
12. Build additional classrooms to widen access

13. Provide incentives to encourage schools organize remedial after school classes to reduce repetition, failure and drop-out rates
14. Partner with relevant agencies to ensure the health of children as a means of sustaining access (through programmes such school feeding, sports etc.)
15. Promote the development of day and special schools as a means of expanding access and reducing costs to parents
16. Provide recreational facilities and beautify school compounds to entice students to schools (UBEC, 2005)

These notions present critical issues in the application of the principles of access in social demand. Of utmost concern to the present study is to investigate the extent to which the outlined issues are as much as possible, implemented to meet the access principles of SDA.

Method

A descriptive survey design type of research was adopted. Nworgu (2015) stated that a descriptive survey research design is one which aims at collecting data on and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts about a given population.

The study was carried out on a sample of 166 respondents which covered 9 chief Inspectors of education from 9 Local Government Area, and 157 principals of public junior secondary school of Edo State. The instrument for data collection was a developed questionnaire made by the researcher titled "Assessment of the Application of Access principle of social demand approach in the management of junior secondary schools questionnaire (AAAPSDAMJSSQ)". The questionnaire was made up of two versions; one to be completed by the Chief Inspectors of Education and the other to be filled by the Principals, each questionnaire contain 10 relevant items on access. The item was anchored on a 4 point rating scale of Very High Extent, High Extent, Low Extent and Very Low Extent. The respondents were expected to indicate the extent to which each of the items contained in the instrument is being applied. A reliability coefficient of 0.72 was obtained using Cronbach alpha method. Mean was used to answer the research question while t-test was used to test the hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Mean rating of Chief Inspectors of Education and School Principals on the extent to which access principle of the Social Demand Approach (SDA) is being applied in the management of junior secondary schools in Edo State.

ITEMS	CHIEF INSPECTORS OF EDUCATION (N = 9)			PRINCIPALS (N=157)			TOTAL (N = 166)		
	MEAN	SD	REMARK	MEAN	SD	REMARK	MEAN	SD	REMARK
1. Schools are provided with various information on federal Government's strategic plans for improving access to junior secondary schools.	2.78	.44	HE	2.55	.50	HE	2.56	.50	HE
2. State Government establish school very close to the houses and villages (providing school close to houses not more than 4km).	1.56	.73	LE	1.13	.34	VLE	1.16	.38	VLE
3. State Government provides school buses to facilitates students access to school.	2.22	.83	LE	1.09	.33	VLE	1.15	.45	VLE
4. Schools do not collect levies and other non- tuition charges (uniforms, examination, sports or computer	2.22	.78	LE	1.72	.55	LE	1.75	.58	LE

	levies).									
5.	Parents/guardians who allow their children to be absent from school are monitored and sanctioned by the State Government.	1.67	.71	LE	1.55	.52	LE	1.56	.53	LE
6.	State Government and its agencies collect birth registration data from households to plan for species in in Junior secondary Schools.	1.56	.53	LE	1.79	.56	LE	1.78	.55	LE
7.	State Government carry out routine health activities to sustain junior secondary school access.	2.11	.60	LE	1.57	.69	LE	1.60	.70	LE
8.	Recreational facilities are provided to entice students to attend schools.	1.78	.83	LE	1.89	.52	LE	1.88	.54	LE
9.	Principals and teacher treat students and their parents with respect.	3.22	.83	LE	2.68	.91	LE	2.70	.91	HE
10.	School environment are well furnished to entice students to attend and want to continue attending.	1.56	.73	LE	1.89	.75	LE	1.87	.75	LE
Mean of means		2.07	.70	LE	1.78	.57	LE	1.80	.59	LE

Key: (VLE = Very Low Extent, LE = Low Extent, HE = High Extent, VHE =Very High Extent)

The result in table 1 show the aggregated mean of means of 1.80 and the standard deviation of 0.59 indicating that the extent to which access principle of the social demand approach is applied in junior secondary schools management in Edo State is low. The disaggregated mean of means and standard derivation for chief inspectors of education and principals perceived access principle of the social demand approach to be applied in junior secondary schools management in Edo State to a low extent.

The item by item analysis shows that chief inspectors of education rated that item 1 and 9 were applied to a high extent while the remaining eight items (items,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 and 10) were applied to a low extent. On the other hand, principals also rated that items 1 and 9 were applied to a high extent while items 4,5,6,7,8 and 10 were applied to a low extent. The remaining two items (item 2 and 3) were rated to be applied to a very low extent by principals.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the mean rating of chief inspectors of education and principals on the extent to which access principle of the social demand approach (SDA) is applied in junior secondary school management in Edo State.

Table 2: t-test comparison between chief inspectors of education and principal mean ratings on the extent to which access principals of social demand approach (SDA) is applied in junior secondary schools management in Edo State.

Source of variation	n	mean	SD	df	t-cal	p-value
Chief inspectors of Education	9	2.07	.70	164	4.27	.000
Principals	157	1.78	.57			

The results in table 2 shows that the mean for chief inspectors of education ($m = 2.07$, $SD = 0.70$) was significantly greater than that of principals ($m = 1.78$, $SD = 0.57$), $df (164)$, t -cal (4.27), $p = .000$. The hypothesis of no significant difference between the two groups on the extent to which access principle of the social demand approach is applied in junior secondary schools management in Edo State was therefore rejected. Hence, there is significant difference between the mean rating of chief inspectors of education and principals on the extent of the application of access principle in the management of junior secondary school in Edo state.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study indicated mostly a low extent of the application of the access principle of the social Demand Approach in the management of junior secondary Education in Edo State. In the opinions of the chief inspectors of education and principals that participated in the study, only two out of ten items investigated were applied to high extent, another three were applied to low extents while there were very low extents of application of the remaining five. It was also found that there was no significant difference between the mean rating of chief Inspectors of education and principals on the extent to which this access principle of the social demand Approach is applied in the management of junior secondary education in Edo State. These stakeholders held similar views on the extent of the application of the access principle. Their views suggest that the requirement of the access principle of the social demand approach have not highly applied in the management of junior secondary education in Edo State. This finding is in line with that of UNICEF (2015) who reported that access to basic education in Edo State has not been highly applied.

It was evident from the views of the respondents that principals and teachers in junior secondary schools treat students and their parents with respect to a high extent. There was also a high extent to schools been provided with various information on Federal Government's strategic plans for improving access to junior secondary school. These interventions and initiatives are appreciated as they contribute in improving access to basic education, however, as World Bank (2011) pointed out, there are insufficient to ensure universal access to basic education.

Meeting the social demand access to basic education for all requires that each of the requirements for access should be executed up to excellent standards (UNICEF, 2015). Unfortunately, the findings of this study indicate Edo State is not even close to meeting the requirements not to talk of attaining excellence in implementing them. For instance, the finding suggests that the extent of proximity of schools is low and inadequate. A reason for inadequacy of schools by proximity is that government has not built new schools in Edo State since the past few years. Rather, efforts are being made to rehabilitate or erect classrooms in existing ones. Without the building of new schools, new developing area would lack nearby school and his would cause children to trek long distance to other area where schools exist. Aiworo (2018) found that travel is comparatively safe and believes this may be partly attributable to safer route to schools and school children being more familiar with the school journey. The research indicates that children aged eleven and fifteen are most at risk of hit or knocked down on Benin City's roads. This shows that there is an evident shortage of established schools in these areas giving unequal opportunity for basic education of these children.

Aziz and Khan (2012) found that long distance to schools has been a deterrent to access to educational opportunities. Similarly UNESCO (2013) found that lack of nearby school is the third major reason why children do not go to school. Where students commute long distance to school, truancy, misconduct and safety arise. These might limit access as some of the students are likely to miss school and some might even drop out at the slightest opportunity.

Besides, the present study found that despite the policy of no levies in junior secondary schools many schools charge levies as a means of raising funds for uniforms, sport examination fees etc. This situation is different from Ghana and Zimbabwe whom UNICEF (2007) reported have scrapped all forms of levies in schools. Levies are against the principle of the SDA which maintained that free basic education will only be effective if it truly reduce costs to parents instead of hiding cost by simply replacing tuition with other types of contributions such as levies. Some parents could not afford to pay the levies charged and this could make them stop their children from attending schools. It could also make schools to send any affected student out of the class even when the social demand approach stipulated that no child is to be turned away school for non-payment of levies.

The low extents of application of the other items on access are against the principles of the SDA, for instance, without explicit and adequate information on Federal Government's strategic plans for improving access to basic education, the stakeholders will not know what they are expected to do or achieve in managing basic education. Also where school buses are not available to improve access to school especially for the physically challenged and those from poor homes that cannot afford to pay for public transport, the students concerned could experience high levels of stress, become frustrated and drop out of school.

Another finding of the study is that parents who allow their children to be absent from school are not monitored and sanctioned by the state government. Finally school environments are not well furnished, decorated and safe to entice students to attend and want to continue attending. These finding negate the access principle of social demand approach because as United Nations Development Group (UNDG, 2013) pointed out that associated with schooling including the imposition of levy for example cost of uniform, sports wears examination fee etc can deter poor student from regularly attending school should be eliminated so they do not make access to basic education a mere illusion. Aziz and Khan (2012) noted that such obstacles would restrict access amongst children especially those low socio-economic backgrounds, farming areas and other remote areas of the country. It was perhaps for these obstacles that Obialor (2011) found that despite the notable progress in access to basic education, statistics show that access remains limited as over 40 percent of school aged children in the state are not in school, while 21% of those who start school drop out before completing basic six.

Also without collecting and using birth registration data to plan for space in basic schools, it would be difficult to utilize enrolment forecasts to meet the social demands of basic education in Edo State. A situation where recreational facilities are not provided also contrasts with the stipulations of the social demand principle as outlined by Universal Basic Education commission (UBEC , 2005) under such situation, the State cannot be termed successful in making a break – through in meeting the social demand for access to basic education.

A major reason for his finding could that Edo State government felt that with the abolishment of school fees, it has addressed the barrier to basic education. Perhaps, the government is not aware that school distance, inadequate recreational facilities and other cost associated with schooling including the imposition of a levy for example examination fees, sport wears, cost of uniforms and textbooks could deter poor students from regularly attending schools.

Conclusion and Implications

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concludes that Edo State has made some effort in implementing the access principle but these efforts are too few and not sufficient to ensure access to basic education. The findings of the study have some implications for the management of basic education. At a broad management and policy level, there is need for policy decisions and commitments to access rather than mere rhetorics. Also the findings have implication for policy making and dissemination. Failure to communicate education policies to relevant stakeholders would make the policy stipulation unclear even amongst the officers

in charge of basic education programme. Unless stakeholders are timely and well informed about policies, innovation and procedures for management, then such policies may never be effectively applied and universal access to basic education might not be achieved.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and their implications, the following recommendations are made

1. The Edo state government and her agencies should make information on Government's strategic plans for improving access to basic education available to chief inspectors of education, principals and teachers.
2. Edo State government and her agencies should abolish other costs associated with schooling including the imposition of examination fees, sport wears and the cost of uniforms and textbooks that deter poor students from regularly attending schools and make equal opportunity and access difficult.

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