

Public Sector Reforms and Quality of Education in Basic Education in Rivers State of Nigeria

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Abstract

Public sector reforms are usually adopted as strategies for expanding and enhancing the quality of public service delivery, particularly in major public organizations of a given society. This study assessed Public Sector Reforms and Quality of Education in Basic Education in Rivers State of Nigeria. The Systems Theory as made popular in the field of Political Science by David Easton was adopted as the theoretical framework of the study. The survey research design was used to generate and analyzed data. Sample size of the study was 358 gotten from a total population of 3446 by the use of the Taro Yamene sample determination formula. Data was generated mainly by the use of a 4-point Likert Scaled Questionnaire administered and retrieved from the 358 respondents. This was complimented by qualitative information gotten from secondary sources such as books and journal articles. Generated data were analyzed using simple percentages while the hypothesis was tested using the Chi-square at significance level of 0.05 alpha level. The study found that; public sector reforms have had no significant impact on the quality of education at the Basic Education level in Rivers State. The study recommends that; the Rivers State Universal Education Board, should organize periodic seminars and workshops for teachers and other key stakeholders in the education sector at this level in order to improve capacity.

Keywords: *Public, Education, Basic, Sector, Quality.*

Introduction

The public sector is also called the state sector. It is the part of the economy composed of both public services and public enterprises. Public sectors include the public goods and governmental services such as the military, law enforcement, infrastructure, public transit, public education, along with health care and those working for the government itself, such as elected officials.

One of the enduring legacies the colonial masters beleaguered to Nigeria's polity is the Public Service institution which has remained a permanent feature, regardless of occasional changes in political and military Leaderships in Nigeria. The people who work in the Public Sector or service are often referred to as the public servants, or civil servants. They are employees of government

who are responsible for the functioning of government through the implementation of government policies (Onuoha, 1993:278- 279).

The public service in Nigeria is made up of workers in various government ministries, parastatals and agencies. Nigeria's public service, as a service institution is expected to play dual and complementary roles of policy formulation and execution. It occupies a pivotal position in the onerous task of translating or putting into action governmental programmes and activities. This is why Philips (1988, p13) in his justification for Nigeria's public service reasoned "Civil/Public service in Nigeria is the major instrument with which the government implements its policies and as the primary and primate instrument of government, its nature, effectiveness and response cannot escape the constant attention of government whose intent is fulfilling its pledges to the people". To be sure, therefore, like any other instrument or agency, to make it functional and operational, the Nigeria's Public Service has to be constantly overhauled, reformed, reshaped and reoriented.

Series of reform initiatives were established in the post-independence period. Some of them are: the Morgan Commission (1963), attended to the general demand for wage increase consequent on the Mbanefo wage award of 1959, proposed a minimum wage on geographical basis.

The Elwood Grading Team (1966), tackled the anomalies arising from the grading of posts, and proposed uniform salaries for civil service officers performing identical tasks. Adebayo Commission of 1971, set up to inquire into the issue of wage and salary, however deeper managerial challenge pushed its terms of reference beyond wages and salary to issues of organization and structure (Olaopa, 2009).

The Udoji Commission of 1974 diagnosed the central problem of the Nigerian Public Service as that of inability to respond to serious changes. It introduced modern methods of managing complex organizations; The Federal Government undermined the Udoji Report by neglecting its series of recommendation. The wage and compensation issue that surfaced in the pre-1954 reforms again reared its head in the immediate post- independence period and connected all the commissions set up at that time.

The Dotun Philips Study Group in 1985 (Ayeni, 2008: 60), specifically assesses the effectiveness of the Public service which eventually led to recommendations about reduction in personnel, and fundamentally the enthronement of professionalism. The Babangida regime, on the basis of the Phillips Report, produced the 1988 Civil Service Reforms through Decree No.43 of 1988. To establish a virile, dynamic and result- oriented Public service. The 1988 reform emphasized the need for specialization, regular training and retraining (Dibie, 2003). Because some of the commission's recommendations were turned down, and the implementation of the accepted ones did not achieve the intended goal the Civil Service continued to perform poorly.

Beyond the aforementioned reforms, Nigeria on 30th September 1999 launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE). This was a major reform in the educational sector aimed at reversing the disturbing rate of illiteracy and out-of-school children by making basic education compulsory and

free (Federal Ministry of Education, 2000). Universal Basic Education entails the transmission of fundamental knowledge to all facets of the Nigerian society from generation to generation. It has three main components Universal, Basic and Education. And to oversee the success of this reform programme, the Federal Government established the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC). The study is structured into four interrelated parts; after the foregoing part are; theoretical framework and conceptual review, methods, data presentation, analysis and discussion and conclusion/recommendation.

Theoretical Framework

Systems Theory

According to Sharma and Sadhana (2006), system theory has been in use since 1950s. Easton (1954), conceived system as essentially an assemblage of subsystems interconnected and mutually interdependent to each other, so as to form a complex system. It explains relationship and not individuals, elements that guide the understanding of the theory are:

a. Parts

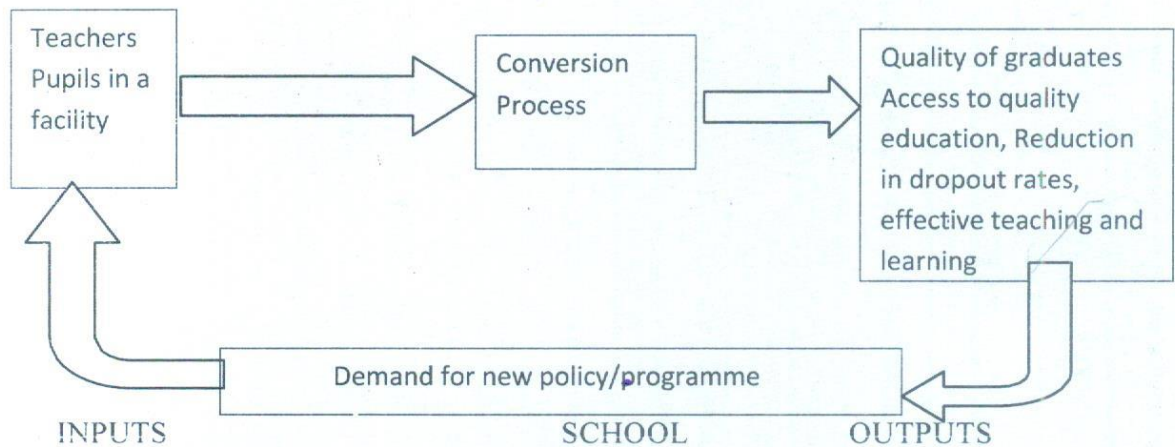
b. The parts must be related to the whole and;

c. Each part makes certain contributions towards the survival of the whole

The last aspect is referred to as departments, do not work for the realization of their own personal interests but rather for the overall goal and objective of the organization. Lucey (1997), observes that, the systems approach is a framework, which helps us to analyze and explore the operation and interactions which exist in the system. Systems are composed mainly of three key activities which are inputs, process and outputs. Ezeani (2006), opines that an important element in the systems approach is the emphasis on input-output analysis. This implies an interrelated set of activities that allows for the conversion of inputs and outputs from the environment. It also consists of demands and support. Demands are claims made by individuals and groups on the political system for action to satisfy their interest. Support is rendered when groups and individuals abide by election results, pay taxes, obey laws and have regard to decisions and actions of the authoritative political system made in response to demands (Rees *et al*, 2001:40).

The system is interrelated and interdependent and in order to improve on a system, one must understand how it works. The relevant aspect of a system therefore includes inputs, processes, outputs, controls and feedback (Ologbenla, 2004). Inputs are the items which go into the system. Process is what the system does and this is conversion of inputs into outputs. Thus, output is the result of the process. Controls serve as regulatory methods, while feedback is the information received on the quality of outputs. This explains that organizations are dynamic with interconnecting parts (Rees *et al*, 2001:40).

Easton's Model of System Analysis



Source: Hague and Harrop (1982)

This theory is a useful framework for understanding the dynamics of public sector reforms and efficiency in the universal basic education commission which is the body charged with the responsibility of providing quality education at the basic level in Nigeria.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Public Sector

Public sector also known as state sector is the portion of nation's affairs especially economic affairs that is controlled by government agencies. It is a part of the economy that comprises of both the public services and public enterprise organs that are not part of the private sector or voluntary sector. Public services on the other hand includes public goods and governmental service such as military, law enforcement, infrastructure (public roads, bridges, tunnels, water supply, sewers, electric grids telecommunication, etc.) public transit, public education along with health care and those working for government (employees) and elected or appointive officers (Johnson, 2016).

The Public Service refers to all organisations that exist as part of government machinery for implementing policy decisions and delivering services that are of value to citizens. It is a mandatory institution of the state under the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as outlined in Chapter VI of the Constitution under the title: The Executive, Part I (D) and Part II (c) which provides for a public service at the federal and state levels of government (Onah, 2009). The Public Service in Nigeria comprises the following:

- i. The civil service often referred to as the core service, consisting of line ministries and extra-ministerial agencies.
- ii. The public bureaucracy, or the enlarged public service, made up of the following:

- a. Services of the state and national assembly.
- b. The judiciary
- c. The armed forces
- d. The police and other security agencies
- e. Paramilitary services (immigration, customs, prisons etc.)
- f. Parastatal and agencies - including social service, commercially-oriented agencies, regulatory agencies, educational institutions, research institutes, etc.

The Public Service in Nigeria is a colonial heritage of public administration. During the colonial rule, the upper echelon of the Civil Service was dominated by Europeans on who were concentrated executive, judicial and legislative powers. Succeeding constitutional reviews however increased the stake of Nigerians at the helm of the Public Service as a national institution for spearheading the rapid transformation of the nation and ensuring continuity of administration (Onah, 2009). The public service of any country stands out as the major machinery of government for the formulation and implementation of public policies. It does this by translating the plans and programmes of government into concrete public goods and services for the use of the citizenry. Since public bureaucracy is primarily concerned with public administration, the management of public affairs therefore rests heavily on it. Whatever the system of government in practice in a country might be, the public service is designed to be the prime mover of the social and economic development of a nation.

Universal Basic Education in Nigeria

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme is an educational programme aimed at eradicating illiteracy, ignorance and poverty. It is in compliance with the Declaration of the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) which was made in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, and Bating clearly in Article 1 that every person - child, Youth on Adult shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic needs. This declaration was reaffirmed at the World Summit for Children also held in 1990, which stated that all children should have access to basic education by the year 2000. The World Summit for Children placed a lot of emphasis on raising the levels of female literacy. In a bid to achieve education goals, the Dakar World Education Forum was held as a follow-up meeting to the WCEFA where new sets of goals were set to be attained by the year 2015. The goals include:

- a. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
- b. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, with special emphasis on girls, children in difficult circumstances and from ethnic minorities have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
- c. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;
- d. Achieving a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;
- e. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;

- f. Improving all aspects of the quality of education, and ensuring excellence for all, so that recognized and reasonable learning outcomes are achieved, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Antecedents of UBE

Nigeria has made efforts in the past to provide broad-based education through various programmes (Patrick. 2000). These programmes include:

- a. Introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Western Region on 17th January 1955.
- b. Introduction of Universal Primary Education in the Eastern Region in February 1957.
- c. Introduction of UPE in Lagos (then Federal Territory) in January 1957.
- d. The publication of the National Policy on Education in 1977, which is unequivocal in its insistence on functional, universal and qualitative education. The Policy declares government's intention to use a variety of strategies for the provision of Universal Basic Education for all citizens.
- e. Launching of Universal Free Primary Education on 6th September 1976.
- f. The launching of Universal Basic Education (UBÉ) on September 1999.

The UBEC's administration is headed by an executive secretary appointed by the president on the recommendation of Education Ministry. The highest decision making body of National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) is the Governing Board headed by a Chairman and Secretary (which is the executive secretary of the commission) and members. The board members are representatives of federal ministries, institutions and professional organisations which include Federal Ministries of Education and Finance, Federal Colleges of Education (Technical), Federal Colleges of Education (Conventional), State Colleges of Education, Nigerian Academy of Education and Nigerian Union of Teachers (Ojoye, 2018).

Method

This study adopted the survey research design. The population of this study consisted of the stakeholders of basic education in Rivers State. The stakeholders are: the staff of UBEB, teachers, parents, civil society organisations and the students. But for purpose of the study, the parents, represented by the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) will stand in for the students. The population of the study is put at Three thousand four hundred forty six (3446). The distribution of the population is as follows: Staff of SUBEB: Four Hundred and Forty (440); Teachers: Two Thousand, One Hundred (2,100); Parents: Eight Hundred and Forty-Eight (848) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs): Fifty-Eight (58).

The appropriate tool used in determining the sample size is Yamene (1967). The formula is express thus:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

- n = sample size to be determined
- N = the entire population of interest
- = error margin (0.05)
- I = constant substituting the formula we have

$$\begin{aligned}
 n &= \frac{3,446}{1 + 3,446(0.05)^2} \\
 &= \frac{3,446}{1 + 3,446(0.0025)} \\
 &= \frac{3,446}{1 + 8.62} \\
 &= 358.2 \\
 &= 358 \\
 n &= 358 \text{ (Nearest whole number)}
 \end{aligned}$$

The sampling technique that was used for this study was the “stratified sampling technique”, the reason for this technique was largely informed by its ability to group population into some definite characteristics or strata.

The questionnaire was the main instrument used in collecting primary data while interviews were used to compliment data collection. Also existing literature were used as secondary data to aid the data obtained from the primary sources.

Collected data were analyzed using simple percentage method while hypothesis was tested using chi-square (χ^2).

The chi-square (χ^2) model is given by

$$X^2 = E \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$$

- Σ = Summation of
- O = Observed frequency
- E = Expected frequency

The expected frequency (E) is computed using the formula

$$E = \frac{\text{Number of Respondents (Actual Samples size)} \times N}{\text{Number of variables (n)}}$$

Where N= Number of respondents (Actual sample size)

n = Number of variable (yes, No, Don't know)

Degree of freedom (df)

The degree of freedom (df) is given by $n - 1$

Where n = number of variables

Level of significances

The level of significance was determined at 0.05 alpha level. This implies that the study was based on 95% confident level.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

Table 1: Distribution of Questionnaire

S/No	Item	No. of Questionnaire	Percentage	No. of Questionnaire Returned
1	SUBEB Staff	80	22.3	55
2	Teachers	180	50.3	125
3	Parents	72	20.1	35
4	CSOs	26	7.3	25
Total		358	100	240

A total of 358 questionnaires were administered to the respondents, as shown in the table above. However, only 240 questionnaires were filled and returned. The returned questionnaire were presented as shown in the demographics of age range, sex, educational qualifications and marital status as shown in the tables below.

Socio-demographic information of the respondents.

Table 2

Sex	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	140	58.33
Female	100	41.67
Total	240	100

Sources: Researcher's Field Work, 2024.

From the data shown above, it shows that 140 respondent's representing 58.33% are male, while 100 respondents representing 41.67% are female.

Table 3: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
25 – 30	40	16.67
31 – 55	35	14.58
56 and above	165	68.75
Total	240	100

Sources: Researcher's Field Work, 2024

From the data shown above 40, (24%) of respondents are between the ages of 25-30 years. 35 (14.58%) are between the ages of 31 – 55 years. While 165 (68.75%) are 56 years and above. The significance of the age distribution as shown above is that a combined 280 respondents representing 75.7% are between the ages 31 and above.

Table 4: Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Single	25	10.42
Married	215	89.58
Total	240	100

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2024.

Majority of the people polled (89%) are married.

Table 5: Respondents based on Educational Qualifications

S/N	Educational Qualifications	Frequency	Percentages (%)
1	FSLC	30	12.50
2	SSCE	60	25.00
3	HND/BSC	135	56.25
4	MSC/PhD	10	4.17
5	VOCATIONAL EDUCATION	5	2.08
	Total	240	100

Source: Field survey, 2024

From table 5, FSLC holders are 17.14%, SSCS holders 34.29%, HND/BSc HOLDERS 40%, MSc/PhD 5.71% while only 2.86% did vocational education

How has public sector reforms impacted on the quality of Rivers State Universal Basic Education?

Table 6

VARIABLES	OBSERVED N	EXPECTED N	RESIDUAL
Strongly Agree	45/	60	-15
Agree	57	60	-3
Disagree	68	60	-8
Strongly disagree	70	60	10
Total	240		

Source: Researcher’s field work, 2024.

When respondents were asked the question, “Do you agree that public sector reforms have impacted on the quality of basic education in a significant 45 answered, “strongly agree”, 57 replied “agree”, 68 disagreed, while 70 strongly disagreed. This means that majority believe that the public sector reforms have not impacted positively on the quality of basic education in any significant manner.

Test of Hypothesis

Decision Rule

A. Where the calculated value is less than the tabulated (critical) value, the HA will be eliminated and the HO will be acknowledged.

B. Where the calculated value is higher than the tabulated (critical) value, the HA will be acknowledged and the Ho will be eliminated.

$$\text{Chi-square Test: } X^2 = \sum_j \left(\frac{oL-Ej}{Ej} \right)$$

Ha: Public sector reforms have significant impact on the quality education at the Basic Education level.

Table 8

VARIABLES	OBSERVED N	EXPECTED N	RESIDUAL
Strongly Agree	55	60	-5
Agree	62	60	2
Disagree	53	60	-7
Strongly disagree	70	60	10

Total **240**

Source: Researcher's field work, 2024.

$$E = \sum O / N = 240 / 5 = 48$$

O	E	O-E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
55	60	-5	25	0.41667
62	60	2	4	0.0667
53	60	-7	49	0.8187
70	60	10	100	1.6667

$$X^2_{cal} = \frac{(O-E)^2}{E} = 2.9691$$

N=Number of observations

O=Observed Value

E=Expected Value

(O-E)=Residual Value

(O - E)² = Square of Residual Value

$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$ = Square of Residual Value divided by Expected Value

$\sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$ -Chisquare Value Calculated= X²calculated

X²calculated = 2.9691

df=(11-1)=(4-1)=3

X²read= X² (0.05,3)= 7.81

Since X²calculated < X²read we accept the Null, and reject alternative, since it falls within the acceptable region. This implies that Public sector reforms have not had significant impact on quality of education at the Basic Education level.

Discussion of Findings

It was discovered that Public sector reforms have not had significant impact on quality of basic education. This is against the backdrop of the fact that the analysis originating from hypothesis showed that the statistical chi-square (X^2) value of 2.9691 is less than X^2 tabulated value of 7.81 which made the researcher to accept the null hypothesis. This agrees with Jega (2018), who found that there is limited quality of basic education in Nigeria. This finding is also in tandem with Okolo (2010) who revealed that the reforms did not significantly impact positively on quality of education.

Conclusion/Recommendations

From the analysis originating from the hypothesis showed that the statistical chi-square (X^2) value of 2.9691 is less than X^2 tabulated value of 7.81 which made the study to accept the null hypothesis. This showed that Public sector reforms have not had significant impact on quality of basic education.

RSUBE should organize periodic seminars and workshop for teachers and other key stakeholders, in order to improve their capacity. Again, the RSUBE should overhaul its supervisory unit. One of the basic problems of basic education in Nigeria is the absence of an effective functioning teachers- supervision-mechanism. The thinking is that if teachers are well supervised, their performance will improve. RSUBE should also improve on motivation. Motivation has a positive relationship with improved performance.

The study also recommends that RSUBE overhaul its entire operation structures with the view to fully and properly aligning with the vision of the RSUBE. This will enhance its deliverables and ensure positive outcomes in basic education.

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