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ENROLLMENT PATTERN AND CLASSROOM SITUATION IN EDO STATE PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This study analysed the enrollment pattern and classroom situation in Edo State public primary schools from 2016-2020. To achieve this, four research questions were raised and answered. The simple descriptive survey research design was used. Two instruments, a checklist and a questionnaire were used to collect data for the study. The data collected were analysed, using frequency count, percentage and mean. The analysis revealed that: pupils' enrollment in the schools was high and on the increase yearly; enrollment for gender was higher for male than for female; highest in grade level 1 and lowest in grade level 6. It was also found that the classroom situation was not conducive enough. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Edo State government should maintain the high enrollment level by ensuring that the UBE and Edo-BEST schemes are sustained, more classrooms be built and more furniture provided in all the schools.

Keywords: Enrollment pattern, Classroom situation, Primary education, Edo State

Introduction

Enrollment of pupils into primary schools dates back to when western education was introduced to Nigeria by the missionaries in 1842. Expansion of primary education has since been on the increase because of the attention it has received since the missionaries' time through the colonial era to the present day. This could also be as a result of the society and government's realization of the importance of education in a nation's overall development.

Nigerian government has made various attempts in the past to make education accessible to all school aged children in the country. Such attempts included the provision of broad based schooling through

the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in the Western (1955) and Eastern (1957) regions; the publication of the National Policy on Education in 1977; the launching of the free Universal Basic Education (UBE) at the national level in 1999 and Edo-BEST Programme in Edo State in 2018 to overhaul the basic education sub-sector.

These programmes might have attracted many children to primary schools, thereby, increasing enrollment. To buttress this, Nwadiani (2010) stated that primary schools began to witness rapid increase since the introduction of the UPE. The explosion was without adequate planning because the education policy which ought to be first came a year after the UPE was launched and need assessment thereafter was not well done. Lack of reliable data became a problem as it had great implication for enrollment. The rise in education demand could have put pressure on available school resources. Teacher-pupil ratio increased and classrooms were no longer enough, leading to pupils' congestion in the available ones. Lending credence to this, Osarenren-Osaghae and Irabor (2018) asserted that since the UBE programme began, it has been riddled with challenges of poor planning, inadequate facilities and student population explosion.

Aside from the free education policy, other forces that also added to the enrolment surge included parents and their wards aspirations for education; perception of education as an economic good; uncontrolled population and education politicization. With regard to educational aspiration, parents, particularly the poor and less educated enrolled their children in schools not only for the benefits associated with schooling, but to also have access to government employment which they felt could enhance their status (Olaniyan, 2011).

Education as an economic good is seen as the main agent for the formation of human capital that brings about development. With the studies of human capital economist in the early 60s, many nationalist leaders were encouraged to invest in education because with trained citizenry, varied changes could occur and ultimately, poverty, unemployment, ignorance, income inequality and diseases would be eradicated. For population explosion, the progress made in science and technology has led to great improvement in health care. Infant mortality has greatly reduced amid high birth rate which had hitherto resulted in uncontrolled population (Nwadiani, 2010).

Politically, education policy is subjected to government's manipulation. The fact that education is seen as a public good, government sees it as a gift to its citizens rather than an outgrowth from societal values and needs. Adeyinka (2012) stated that in Nigeria, education politicization is a major problem of education growth and in an attempt to meet up with their counterparts, many States engaged in school operation even when they were least ready for it. He added that this could increase enrollment, leading to classroom congestion.

Individuals enroll in primary schools so that they could read, write, obtain skills, knowledge and widen opportunities for educational advancement. They also do that for improved health and longer life, improved use of leisure time, more informed and efficient consumer behaviour and improved ability to manage personal assets (Weibrod and McCarthy quoted in Nwadiani, 2010). All these benefits associated with education could have greatly increased primary school enrollment in Nigeria, thereby leading to overcrowded classrooms. As a result of pupils' overpopulation, the teaching-learning environment may fall short of the minimum standard as it is now characterized by classroom congestion and crumbling facilities. Corroborating this view, Owoseni, Ibem and Opoko (2020) found that a sizeable portion of the infrastructure in public schools in Nigeria is in a state of disrepair.

Amidst the increase in primary school enrollment, it has been observed that the number of boys that enroll into basic school is higher than that of girls. To buttress this, Alike (2009) asserted that the gender gap favouring boys in enrollment is found to be steadily high. She added that the girl child is more unlikely to enroll or may drop out of the school system due to socio-economic status of their parents, early marriage, pre-marital pregnancy and home chores.

Despite the rising trend in school enrolment, there seems to be the issue of non-completion of primary school among the pupils that enrolled into the basic education as it has been observed in the grade wise-enrollment pattern of public primary schools in Edo State between 2016 and 2019. This is supported by Aliero (2020) on factors responsible for rising dropout among primary school pupils in Nigeria, where he stated that despite the increasing attention of the Nigerian government to basic education, school dropout has remained a problem. He added that the growing literature on school dropout revealed that those that did not complete their education, when

compared to their peers who graduated, are more often related to poverty, schooling expenses, unemployment, single parenthood, pre-marital pregnancy, health and culture related issues.

Statement of the Problem

In recent times in Edo State, it has been observed that pupils' enrollment into primary schools has continued to increase amidst inadequate and overcrowded classrooms. The situation is worrisome as pupils learn in non-conducive classrooms and the pre-existing facilities are stretched beyond measure. The increase in enrollment is not being matched with additional classrooms, chairs, desks and teaching aids. Pupil-teacher ratio of 1:40 recommended in the National Policy on Education is not adhered to, as some classes have more than 60 pupils. Of the existing classes, some are housed in dilapidated structures, which further reduced the number of functional classrooms. In some schools, teachers find it difficult to move round the classrooms for supervision because of large class size caused by the increased in enrollment (Eseigbe and Odigie, 2015). The "red roof revolution" embarked upon by the state government to renovate some public schools across the state only took place in some selected schools and no extra classrooms were constructed to address the issue of classroom congestion. As a result, it has been observed by most stakeholders that pupils' performance, particularly in the primary six school leaving certificate is on the downward trend. This study therefore is out to determine the actual enrolment pattern and classroom situation in Edo State public primary schools and the way forward.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. determine the actual enrollment pattern with respect to number, grade levels and gender across 4years (2016/17-2019/20) and
2. ascertain the classroom situation in Edo State public primary schools.

Research Questions

To guide this study, the following research questions were raised: What is the annual pupils' enrollment growth in Edo State public primary schools?

1. What is the pattern of enrollment in respect of grade level 1-6 in Edo State public primary schools?
2. What is the gender pattern of enrollment in Edo State public primary schools?
3. What is the classroom situation in Edo State Public Primary Schools?

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised all the 375,711 pupils in the 1,089 public primary schools in Edo State as at 2020. The sample size was 100 schools and this was determined, using 10% of the total population. Pupils constituted the respondents and 5 of them were randomly picked from each of the sampled schools, making it 500 pupils. The instruments used were a checklist titled "Enrollment Pattern Checklist (EPC)" and a questionnaire titled "Classroom Situation Questionnaire (CSQ)". The checklist was designed to obtain information from the State Ministry of Education and the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) on the Enrollment Pattern of Public Primary Schools in the State. The questionnaire was designed to obtain information from primary school pupils on the classroom situation. The instruments were validated by two experts in measurement and evaluation department of the Faculty of Education, University of Benin. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested, using Cronbach Alpha and a coefficient of 0.85 was obtained. The checklist, because it has already occurred, was not tested. Data collected were analysed, using frequency counts, percentages and mean.

Results

Research question 1: What is the annual pupils' enrollment growth in Edo State public primary schools?

Table 1: Enrollment of pupils in Edo State Public Primary Schools (2017-2020)

Year	Enrolment	Percentage increase/decrease (%)
2017	287,337	
2018	291,121	1.29% increase
2019	316,805	8.11% increase
2020	375,711	15.68% increase

Source: Ministry of Education, Benin City

Table 1 showed that in 2017 session, enrolment was 287,337. In 2018, it increased to 291,121 (1.29% increase). In 2019, the figure was 316,805, with an increase of 8.11% over the previous session. In 2020, the enrolment was 375,711, which translated to a 15% increase over the previous academic session's enrolment.

Research question 2: What is the grade-wise enrollment pattern in Edo State public primary schools?

Table 2 Grade levels 1-6 Pattern of enrollment in Edo State public primary schools from 2017 – 2020.

Year	Grade						Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
2017	52,807 (18.8%)	50,570 (17.60%)	48,650 (16.93%)	47,404 (16.50%)	45,551 (15.85%)	42,351 (14.32%)	287,333 (100%)
2018	53,502 (18.38%)	51,236 (17.60%)	49,291 (16.93%)	48,028 (16.50%)	46,151 (15.85%)	42,913 (14.74%)	291,121 (100%)
2019	56,363 (17.79%)	55,998 (17.68%)	53,302 (16.83%)	51,382 (16.22%)	51,858 (16.36%)	47,900 (15.11%)	316,802 (100%)
2020	68,344 (18.20%)	65,265 (17.37%)	64,182 (17.08%)	61,250 (16.30%)	58,874 (15.67%)	57,796 (15.37%)	375,711 (100%)

Source: State Universal Basic Education Board, Benin City

Table 3 showed that in 2017, out of the 287,333 total enrollment, 52,807 pupils (18.8%) enrolled into grade 1; 50,570 pupils (17.60%) enrolled into grade 2; 48,650 pupils (16.93%) enrolled into grade 3; 47,404 pupils (16.50%) enrolled into grade 4; 45,551 pupils (15.85%) enrolled into grade 5; and 42,351 pupils (14.32%) enrolled into grade 6.

In 2018, out of the 291,121 total enrollment, 53,502 pupils (18.38%) enrolled into grade 1; 51,236 pupils (17.60%) enrolled into grade 2; 49,291 pupils (16.93%) enrolled into grade 3; 48,028 pupils (16.50%) enrolled into grade 4; 46,151 pupils (15.85%) enrolled into grade 5; and 42,913 pupils (14.74%) enrolled into grade 6.

In 2019, out of the 316,802 total enrollment, 56,365 pupils (17.79%) enrolled into grade 1; 56,364 pupils (17.68%) enrolled into grade 2; 51,382 pupils (16.83%) enrolled into grade 3; 53,302 pupils (16.22%) enrolled into grade 4; 51,858 pupils (16.36%) enrolled into grade 5; and 47,900 pupils (15.11%) enrolled into grade 6.

In 2020, out of the 375,711 total enrollment, 68,344 pupils (18.20%) enrolled into grade 1; 65,265 pupils (17.37%) enrolled into grade 2; 64,182 pupils (17.08%) enrolled into grade 3; 61,250 pupils (16.30%) enrolled into grade 4; 58,874 pupils (15.67%) enrolled into grade 5; and 57,759 pupils (15.37%) enrolled into grade 6.

Research question 3: What is the gender pattern of enrollment in Edo State public primary schools?

Table 3: Pattern of Enrollment in respect to Gender (2017-2020)

Year	Male	Percentage (%)	female	Percentage (%)
2017	145,388	50.27	143,819	49.73
2018	147,302	50.60	143,819	49.40
2019	160,283	50.59	156,522	49.41
2020	190,941	50.82	184,770	49.18
Average	160,979	50.59	157,232	49.41

Source: Ministry of Education, Benin City

Table 3 showed that in 2017, male enrollment was 145,388 (50.27%) while that of female was 143,819 (49.73%). In 2018, male enrollment was 147,302 (50.60%) while that of the female was 143,819 (49.40%).

In 2019, male enrollment was 160,283 (50.59%) while that of the female was 156,522 (49.41%). In 2020, male enrollment was 190,941 (50.82%) while that of female was 184,770 (49.18%). On the average, the enrollment for males was 160,979, representing 50.59% while that of the females was 157,232, representing 49.41% of the total enrollment for the year 2017-2020. It therefore revealed that enrollment was higher for males, an implication that more boys attended primary schools than girls.

Research Question 4: What is the classrooms situation in Edo State public primary schools?

To answer this, responses to items 1-6 on the questionnaire were analysed. The result is shown in table 4.

Table 4: Analysis of responses to classroom situation

S/N	ITEMS	N	YES (%)	NO (%)
1	Are the classrooms in your school overcrowded?	500	400(80%)	100(20%)
2	Are the roofs of the classrooms good?	500	148(29.6%)	352 (70.4)
3	Is there a writing board in your classroom?	500	355(71%)	145 (29)
4	Are there chairs and tables for teachers and pupils?	500	500(100%)	Nil (0%)
5	Are the available chairs and tables in good shapes?	500	301(60.2%)	199 (30.8)
6	Are the available chairs and tables adequate?	500	157(31.4%)	343 (68.6%)

In table 4, it is shown in item 1 that out of the 500 respondents, 400 (80%) indicated that their classrooms were overcrowded, while 100 (20%) indicated that their classrooms were not overcrowded. In item 2, out of the 500 respondents, 148 (29.6%) indicated that the roofs were good, while 352 (70.4%) indicated that the roofs were not good. In item 3, out of the 500 respondents, 355 (71%) indicated that there were writing boards in their classrooms, while 145 (29%) indicated that there were no writing boards in their classrooms. In item 4, all the respondents (100%) indicated that there were chairs and tables in their classes for both teachers and pupils. In item 5, out of the 500

respondents, 301 (60.2%) indicated that the available chairs and tables were in good shapes, while 199 (39.8%) indicated that the available chairs and tables were not in good shapes. In item 6, out of the 500 respondents, 157 (32.4%) respondents indicated that the available chairs and tables in their classes were adequate for the pupils, while 343 (68.2%) indicated that the chairs and tables in their classes were not adequate to accommodate the pupils.

Discussion of Findings

The finding in table 1 showed that pupils' enrollment in Edo State Public Primary Schools was on the increase yearly. This could have been as a result of the implementation of the free UBE programme in 1999 by the Federal Government and Edo-BEST Programme in 2018 by Edo State Government. Many parents who could not afford to enroll their wards in schools prior to these periods could have taken advantage of the free programmes to enroll their children in school. This ultimately could have soared enrollment into primary schools. This finding is in line with Nwadiani (2010), who asserted that primary schools enrollment in Nigeria began to witness rapid increase since the introduction of the free UPE in 1955 and 1957 in the Western and Eastern regions respectively. It also corroborated the study of Osarenren-Osaghae and Irabor (2018) where they stated that since the UBE Programme started, it has been riddled with the challenges of student population explosion.

The finding in table 2 showed that boy's enrollment was higher than that of girls. This could be as a result of the fact that some parents prefer sending their sons to schools, rather than their daughters because of the fear of pre-marital pregnancy and the fact that they want them to stay at home for domestic chores. This implies that enrollment pattern was in favour of boys. This finding agreed with Alike (2009) who found in her study on gender imbalance that the gap favouring boys in school enrollment was high and that the girl child was more likely not to enroll or may drop out of school due to socio-economic status of parents, early marriage, pre-marital pregnancy and household chores.

The finding in table 3 showed that the higher the grade, the lower the number of pupils that are enrolled into primary schools. It was also revealed that grade 1, in the years under review, had the highest enrollment, followed by grades 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively. This

could be as a result of the fact that not all that enrolled into primary one were able to complete their primary education, probably because of poverty, health related issues, pre-marital pregnancy. Despite the free UBE Programme implemented by the Nigerian government and the Edo-BEST put in place by the Edo State Government, school dropout has remained endemic among primary school pupils. Though, the UBE may be free, not everything about it is free. Besides nonpayment of school fees, uniform, books and other sundry expenses are borne by the parents. Hence, many pupils from the low income families may not be able to complete primary education. This is in line with the findings of Aliero (2020) that worked on factors responsible for rising dropout in primary school pupils in Nigeria, and he stated that despite the increasing attention of the Nigerian government to basic education, school dropout has remained a problem. He added that the growing literature on school dropout revealed that those that did not complete their education, when compared to their peers who graduated, are more often related to poverty, schooling expenses, unemployment, single parenthood, pre-marital pregnancy, health and culture related issues.

The findings in table 4 showed that the classroom situation was not conducive enough as a result of the classroom congestion. This could have been occasioned by the increase in primary school enrollment as a result of the implementation of the free UBE Programme. This finding is in line with Esegbe and Odigie (2015) where they asserted that teachers find it difficult to move around in classrooms when teaching because of the large population of pupils. It was also found that some of the roofs of the classrooms were not good. Though most of the classrooms had red roofs that were still intact, some schools blocks of classrooms still had tattered roofs with broken windows and floors. There are still some abandoned blocks of classrooms that look like death traps in some of the schools visited. It was also revealed that most of the classrooms had writing board since 71% indicated so. This could be as a result of the fact that most of the teachers may have had to improvise writing board where there were none since they had to teach. Though, most of the classrooms had writing board, it was observed that many of the writing boards were improvised walls in front of the classes painted with charcoal powder. It was also found that all the classrooms had chairs and tables for the

teachers and pupils to sit on. It was also revealed that most of the available chairs and tables were not in good shapes and they were not adequate for the pupils to sit on due to overpopulation. These findings agreed with the study done by Opoko, Ibem and Owoseni (2020) on learning environment, where they found that a large portion of infrastructure in public schools in Nigeria is in a state of disrepair and grossly inadequate.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that pupils' enrollment in Edo State public primary schools was high and was on the increase yearly; The pupils' enrollment was higher for the males than for the females and highest for grade level one than for the other grades. It was also concluded that the classroom situation was not conducive enough due to overcrowding of pupils, the tattered and leaking roofs, improvised writing boards and defective and inadequate furniture.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government should maintain the high level of enrollment by ensuring that the UBE and Edo-BEST Scheme are sustained.
2. To ensure that pupils who enroll into grade 1 remain and complete grade 6, there should be an effective monitoring of the policy of free tuition, as most pupils are still subjected to one payment or the other in the name of registration, examination, report card and lesson fee.
3. Government should as a matter of urgency embark on enlightenment programmes that would help checkmate gender imbalance in school enrolment. This could be done through television and radio jingles on the need to improve the quality of human life through the girl-child's education.
4. To make the classroom situation more conducive, more classrooms should be built and more furniture provided in all the schools to prevent classroom congestion. Classrooms with tattered roofs should be renovated. White boards should be provided in schools with improvised black walls and security measures should be put in place in all the schools to protect the facilities.

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