

Socio-Cultural Inhibitions to School-Aged Children Access to Basic Education in Akwa Ibom, and Rivers States of Nigeria

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Abstract: *The study examined the socio-cultural inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria. Two research questions and two hypotheses were tested and answered in the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey design, with the population as the 2899 UBE primary and junior secondary schools in the two states. These schools have a corresponding number of 2899 school administrators who acted as the participants in the study, from which 1159 (representing 40%) were selected as sample, using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The subjects of the study responded to an eighteen item instrument titled 'Socio-Cultural Inhibitions to School-Aged Children Access to Basic Education Scale (SCISACABES), designed by the researchers, in the modified 4-point Likert scale model, with a reliability index of 0.85, obtained using Cronbach Alpha Statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions while z.test statistics was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the study show that social issues ranging from language of instruction to high crime rate and cultural issues ranging from early marriage to strong entrepreneurial spirit among a people inhibit access to basic education of school-aged children in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria. The study also found no significant difference between mean ratings of the respondents on the social inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education and a significant difference between the mean rating of the respondents on the cultural inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria. It was therefore concluded that social and cultural issues inhibit access to basic education of school-aged children. Recommendations are that school administrators should employ appropriate administrative strategies to mitigate the effects of the social and cultural variables to increase access to basic education of school aged children.*

Keywords: Socio-Cultural, Inhibitions, School Aged Children, Access, Basic Education

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Introduction

Locally and internationally, societies see education as the instrumentality for introducing the younger, needy and desiring folks into their worthwhile knowledge, skills and values from generations to generations. Education is therefore, the instrument, which societies use to keep alive their cultural knowledge, skills and values for internalization and consumption by generations yet unborn.

Typically, the introductory comments appear to be laden with ideas that may be considered alien to what is education, internationally. However, let it be mentioned for records purposes, that it is high time, scholars and researchers address world problems and issues based on the exigencies of the time. As it connects education, the meaning of education has gone beyond the transmission of worthwhile knowledge, skills and values from generation to generation as canvassed in Schofield (1990). Although the present researchers are not invalidating the path-breaking meaning which Schofield offers, it has become pertinent to mention in definitions who need education and for what reasons and circumstances as well.

Traditionally, education, especially at the basic level, is meant for the younger folks in society, who need to be socialized into life in their societies. However, arising from some reasons that may be natural or man-made, some folks in society, among them teenagers and young men and women, also need and desire basic education like the younger folks in society. Some of these occurrences include insurgencies, wars, poverty, criminal activities and epidemics, among others, that may debar people from seeking education when they are much younger. Afangideh and Aliezi (2017) report that when folks, who could not get education when they were younger reach a stage of realization, such people will need and desire to be educated. Hence, the need to take a second look at the meaning of education to accommodate the purposes, the beneficiary and the circumstances.

Education is given so many premiums in society. This premium stems from the benefits of education to individuals, groups and the societies at large and explains why education is needed by all and sundry. Little wonder, the World Bank (2004) perceives education to be the answer to crime, poverty and other social vices and confirmatory of the position by Legendary South

African Reggae Star, Lucky Philip Dube, in his 1990 debut album 'The Prisoner' that his father had told him that education is the key. On the political front, education has a special role to play. Apart from serving as the instrument for political education of the electorate, politicians use free education as the expected compensation for society after they have been voted into power. This explains why most political party manifestoes, at least, in third world nations, must carry promises of free education, after being voted into power.

Education as an instrument for societal progression, has positive imprints on the economy. Scholars of organization in education and the broader other fields, among them, Ubokodom (1993), Obinaju (1993), Emah (1993) and Enahwo (1990), present appreciable evidences on investment in human capital and national economic progress, the relationship between education and the economy and the linkages between economic changes and education in society. On a general note, it will therefore not be an understatement to say that, education is the single most identifiable instrumentality for driving the economies of nations, who seek genuine growth and development for their people and society.

Education has implications for the military, the para-military, the industries, the bureaucracy, religious outfits, the hospitals, banks, among numerous. Its importance and influence may have influenced the recommendation by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, that nations should not allocate less than 26 percent of their annual budgets to educational services, at all the levels of education and may not also be unconnected with reasons nations give for floating free education programmes for its citizens.

Apparently, arising from the foregoing presentation, the Western Region of Pre-Independent Nigeria introduced the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme. The programme succeeded in placing the Yoruba Cultural Group as the one with the highest number of educated people, till date. Twenty-one (21) years later, in 1976, during the first coming of Olusegun Obasanjo while as Military Head of State, the Universal Primary Education Programme, was launched, at the national level. The programme helped in seeing to the mass training of teachers among other benefits, before going the ways of the previous programme.

Interestingly, precisely during Nigerian fourth attempt as a republic in 1999, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo emerged again. This time as an elected president, he launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme. The launching took place in Sokoto State of Northern Nigeria.

According to Atueyi (2017), the goals of the UBE include unfettered access to nine years of formal basic education, providing free universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age, reducing drastically, the incidences of drop out from the formal school system and ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills, as well as ethical, moral and civic values, needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning. The scholar further states that the law that established the UBE Act, presupposes that, every child, completes basic education, should have adequate level of literacy and also be able to decipher, on what is good or bad. However, it appears that this is not so in the contemporary education scene of Nigeria. Differently, there is illiteracy, poverty and ignorance and crime on the land, and mostly perpetuated by folks, who are supposed to be products from the Universal Basic Education Programme and tend to suggest that the expected targets for the launching and implementation of the scheme, may not have unfettered access to participate in the scheme.

In educational and sociological literature, research findings, scholarly positions, comments and opinions from stakeholders in education have shown that two human related variables hinder access to attendance in education. These are social and cultural issues. Among the social issues, Pauce (2017) lists them to include language, election, poverty, house prices, childhood sexual abuse, climate change, economic inequality and crucial public services among them health care and education. On a specific note, The National Academies (2005) reports that, children aged two to five, who attend well planned high quality pre-school programmes tend to learn more and are better prepared to successfully master the complex demands of formal school, but also note that young children who live in poverty, where mothers have no formal education or who live in other circumstances that place them at greater risk of failure in schools are much more likely to succeed, if they attend good pre-school. These other circumstances include

crime and the politics of language in education which Tamini (2013) found to be one of the social issues hindering access to education in Pakistan.

Apart from the social issues, cultural issues also limit access to education. In a study by Bhandary (2017), early marriages, caste based gender, sex discrimination, household work, high value for a son and traditional cultural beliefs, were found to be the cultural barriers to women access to education, in rural Nepal. Quite differently, S.O. Oluwuo (Personal Communication, June 8, 2018) notes that, among the Igbos of South-Eastern Nigeria, attachments to religious beliefs, high preference for the education of the girl and entrepreneurial inclinations of the Igbos have been the bane of the UBE programme.

The foregoing presentations tend to present reports, findings from researchers and comments on the social and cultural issues that limit access to education in order lands. Little is known about the case of Akwa Ibom and Rivers State of South-South, Nigeria. This is where the researchers drew the interest to go into the present academic excursion to provide empirical explanations to the trend in the two states.

Statement of the Problem

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme was introduced in 1999, by the administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. The major objective of the administration's pet education programme was to give free and compulsory basic education to children of school age, up to Junior Secondary 3. Quite unfortunately, precisely 19 years after the launching of the Universal Basic Education programme in Nigeria, it is always and seriously disheartening, apart from being an indication of governance failure that, in some villages, towns and cities, children of school age, are still found on the streets, begging, moving aimlessly, hawking some wares, for their parents or guardians or for themselves, while some are found working in the farms during school hours. When these children are confronted to explain why they are not in schools at such hours of the day, they tend to point accusing fingers to problems that are largely social and cultural issues that block children access to schools at least up to basic education in the two states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study examined the socio-cultural inhibitions to school aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. ascertain the social inhibitions to school aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria
- ii. Determine the cultural inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. What are the social inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria?
2. What are the cultural inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in the study at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of UBE school administrators from Akwa Ibom and Rivers States on the social inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of UBE school administrators from Akwa Ibom and Rivers States on the cultural inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria.

Methodology

The design for the study was the analytic descriptive survey. This could be explained in the fact that, respondents of the study, only collected information on the variables of the study and described and explained them as they occurred, apart from making efforts to test hypotheses on the variables and inferring the results on the population of the study. The population of the study was the 2899 UBE Primary and Junior Secondary

Schools in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria. These were 1663 for Akwa Ibom and 1236 for Rivers. These schools have corresponding and respective number of 1663 and 1236 school administrators, making a total of 2899, from which a sample of 1159 (representing 40% of the total in the population) was drawn, using the proportionate stratified random sampling technique. The subjects of the study responded to a validated 18-item instrument titled ‘Socio-Cultural Inhibitions to School-Aged Children Access to Basic Education Scale ‘ (SCISACABES), designed by the researchers, in the modified 4-point Likert scale model, with a reliability index of 0.85, obtained using Cronbach Alpha statistics. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions while z.test was used in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The results of the study came from the answers to the research questions and the results to test of hypotheses. Thus;

Research Question 1: What are the social inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Mean Ratings of UBE School Administrators on the Social Inhibitions to School-Aged Children Access to Basic Education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria

MEAN RESPONSES							
S/N		\bar{x}_1	SD_1	\bar{x}_2	SD_2	$\bar{\bar{x}}$	Remark
1	The language of instruction in schools can cause potential attendees to withdraw.	3.54	0.93	3.47	0.91	3.51	Agreed
2	Electoral issues have the capability of discouraging children from going to school.	3.55	0.88	3.26	1.01	3.41	Agreed
3	Those who lack vital things of life may find it difficult to go to school.						Agreed
4	Prices paid by parents as rents have the capability of stopping the education of children.	3.41	0.96	3.07	1.16	3.24	Agreed
5	Changes in climatic conditions can reduce children's rate of attendance in schools.	1.46	0.72	1.57	1.08	1.52	Disagreed
6	Children who suffer sexual abuses may find it difficult to go to schools.	3.33	0.78	3.72	0.62	3.53	Agreed
7	Inequalities in economic conditions of families are strong determinants of children's access to educational programmes.	3.42	0.88	3.22	1.06	3.32	Agreed
8	Children from families who lack access to health care can hardly have access to school programmes.	3.51	0.75	3.08	1.20	3.30	Agreed
9	Communities with cases of high crime rate register low enrolment of children at schools.	1.55			0.94	1.54	Disagreed
	Criterion $\bar{x} = 2.50$				1.01	$A\bar{\bar{x}} = 2.98$	Agreed

Legend	Scale
\bar{x}_1 = Mean Rating of UBE administrators from Akwa Ibom Disagree	1.00 - 2.449
SD_1 = Standard Deviation for Mean Rating Group 1	2.50 - 4.00. Agreed
\bar{x}_2 = Mean Rating of UBE administrators from Rivers	
SD_2 = Standard Deviation for Mean Rating Group 2	
\bar{x} = Weighted Mean Rating	
$A\bar{x}$ = Aggregate Weighted Mean	

Data on Table I show that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 had weighted mean ratings above the criterion mean of 2.50 and were agreed on as the social inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria. Differently, items 5 and 9 had weighted mean ratings below the criterion mean of 2.50 and were disagreed on as the social issues that inhibit school-aged children access to basic education in the two states.

In summary, with an aggregate weighted mean of 2.92, UBE school administrators agreed that the social inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria are the language of instruction in schools, electoral issues, lack of vital things of life (poverty), house prices, changes in climatic conditions, sexual abuses, inequalities in economic conditions, lack of access to health care and high crime rate.

Research Question 2: What are the cultural inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on the Mean Ratings of UBE School Administrators on the Cultural Inhibitions to School Aged Children Access to Basic Education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria.

MEAN RESPONSES							
N o.		\bar{x}_1	SD_1	\bar{x}_2	SD_2	\bar{x}	Remark
10	Children who get married early may be denied access to education.	3.76	0.75	3.46	1.13	3.61	Agreed
11	Communities with caste based gender favour the education of particular sexes.	3.66	3.64	3.45	1.04	3.56	Agreed
12	Determining who goes to school on the basis of sex limits access to education of potential attendees.	3.59	0.92	3.47	1.09	3.53	Agreed
13	Children who are deeply involved in household works find it difficult to go to schools.	1.71	0.94	1.25	0.67	1.48	Disagreed
14	High value for sons debar the female folks from attending schools.	1.44	0.88	1.49	1.04	1.47	Disagreed
15	Those who hold strong attachments to traditional issues do not see the need for Western education.	3.70	0.58	3.34	1.08	3.52	Agreed
16	Strong attachments to religious tenets reduce children's interest in education.	3.16	0.92	3.47	0.82	3.32	Agreed
17	High value for the girl child debar the male folks from going to schools.	1.63	1.01	1.48	0.73	1.56	Disagreed
18	Entrepreneurial spirit among people limits children's chances of going to schools.	3.46	0.81	3.22	1.07	3.34	Disagreed
	Criterion $\bar{x} = 2.50$	2.90	0.83	2.74	0.96	$A\bar{x}\bar{x} = 2.82$	Agreed

* The legend and scale for Table 1 apply

Data on Table 2 show that items 10, 11, 12, 15, 16 and 18 had weighted mean ratings above the criterion mean of 2.50 and were adjudged as the cultural inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria. Differently, items 13, 14 and 17 had weighted mean ratings below the criterion mean of 2.50 and were denied agreement as the cultural inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education in the two states.

In summary, with an aggregate weighted mean rating of 2.82, UBE school administrators agreed that the cultural inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria are

early marriage, caste based gender, sex discrimination, involvements in household works, high value for sons, strong attachments to traditional issues, strong attachments to religious tenets, high value for the girl child and strong entrepreneurial spirit among a people.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of UBE school administrators from Akwa Ibom and Rivers States on the social inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria.

Table 3: Summary of z-test Analysis of the Mean Ratings of UBE School Administrators from Akwa Ibom and Rivers States on the Social Inhibitions to School-Aged Children Access to Basic Education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria

Subject	N	\bar{x}	SD	z-cal	z-crit	df	Decision
UBE School Administrators from Akwa Ibom	665	3.02	0.84	1.67	1.96	1557	Not Significant (failed to reject)
HODs from State Universities	494	2.92	1.01				

Legend

- N = Number of Subjects
- \bar{x} = Mean
- SD = Standard deviation
- z-cal = z-calculated value
- z-crit = z-critical table value
- df = degree of freedom

Data on Table 3 show summaries of subjects, means, standard deviations and z.test of difference between the mean ratings of UBE school administrators from Akwa Ibom and Rivers States, on the social inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria. The calculated value used in testing the hypothesis stood at 1.67, while the z.critical value stood at 1.96, using 1557 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. At 0.05 level of significance and 1557 degrees of freedom, the calculated z.value of 1.67 is less than the z.critical value of 1.96. This shows that, there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of the administrators. Based on the foregoing observations, the researchers retained the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference

between the mean ratings of UBE school administrators from Akwa Ibom and Rivers States on the social inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of UBE school administrators from Akwa Ibom and Rivers States on the cultural inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria.

Table 4: Summary of z-test Analysis of the Mean Ratings of UBE School Administrators from Akwa Ibom and Rivers States on the Cultural Inhibitions to School-Aged Children Access to Basic Education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria

Subject	N	\bar{x}	SD	z-cal	z-crit	df	Decision
UBE School Administrators from Akwa Ibom	665	2.90	0.83	3.20	1.96	1557	Significant (Reject)
HODs from State Universities	494	2.74	0.96				

* The legend for Table 3 applies

Data on Table 4 show summaries of subjects, means, standard deviations and z.test of difference between the mean ratings of UBE school administrators from Akwa Ibom and Rivers States on the cultural inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria. The calculated value, used in testing the hypothesis, stood at 3.20, while the z.critical value stood at 1.96, using 1557 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance.

At 0.05 level of significance and 1557 degrees of freedom, the calculated value of 3.20 is by far greater than the z.critical value of 1.96. This showed a significant difference in the mean ratings of the respondents. In the light of the foregoing observations, the researchers were constrained to reject the null hypothesis in favour of the alternative that there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of UBE school administrators from Akwa Ibom and Rivers States on the cultural inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria.

Discussion

Social Issues in Access to Basic Education

First, it was found out that the social inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education in Akwa Ibom and Rivers States of Nigeria are the language of instruction in schools, electoral issues, lack of vital things of life (poverty), house prices, changes in climatic conditions, sexual abuses, inequalities in economic conditions, lack of access to health care and high crime rate. This finding agrees with Pauce (2017), The National Academies (2005), and Tamini (2017). These scholar, academic outfit and researcher provide impressive findings and evidences to buttress that these social forces inhibit access to education programmes. A possible explanation for the trend in the finding may be traceable to the impacts of such social issues in the two states. Although, a corresponding finding from hypothesis testing established no significant difference between the mean ratings of UBE school administrators on the social inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education, it cannot invalidate the fact that some critical social issues limit access to education. The sharp difference, may be due to the statistical processes employed in the preparation of the data or may be due to the differences in the social occurrences in the two states, investigated. These findings imply that children of school-age, who are out of school are in such conditions because of social forces.

Cultural Influence in Access to Basic Education

The second finding of the study is that the cultural inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education are early marriage, caste based gender, sex discrimination, involvement in household works, high value for sons, strong attachments to traditional issues, strong attachments to religious tenets, high value for the girl-child and strong entrepreneurial spirit among people. This finding is confirmatory of the findings from Bhandary (2017) and the stout academic position taken by S.O. Oluwuo (Personal Communication, June 8, 2018). A possible explanation for the trend may be due to the fact that the two states studied, constitute a great majority of ethnic minorities in Nigeria and have strong attachments to culture. Little wonder, a corresponding finding from hypothesis testing found a significant difference between the mean ratings of UBE school administrators on the cultural inhibitions to school-aged children access to basic education. These findings imply that

cultural issues have contributed to lack of access to basic education in the two states.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the discussion on them and their implications, it is concluded that children of school-age inability to access basic education are largely caused by social and cultural factors.

Recommendations

In the light of the conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are offered for implementation:

1. Stakeholders in education among them, the government, communities and schools administrations should find practicable solutions to some of the social issues limiting access to education.
2. There is need for cultural re-orientation of the people in line with the demands of modern society to readdress the people on the need for basic education.

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