

Full Length Research Paper

The extent of basic school teachers involvement in the national basic education reform in Ilorin Emirate, Nigeria

Yusuf A.^{1*}, Ajidagba U. A.¹, Yusuf H. T.¹, Olumorin C. O.¹, Ahmed M. A.¹, Salman M. F.¹, Ibraheem T. O.¹, Oniyangi S. O.¹ and Yusuf N.²

¹Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

²Faculty of Business and Social Sciences, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

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While acknowledging the epochal nature of the educational reforms introduced by the Obasanjo administration, especially at the basic educational level, it is important to note that teachers who are the major stake-holder, had not been properly carried along in the formulation and implementation of the reform. This study therefore, examined the extent of basic school teachers' involvement in the reforms at the basic educational level in Nigeria. Findings in the study showed that the level of basic school teachers' involvement in the reform was still very low. It was presumed that the reforms may not be successful without adequate enlightenment and involvement of teachers who are the grass root implementers of the education policy. The paper has suggested strategies towards enhancing teachers' involvement in the successful implementation of the reforms of basic education in Ilorin, in particular, and other parts of the Nigeria in general.

Key words: Basic education, reform, teachers' involvement, adequate enlightenment.

INTRODUCTION

The urgent need for education reforms can be fully appreciated against the back drop of the declaration by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1998) that 60% of Nigerians were illiterates. The situation is worrisome because no nation can rise above her level of education. Indeed, education determines scientific and technological progress of a nation. That only 14 million out of the about 21 million Nigerian children of school age were actually enrolled in school (Federal Ministry of Education, 1996). This is a cause for the genuine concern of all stake holders.

International Foundation for Education and Self-Help (IFESH) (2007) also observed that enrolments of pupils in primary schools in Africa countries are among the lowest in the world. IFESH (2007) submitted that Africa is adversely affected by limited funds, quantity and quality

of teaching and learning materials. In line with this, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (2007) also observed that 38% of school-aged children, mostly girls, do not attend primary school at all.

Economic and social developments are increasingly driven by the advancement and application of knowledge. (Williams, 2004) noted that education is fundamental to the construction of knowledge economy and society in all nations. However, the potential of the educational system in developing countries to fulfil this responsibility is frequently thwarted by the long-standing problems of finance, efficiency, equity, quality and governance. These problems could be regarded as the old challenges in the present day economy.

Salami (2001) opines that the problems of Nigeria are of two types; that are the old challenges augmented and strengthened by the new challenges which are linked to the growing roles of knowledge in economic development, rapid change in telecommunication technology, and the globalization of trade and labour market. In other words, knowledge has become the most important factor

*Corresponding author. E-mail: yuabra@yahoo.com. Tel: 08060633040.

for economic development in the 21st century. Porter (1990) and Abdallah (2007) suggest that through the capacity of knowledge to augment productivity, it increasingly constitutes the foundation of a country's competitive advantage. This change is most evident in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), countries, where investments in the intangibles that make up the knowledge base of a country (for example, research and development, higher education, and computer software) are equalling or exceeding investment in physical equipment (OECD, 2001). While undergoing these transformations, many developing countries are not yet reaping their benefits. This is because the capacity to penetrate and harness knowledge in the pursuit of sustained development and improved living standards is not spread equally among nations.

Because of low literacy level, Nigeria as a nation has not enjoy the fruits of self-promoting cycle in which the benefits of research help to produce the wealth and public support needed to enable continued investment in research and development (R and D). Nigeria is one of the developing countries, which have neither articulated a development strategy linking knowledge to economic growth nor built their capacity to do so.

Another serious problem is the drop-out rate at the basic education level. For instance, International Consultative Forum on Education for All (2001) observed that in 1995, the percentage of elementary students dropping out of school by the sixth year stood at 30.8%.

Following many years of questionable educational policies under various military administrations in Nigeria, the 1999 democratically elected president Olusegun Obasanjo offered initiatives, which was called 'an educational reforms', affecting all levels of education, including the basic education. The effort was geared towards making Nigeria to become an emerging economic model, delivering sound educational policy and management for public good (All Africa Global Media, 2007). It was this vision that has expanded the role of education as an investment for economic, social and political development.

Nick (2004) and Newsedge (2007) opines that education has become a tool of empowerment for the poor as the socially marginal red groups, an effective means of developing full capacities as potentials of the human resources, and a veritable means of developing a sound intelligent learning society. To attain the goals of education in Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Education (FME), under the leadership of Obiageli Ezekwesili introduced a blueprint for education reforms and intervention documented in the Ministry's white paper titled "vision 2020: The role of the Nigeria Education Sector". The education reform embarked upon by government to stimulate national growth and development appears ambitious. It is aimed at providing education to all Nigerians irrespective of age, sex, religion, occupation and location. The reform agenda, according to the

(FME, 2007), is leveraging a combination of strategic human and infrastructure capital reforms, aided by specific tactical interventions. The agenda includes the following;

1) Operation reach all primary schools (ORAPS), also conditioned an assessment programme aimed at monitoring and assessing the state of all public primary schools with a view of meeting their needs. ORAPS is a follow up to operation reach all secondary schools (ORASS). It has been successfully carried out over the last quarter of 2006. ORAPS is an exercise geared towards doing both qualitative and quantitative inspection of all primary schools in Nigeria.

2) Operation reach all secondary schools (ORASS), also conditioned an assessment programme which is aimed at monitoring and assessing the state of all public secondary schools with a view of meeting their needs. ORASS was the first 'condition survey' conducted by the ministry of education since its inception. 11,000 inspectors visited and inspected 14,543 secondary schools.

3) Ready to be educated, advance and develop (READ), is geared towards encouraging a reading culture among the youths.

4) Adopt-a-public-school initiative aims to leverage stakeholders in education, particularly corporate organizations, to come together as partners, for rescuing public schools and consequently, restore them to institutions capable of delivering sound learning and aptitudinal education.

5) The community accountability and transparency initiative (CATI) seeks to get various institutions, civil society groups, town unions, and many others involved in holding Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), contractors and the various ministries of education accountable for government disbursements at all tiers.

6) Innovation enterprise institutions (IEI) is a body to advance Nigeria's economic growth through the maximization of human potentials through excellence in vocational and technological training to develop the workforce and enhance Nigeria's global competitiveness.

7. Universal Basic Education Reform, aimed at meeting the 21st century national and international imperatives;

8) The public private partnership (PPP) initiative ensures the effectiveness of the Federal Government Unity Schools, by bringing together various stakeholders in the education system to deliver innovative solutions to the problems of poor school management, academic underachievement and poor utilization of public financial resources.

9) The consolidation initiative is a body that promotes the conversion of all Federal Polytechnics and Colleges of Education into Federal Universities, thus improving the carrying capacity of Universities, and satisfying the quest for university education and degree certification.

10) The ed. TAP initiative tracks the —products of Nigeria’s educational system to determine who they are, their backgrounds, capabilities and needs to inform a long-term strategic planning process for the education sector. Other aspects of the reform include school feeding programme, and girl- child education programme.

The universal and compulsory nature of the basic education programme means that more teachers would be needed in schools that will be well trained and motivated. Teachers that are unwilling to reach out to other stakeholders may not be desirable. The involvement of teachers (Onah, 1998) is basic to the success of any reform in the education sector.

Meanwhile, it was observed that the available literature on the reform has not addressed the basic school teachers’ involvement in the formulation and implementation of the reform. Thus, there is need to investigate the involvement and adequate training of basic school teachers in the reforms; with a view to suggest relevant strategies for ensuring and enhancing the success of the reforms, especially at the basic education level.

Purpose of the study

The study is set specifically to:

- a) Find out the extent of involvement of basic school teachers in the basic education reforms;
- b) Discover the level of involvement of basic school teachers in the formulation and implementation of the reforms.

Research questions

The following research questions were raised in the study:

- 1) What is the level of teachers’ involvement in the reforms of basic education in Nigeria, especially in Ilorin?
- 2) What is the extent of teachers’ involvement in the formulation and implementation of the education reforms?

METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive survey research type using the questionnaire for data collection. The population for the study was 2, 809 including the head teachers in Ilorin metropolis, out of which, a sample of 285 teachers were randomly selected. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire constructed by the researcher. The questionnaire was made up of 2 sections

each containing 22 and 12 items respectively that elicit the respondents’ level of awareness and involvement in the reforms.

The questionnaire was a four point likert type scale. The research personally visited the respondents to administer the instrument. A total of 255 copies of the questionnaire completed by the respondents were collected and analyzed. The respondents were required to tick (√) in the response that best satisfied their level of awareness of and involvement in the items. The mean of 2 and above was used as an acceptable mean showing adequate involvement in the reforms. Mean scores between 1.50-1.99 were taken as low awareness and below 1.50 as no involvement. The responses were scored and the means calculated as shown in Tables 1a and b.

RESULTS

From the analysis, it is observed that out of the twenty two- item initiatives related to basic education, the objective of the universal basic education (UBE), regular monitoring and evaluation of the UBE objective, UBE strategies, outcome and UBE as nine- year programme, the respondents are aware of millennium development goals (MDG), UBE reforms while they have low awareness on ORAPS, CATI and ORASS. From the analysis, the respondents have no knowledge of intelligent society, Ed (TAP), TQV and T.C. P4E, and school feeding programme. Out of the twenty two items in the section, A of the questionnaire, only seven of the items had their mean scores 2.00 and above. The rest had their mean scores lower than 2.00.

Out of the twelve items in the section B of the questionnaire, all the items had their mean scores lower than 1.5 except their involvement in the MDG where the mean score was 2.23. The result showed that the respondents were not involved in many of the aspects of the education reforms.

DISCUSSION

The study revealed that teachers have little or no involvement in the planning and implementation of the reform. This finding is in line with (Emmanuel, 2007) who had rightly observed that the stakeholders, including the teachers were not properly carried along. The findings showed that the teachers, who were expected to translate the reforms into reality, were not involved in the planning and even in the evaluation of the reforms. The findings also tally with the submission of (Patrick, 2000), who stated that many laudable educational initiatives have failed because of the teacher’s factor. This is because no educational system can rise above the level of its teachers.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the education reform programme is an expression of the strong desire of Government to reinforce

Table 1a. Mean scores of the respondents on awareness in basic education reforms.

Are you aware	Mean	Decision
Operation reach all primary school	1.8	L A
P 4 E	1.4	NA
READ	1.6	LA
Intelligent society	1.4	NA
Ed TAP	1.4	NA
UBER	2.3	A
TQV and T.C.	1.4	NA
CATI	1.4	NA
ORASS	1.8	L A
School feeding programme	1.4	NA
The objective of the UBE	2.2	A
There will be regular monitoring and evaluation of the UBE objective	2.2	A
The UBE is nine- year programme	2.7	A
The implementation approached and strategies	1.4	NA
The MDG	2.4	A
The EFA	1.6	LA
There will be regular monitoring and evaluation of the UBE strategies	2.3	A
There will be regular monitoring evaluation of outcome	2.3	A
Workshop and seminars have been going on in the UBE	1.7	LA
Funding arrangement for the UBE scheme	1.5	LA
The structure of the UBE scheme	1.5	LA
The rationale of the reform	1.5	LA

LA= Low, A= Adequate NA= No involvement.

Table 1b. Mean scores of the respondents on involvement in basic education reforms.

Are you Involved in	Mean	Decision
The UBE planning	1.1	NI
The school feeding programme	1.29	NI
The formulation of the objective of the UBE	1.27	NI
Meetings of stakeholders in UBE	1.35	NI
The implementation approached and strategies	1.27	NI
The implementation of MDG	2.23	I
The implementation of EFA	1.27	NI
The monitoring and evaluation of the UBE objectives	1.35	NI
The monitoring and evaluation of the UBE strategies	1.35	NI
The monitoring and evaluation of outcome	1.35	NI
The workshop and seminars on the UBE	1.36	NI
The funding arrangement for the UBE scheme	1.21	NI

NI= No involvement, I= Adequate involvement.

participatory democracy in Nigeria by raising the level of awareness and general education of the entire citizenry, every thing necessary should be done for the successful implementation of the programme. Primary school teachers should be fully involved in the planning and implementation. It is therefore necessary that the teacher who will directly implement the reform should be properly

briefed and involved. The teacher should know what the reform is all about, including their objectives, approaches and strategies used.

While there is urgent need for education reforms in Nigeria, all the stakeholders, especially the teachers, must be carried along in its conception, formulation and implementation. The first place to start is the training and

retraining of teachers. Kwara State has not recruited primary school teachers for some time now. Colleges of Education in the state, and other institutions have been producing teachers who are not employed. Recruitment of teachers will help in creating the awareness. Workshops and seminar should involve all teachers in the villages, towns and cities.

In teaching, condition of the teacher presupposes the learning condition and success of the learners therefore a good working condition of teachers is that condition that keeps them happy, regular and highly dedicated to their duty, and this should be given topmost priority. Another strategy is to professionalize teaching with a clearly articulated code of conduct, disengage all quacks and recruit qualified teachers to replace them. It is only happy and highly motivated teachers that can successfully help in the implementation of universal basic education (UBE) initiatives. Above all, the entire Nigeria populace should patriotically assume ownership of the programme by participating actively in its execution.

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