

13

Implications of In-School Versus Out-School Population for Educational Planning

By

IDORENYIN JONATHAN OKON

*Department of Curriculum Studies Educational Management and Planning
University of Uyo, Uyo*

SABITU NUNAYON ABDUL

*Department of Curriculum Studies Educational Management and Planning
University of Uyo, Uyo*

IDONGESIT UFOT ETUKUDOH

*Department of Curriculum Studies Educational Management and Planning
University of Uyo, Uyo*

And

BASSEY MOSES OBETEN

*Department of Curriculum Studies Educational Management and Planning
University of Uyo, Uyo*

Abstract

This paper examined the implications of in-school versus out-school populations for educational planning. Factors impelling progression of out-school children in Nigeria were discussed. Such factors were grouped as: child-related factors, home factors, school related factors and climate and security factors. Implications of these factors for educational planning were discussed. It was concluded that the rate of out-school children in the country outweighs the number of children currently enrolled in Nigerian schools. Based on the discussion, it is suggested that educational planners should ensure that learning environments in Nigeria are safe and welcoming for learners. Also, security situation particularly in northern Nigeria should be promptly addressed.

All over the world, emphasis is placed on the development of basic education as prerequisite for all round societal development. In Nigeria, education is regarded as instrument per excellence for the attainment of national objectives. According to Adam, Adom, and Bediako, (2016), education remains “a human right as guaranteed under the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child”. Apart from fostering literacy among citizens, education contributes to national growth and coherence. A popular quote from Nelson Mandela says “an educated, enlightened and informed individual is one of the surest ways of promoting the health of a democracy.” This explains why first world nations expend huge financial resources in developing education in their domains. The lowering standard of education in third world countries and in Nigeria particularly, may be attributed to inadequate funding for its development. The primary level of education is in a sorry state even though it is officially free and compulsory.

According to UNICEF (2013), about 10.5 million children of school going age are not in school. This staggering figure presents Nigeria as a country with the highest number of out-of-school children in the world. This implies that the number of out of school children outweighs the number of children currently in school. The situation has even grown worse now considering that at the beginning of 2019, the Executive Secretary of the Universal Basic Education Commission, Dr. Ahmid Boboyyi put the figure at 13.2 million. Out of this figure, about 7.9 million representing about 69% of the out-of-school children population in Nigeria are found in the northern part of the country. This is largely due to insurgency and the security situation in that part of the country, which for over a decade now, has forced millions of persons to relocate their homes to other safer places.

According to figures from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in conjunction with UNICEF report of 2016-2017, only about 39.4 percent of the population of children of school going age is currently enrolled in schools. Out of this population, about 60 percent of these children reside in urban centres while 40 percent are spread across the rural areas of the country. Out-of-school children have become a perilous issue in many places around the globe (Young & Chavez, 2002). The introduction of the Universal Basic Education over a decade ago by the federal government was intended to take a lot of out-of school children out of the street and put them in conducive learning environments. Although the government over the years has made concerted efforts to achieve this goal, more is needed to be done to improve enrolment rate and school attendance. In a bid to improve school enrolment and curb incidences of out-of school children, the government have introduced measures such as the Home Grown School Feed programmes, an incentive targeted at improving school

Implications of In-School Versus Out-School Population for Educational Planning

Factors Impelling Progression of Out-School Children in Nigeria

Implications of In-School Versus Out-School Population for Educational Planning

There are many factors which help expand the population of out-school children in Nigeria. These factors are grouped as; child related, home, climate, and safety factors.

Child Related Factors

According to Shehu (2018), the gender of a child is one of the determinants of child schooling in most rural areas. Most parents tend to give preference to the male child when it comes to attending school than the female child. Samal (2012), opined that the parental attitude regarding schooling can prevent their children from getting the best out of education. The cultural position of some parents who feel that the girl child should concentrate on learning how to cook and take care of her home could be the reason for low school attendance by some female children. According to Abdul, Adeleke, Adeyey, Babalola, Eyo, Ibrahim, VokeIghorodje, and Onose, (2014), female children are traditionally expected to stay at home and learn from their mother about activities such as cooking, sweeping, weaving etc. while the male parents are allowed to go to school. In the eastern part of the country, traditional beliefs hold that female education ends in the kitchen and whatever the level of a education given to a girl child, she must end up in a man's house as a wife, thereby wasting the resources used in training her.

Home Factors

The socio-economic status of parents is one of those factors responsible for children not being enrolled in school. A home where parents are poor, can hardly present their children to be enrolled into school. Instead parents of low socio-economic status will rather send their children out for street trading and other economic activities. The educational attainment of parents is also another aspect to consider when looking at out-of-school/in-school children. Educational disadvantaged parents will see nothing wrong in keeping the child at home instead of sending him/her to school.

School Related Factors

Boredom and disengagement in school are reasons why children don't stay in school, or consider it not necessary to remain in school. A school environment that is not safe, attractive and welcoming will kill children's interests in attending school. When learners are not engaged during lessons, there is tendency to lose interest in schooling. When they are properly and appropriately engaged, their interests will be sustained, and they'll look forward to being in school regularly. Instructions in classroom should be interesting and relevant to their everyday life so as to sustain the interests of the children.

Climate

The weather condition in a particular location of the country could militate against school attendance. Communities that often face torrential rain fall within the school period always record low school turn out due to persistent rain fall. The impact of climate condition on school attendance is often felt more in rural communities than urban centres in the country. This is because most communities lack good roads and means of transportation, and since schools are mostly or sometimes located far away from their homes, rain prevent their children from attending. Adeleke (2018) observed that the reality and negative effects attributed to extreme climate conditions have attracted studies on the correlation that exist between climate and school attendance. Shah and Steinberg (2015) reported that during rainy seasons, most parents with low socio-economic status, withdraw their children from school and would rather prefer they assist them at home.

Security Factors

In recent times, the issue of insecurity has remained a prominent topic of national discussion in Nigeria. The country is currently facing different kind of threats from all geographical locations of the country. From the banditry crisis in Zafara, Katsina, Sokoto to Boko Haram insurgency in Yobe, Borno and Adamawa, the story is the same. Insecurity has caused many schools to be closed down due to fear of attacks. There are many instances where schools have been burnt down and teachers attacked. Out of the 13.2million out-of school children in Nigeria, more than 60 percent of that figure are found in the northern part of the country due to the Boko Haram crisis among others. The insecurity situation currently being experienced in the north eastern part of Nigeria has resulted to low turn out in primary schools, a situation that threaten the nation's quest to eradicate illiteracy. According to Eric (2012), the insecurity situation in the country is not just targeted at school children alone, but teachers and the school. Insecurity is a major cause of school drop-out in the county and until government takes drastic steps toward addressing issues of insecurity in all parts of the country, figures of out-school children will continue to be on the increase.

Implication for Educational Planners

There is a wide range of implications of in/out of school children for the educational planners. They have the duty of ensuring that the problems of out-of-school children in Nigeria is addressed. Retention rates in schools should be monitored. To ensure this, many strategies must be put in place. National Dropout Prevention Center (2019,) has identified the following strategies among others for prevention of drop outs in school which Educational Planners can adopt and /or create awareness about curbing children dropping out of school among parents, guardians and care givers. Some of these strategies are discussed below:

Identify Number of Out of School Children

Educational Planners first of all need to develop improved instruments that accurately identify the number of out-of-school children and help understand the characteristics and reasons why they remain excluded from school. Identifying the number of children that are currently out of school will give educational planners a clue to the rate of drop out when compared with in-school children. From the data obtained, educational planners should be able to identify the characteristics of such children who have dropped out and also the reasons why they are not in school. Such facts obtained should be addressed during planning and policy formulations.

Safe and Welcoming Learning Environments

A comprehensive violence prevention plan, including conflict resolution, must deal with potential violence as well as crisis management. A safe learning environment provides daily experiences, at all grade levels, that enhance positive social attitudes and effective interpersonal skills in all students. When children enjoy their school's environment, they'll want to participate and stay in school. A positive school culture, meaningful relationships with adults, and engaging instruction are all ways to motivate learners to want to be in school. La Fountain (2017). A concerned teacher or trusted adult can also make the difference between a learner's staying in school and dropping out. When teachers cultivate healthy personal relationships with learners, such learners can trust their teachers and would always want to be in school and listen to them during lessons.

Systemic Approach

The issue of out-of-school- children in Nigeria should be given prompt attention if the national goals of education must to be achieved. Educational planners should constantly review the goals and objectives relating to school policies, practices and organizational structures as they impact a diverse group of learners. Policies formulated should be followed up for prompt and proper implementation. Care should be taken to assess the relevance of some policies in relation with current issues in the school system. Policies on staff recruitment, training, transfers, funding, provision of facilities, enrolment, organizational structures and so on should be regularly reviewed in line with the goals and objectives of education. This will afford the planners the opportunity of addressing learners drop out issues and also remove the risks of dropping out.

Family Engagement

Research consistently finds that family engagement has a direct, positive effect on children's achievement and is the most accurate predictor of a student's success in school. For instance, Paul and Ngirande (2014), observed that parenting, home and family support were found to be positively related to performance. They observed that

by staying involved in their children's education, parents do impact positively on the academic achievement of the learners. Family involvement is one of the most important contributors to school completion and success. The most accurate predictor of a student's school achievement is the extent to which his/her family encourages learning. Success is more likely if the family communicates high, yet reasonable, expectations for the student's education and future career and becomes involved in his/her education. At an early, parents should provide basic academic foundation for their children. Reading, writing, and math skills are the foundation for learning in all subjects. One of the most important things parents can do is help their children build these skills in their elementary school years.

Apart from being involved in their children's education, parents should be very observant, paying attention to some risk factors. Although risk factors are not precise predictors, parents should be aware of them. More importantly, they should become involved or seek assistance if they repeatedly see risky behaviors such as skipping school, failing classes, having significant discipline problems, or being involved in illegal activities.

Alternative Schooling

Alternative schooling provides potential dropouts a variety of options that can lead to graduation, with programs paying special attention to the student's individual social needs and academic requirements for a high school diploma. In Nigeria, terrorism especially in the north has effected many families and in turn hindered thousands of children from attending school and receiving the educations they desperately need. Due to this growing problem, the United States Agency Intervention Development (USAID) and many Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have created a program called the Education Crisis Response which started in 2014. Education Crisis Response focuses on children ages 6 to 17 and plans to expand access to quality and protective non-formal education and alternative education opportunities for out-of-school children. (Halloran,2016). The program provides students with the necessary school supplies, school provided meals and psychological teaching methods. The program helps the students cope with their traumatizing pasts by having the students work as one unit and establish a great rapport with their teachers. The local community places an important role by stressing peace and other beneficial values. The non-formal learning centers have been created and adhere to a curriculum that includes literacy, numeracy and life skills. Other NGOs have launched projects in the educational system through academic and behavioral supports and interventions, case management, psychological training, supervision, learning strategies that strengthen and explore the possibilities not available within the traditional mainstream education. The government and educational planners can partner with such bodies to give alternative education to children who have dropped out of school.

After-School/Out-of-School Opportunities

Many schools provide after-school and summer enhancement programs that eliminate information loss and inspire interest in a variety of areas. Such experiences are especially important for students at risk of school failure because these programs fill the afternoon “gap time” and holidays with constructive and engaging activities. For instance, students in Technical Colleges in Nigeria undergo a mandatory industrial attachment (IT) in their respective trade areas during holidays. This affords learners opportunity to apply skills they’ve learnt while in class. Educational planners in Nigeria should encourage experiences like these to enhance information retention and inspire their interests in schooling.

Managing and Improving Instruction

Educational planners need to take into consideration the fact that what happens during instructions between the learners and teacher can influence the learners’ interest in school. The most effective way to reduce the number of children who will ultimately drop out is to provide the best possible classroom instruction from the beginning of their school experience through the primary grades. The teacher, the classroom setting, the lessons, delivery methods and the learner’s involvement during lessons all play important roles in sustaining the learner’s interest in school. Teachers are the ones who deal directly with the children. And so, they need to devise innovative ways of delivering lessons to capture and sustain the interests of the learners. Technology offers some of the best opportunities for delivering instruction to engage students in authentic learning, addressing multiple intelligences, and adapting to students’ learning styles. Teachers who work with children at high risk of academic failure need to have an avenue by which they can continue to develop skills, techniques, and learn about innovative strategies.

To keep children enrolled in school, they must be actively involved during lessons. Teachers should provide opportunities for finding new and creative ways to solve problems and achieve success. This is a way of engaging the learners. "In education, student engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education" (Davis J. 2017). When students are engaged with the lesson being taught, they learn more and retain more. Students who are engaged in the work tend to persist more and find joy in completing the work.

Provide Career and Technical Education

Career and technical education classes make school more interesting and meaningful for learners. Personalized learning is another way of making learning more engaging and relevant for students. (La Fountain 2017). It is noted that the most

successful career technical education programs reflect the needs of the community where they are implemented. For example, in more rural areas, especially in the northern parts of Nigeria, agriculture is more popular. This also provides opportunities for learners to prepare for ways they can contribute and help support their own communities. Also, vocational and technical education in Nigeria are key aspects of education meant to equip learners with skills that can help them fend for themselves after school or later on in life.

Identifying Children at Risk

To keep learners from dropping out, a proactive method is needed to identify those students at risk. Warning signals of failing grades, poor attendance, truant behaviors, depression and other warning signs are most closely linked with dropping out. Early identification and systemically monitoring of those who are most likely to drop out is a key to the solution. Schools should train staff that will be skillful and diligent in spotting such learners and providing appropriate interventions and support for them. Such staff should be available at all times for learners at risk and also identify with their individual needs. The school management should be involved in proper support, monitoring and supervision of this sensitive task assigned such staff for effectiveness. If this is not done effectively and on time, there is the tendency that such children may slip unnoticed from the school.

Availability/Quality of Teachers

Another implication of out of school children to Education Planners is ensuring the availability of well trained and equipped staff that are capable of mentoring and observing those at risk students, and are able to utilize available resources. Teachers could represent the only caring adult in some of these learner's lives. All students have the right to be treated equally in a school system regardless of their academic ability and teacher's duty stems from their commitment to deliver education that connect between these learners and their career aspirations.

Ensuring Equality of Access to Quality Basic Education

UNICEF's education programme is aimed at supporting the government in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 by 2030 through improved planning and by addressing the systemic barriers that hinder the effective implementation of an effective education strategy, (UNICEF 2013). All school age children in Nigeria should be provided with equal access and complete quality education within a safe learning environment to enable them gain the skills and knowledge for lifelong learning. Educational Planners at the federal and state levels should strengthen capacities more to deliver quality basic education especially in the northern part of Nigeria which has the highest number of out-of-school children. This they can do by ensuring recruitment of

Implications of In-School Versus Out-School Population for Educational Planning

qualified teachers, provision of more facilities in schools, proper supervision and monitoring among others.

Conclusion

The rate of out-of school children in the country out weights the number of children currently enrolled in Nigeria schools. This is owing to a number of factors as earlier highlighted in the discussion. This situation has far reaching effects on the economic growth and development of the country. Education planners must rise up to the occasion by making plans to address the issue of out of school in Nigeria.

Recommendation

Based on the discussion above, the paper presents some useful information which is essential for stakeholder and education planners to adopt in designing a well inclusive system that will cater for all kinds of learners. Planners in education should take note of the factors that influence out-of school children and draw up programme that will curb the menace in all regions of the country. The issue of insecurity in the northern part of the country is threatening the attainment of educational objectives of the nation. Educational planners must strategize on how to draw programmes that will accommodate children in the Internally Displaced Persons' camp located across the country.

References

- Abdul, M. M., Adeleke, O., Adeyey, O., Babalola, A., Eyo, E., Ibrahim, M.T., VokeIghorodje, M., and Onose, M. (2014). *Analysis of the History, Organization and Challenges of Feminism in Nigeria*. Project 10-cap1-0863."Young Women, Empowerment and Development in Sub-Saharan Africa.Spanish International Cooperation for Development.
- Adam, S., Adom, D. and Bediako, AB (2016) The Major Factors That Influence Basic School Dropout in Rural Ghana: The Case of Asunafo South District in the BrongAhafo Region of Ghana.*Journal of Education and Practice*..7,(28) 1-8
- Adeleke, R. (2018) Climate Variability and its Effects on School Attendance in Selected Public Senior Secondary Schools In Urban Areas of Ibadan, Nigeria. *Asian Journal of Geographical Research* 1 (2) 1-10
- Adekola, O., (2007). "Language, Literacy and Learning in primary Schools: Implications for Teacher Development Programs in Nigeria. World Bank, Africa Region. *Working Paper* 96.

- Azariadis, C. and A. Drazen, (1990). "Threshold Externalities in Economic Development." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* CV(2): 501-526.
- Davis, J. (2017). Innovative teaching strategies that improve student engagement. Five teaching strategies designed to challenge and engage students. Retrieved from <https://amie.org/innovative-teaching-strategies-that-improve-student-engagement>.
- Furger, R. (2008). How to end the dropout crises: ten strategies for student retention. Retrieved from <https://edutopia.org/student-dropout-retention-strategieson>
- Halloran, T. J. (2016). Students find hope in Nigerian education. The borgen project. Retrieved from <https://borgenproject.org/students-find-hope-in-nigerian-education>
- Heckman, J.J., (2011). "Effective child development strategies", in Edward Zigler, Walter S. Gilliam, and W. Steven Barnett, The pre-K debates - Current Controversies and Issues. Paul H. Brookes Pub.Co.
- Heckman, J. (2015). "The Heckman Equation". University of Chicago. <http://heckmanequation.org/content/resource/heckman-equation-brochure-0>
- La Fountain A., (2017). School Culture and Colleagues, Social Emotional Learning. Retrieved from <https://schoolleadersnow.weareteachers.com/decrease-dropout>
- Linda, D., Hyley, M. E. and Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development*. Learning policy institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/effective-teacher-professional-development>.
- Paul, M. and Ngirande, H. (2014). The impact of parental involvement in students' performance. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. 5(8). Retrieved from <https://www.mcser.org/journal/index.php/mjss/article/view/2557>
- National Dropout Prevention Center (2019). 15 Effective Strategies for Dropout Prevention. <https://dropoutprevention.org/effective-strategies/>. Accessed on 9th June, 2019.
- Samal, R. (2012). *Parents' attitude towards schooling and education of children. A project Report Submitted to Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Institute of Technology, Rourkela, Odisha, India*

Implications of In-School Versus Out-School Population for Educational Planning

- Shah, M. and Steinberg, B. M. (2015). *Workforce and human capital investment. Evidence from India*. National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Shehu, H.K. (2018) Factors Influencing Primary School Non-attendance among Children in North West Nigeria. *Literacy Information and Computer Education Journal (LICEJ)*, 9, (2) 2916-2922
- UNICEF, (2013) *Education: Evaluation Report*.
<https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/education>. retrieved on 9th June, 2019.
- World Bank, (2013). “*Project appraisal document for an education investment project in Nigeria*”, (Report No: 75530-NG). Nigeria.
- Young, A.P & Chavez, E. L (2002). Not all school dropouts are the same: ethnic differences in the relation between reasons for leaving school and adolescent substance use. *Psychology in the schools*, 39(5). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.10054>