Students' Access to Quality Learning Resources for Enhanced Performance in Secondary Schools in Abia State, Nigeria

Ohia, Adanmangozi, Ph.D

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt.
Email: adanma.ohia@uniport.edu.ng

Abstract

The performance of students in Nigeria education system depends to a great extent on their accessibility to quality learning resources. This study is anchored on the input-output production function in education. It examined the accessibility of students to qualified teachers and functional library facilities in both rural and urban located secondary schools in Abia State. The research design is descriptive survey. The population consisted of 190 public senior secondary schools with a total of 1,568 respondents made up of 190 principals, 190 vice-principals and 1,188 sectional head teachers. Using proportionate stratified random sampling technique the numerical strength of the sample was 784 made up of 95 principals, 95 vice-principals and 594 sectional head teachers. Data were collected using both personal observation and a researcher-structured questionnaire titled "Access to Quality Learning Resources Questionnaire" (AQLRQ). The questionnaire was validated and had a reliability index of 0.76 using ConbachAlpha method. Statistical analysis was done and findings revealed among other things that students have access to qualified teachers in the urban located schools than the rural-located schools. Students do not have access to functional library resources in 80% of the schools. Recommendations include the need for the government to send qualified teachers in specialized areas like Science and Mathematics to both urban and rural-located schools including the provision of functional libraries for increased students' access and enhanced performance.

Keywords: Students' Access, Learning Resources, Enhanced Performance, Implications For Planning.

Introduction

One of the topical issues in the present-day Nigeria education system is the performance of graduates who arethe outputs from the system. Most worrisome is the growing discontent and distrust from the society about the quality of public secondary school products. This is judged by their poor performance in public examinations, inability to cope with further

education at the tertiary institutions and even their inability to express themselves very well in public.

The result of a research carried out by Nwafor (2005) showed that the achievement level of public secondary school leavers is very low. Graduates from public secondary schools perform abysmally below the expectations of the employers of labour. Besides, 84% of these students graduate from secondary school without the ability to exhibit any acquired skill or knowledge.

The quality of education in Nigeria became questionable since the l970swhen the decline in the functionality of products of the system started manifesting. Sequel to this, the government in 1973 convened a meeting of education experts under the chairmanship of Chief S. O. Adebo. Various interest groups were represented ranging from educational agencies to employers of labour who are the consumers of the products of the education system. Some modifications of the recommendations reached at the seminar crystalized into the National Policy on Education. With the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and presently the Universal Basic Education (UBE), the emphases seem to have shifted from qualitative to quantitative production of graduates from the system. But to ensure that quality of educational delivery is not sacrificed at the altar of quantity, the Federal Ministry of Education formulated minimum standards for the provision of education at the different levels as a guide to proprietors and other interest groups (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Formulating beautiful policies is one thing, the implementation is another; hence the question mark on quality of students' performance.

The concept of quality has multidimensional facets and interpretations depending on the context. In fact, it is conceptually complex, lending itself to variety of meanings by different people, scholars and non-scholars alike. Babalola,Adedeji&Erwat (2007), in explaining Crosby's citation in Wilkinson (1998) assert that when a product or service conforms to standards, specifications or requirements, it is said to have quality. According to Babalola et al (2007:242), the British Standard Institute (BSI, 1990) defined quality as "the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs". With regards to education, peoples' notions about quality differ so much that there exist sometimes conflicting ideas. Be that as it may, one consensus point is that quality makes a difference between success and failure. When seen as a relative notion, it is often measured against a criteria or set standard (Okorie and Uche, 2004).

It is worth pointing out that the quality of any educational system is an index of the quality of inputs, into the education process. A very good measure of the quality of the education system is by the quality of performance of the output (graduates) from the system.

Statement of Problem

There are public outcries that the standard of education in Nigeria seems to be falling. The nation's education system churns out large number of graduates each year, but the quality of these graduates are now questionable. Since the quality of input into the education system determines the quality of output, the most objective approach to addressing the issue of poor quality graduate turn-out is to ensure that quality learning resources are accessible to students. Do they have access to quality teaching manpower and library resources? How are these resources distributed between schools in urban and rural areas? These are the issues that constitute the focus of this study; because quality teachers and functional library resources among other things are central to every quality educational delivery process.

Purpose of the Study

Based on the problems identified above, the purpose of this study was therefore to achieve the following objectives:

1. Determine the teacher quality index accessible to students;
2. Assess the quality of library resources accessible to students;
3. Compare urban and rural located schools on the quality of teaching manpower resources accessible to students;
4. Compare the quality of library resources accessible to students in urban and rural located schools.

Methodology

The design of the study is descriptive. The population for this study consists of 190 public senior secondary schools. The respondents are 190 principals, 190 vice principals and 1,188 sectional head teachers in these schools. Using a proportionate stratified random sampling technique, the sample size was 784 made up of 95 head teachers, 95 vice- principals and 594 sectional head teachers in the 95 sampled schools. The instruments were a researcher-structured instrument titled Access to Quality Learning Resources Questionnaire (AQLRQ) and personal observation. The questionnaire was validated by experts in the area of measurement and evaluation.Concrete factual data and estimates were also collected from the schools and analysed for the study. To analyse the data, responses to the questionnaire items were aggregated according to facilities and schools for the physical resources. The information gathered on qualification of teachers were weighted thus:

- ❖ Below NCE and degree without education = 1
- ❖ NCE =2
- ❖ First degree with education= 3
- ❖ Masters degree with education = 4
- ❖ Ph.D with education =5

Teaching subject relevance of the teachers was generated by comparing their subject of qualification with their subject of engagement and weighted them thus:

- ❖ Those teaching unrelated subjects = 1
- ❖ Those teaching related subjects = 2
- ❖ Those teaching subject of qualification = 3

Weighted mean, percentages and t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance were used in analysis to address the issues raised.

Results and Discussions

Quality of teaching manpower resources accessible to students

In this study, the indicators of teacher quality are qualifications, teaching subject relevance and student-teacher ratio.

Table 1
Teacher Quality Index accessible to students

Teacher quality index	Average mean	weighted	Criterion mean
Teacher qualification	3.025	3	
Teacher subject relevance	2.50	3	
Ratio of students to a teacher	15	35	

Source: Research Survey Data, 2017.

The weighted mean of teacher qualification in Table 1 shows an average of 3.025. This means that there are qualified teachers in Abia State public secondary schools, judging by the fact that 3.0 is the weighting for teachers with first degree in education (which is the minimum qualification for teaching at this level). With regards to teaching subject relevance, many of the teachers teach subjects that are only related to their area of specialization (2.0) not their subject of qualification (3.0). This is an indication that most teachers are not engaged in their best areas of professional competence; most probably due to the fact that most schools lack teachers in critical subject areas like the Sciences, Home Economics and Mathematics especially in the rural-located schools.

This finding is adequately supported by Earthman (2007) who asserted that quality teachers are more prevalent in urban schools. However, to guarantee quality supply of teachers, Edusource (2008) showed that in California, there is a permanent induction body called Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Programme(body) that helps the beginning teachers to get started successfully in their classroom practice from the theoretical knowledge acquired during training.This helps too to provide orientation for already serving teachers. Can this suggestion help solve the problem of inadequacy of quality teachers in Nigeria? Given it a trial could provide an answer.

Quality of Library Facilities Accessible To Students
Library service is one of the vital inputs that is needed to facilitate effective teaching and learning. In support of this, Thomas as cited in Agboola(2006) attested to the fact that the quality of any educational system could be interpreted as a function of the inputs into the system. Access to education implies the possibility of everyone who is qualified and willing to get education receives it. It is of great importance, both as a basic need necessary for an individual's fulfillment and as a strategic need which is something that will yield access to other opportunities.

The quality of access that students have to library resources was examined using library space, seats, reference materials in the library and availability of trained librarians. The result of data analysis gathered with regards to this is shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Percentages and students' access index to library facilities in senior secondary schools in Abia State

S/N	Classroom Resources	Capacity Availability	No in Good Condition	% in good Condition	Access Index
1	Library spaces	180	180	100	0.0188
2	Library furniture (table and seats)	78	46	58.97	0.0048
3	Number of reference materials	NA	NA	NA	NA
4	Trained Librarian	12		100	0.1212
	Mean			**86.32**	**0.048**

Source: Research Survey Data, 2017.

NA means not available

Table 2 shows that students' access to library resources is very deplorable. From the table, there are only 12 trained librarians and 180 library sitting spaces with furniture for only 78 students in the entire 95 sampled schools, even though an appreciable number of available ones are in good condition. Hence, the aggregate access index is very negligible (0.048). This means that students have access to less than 5% of the library resources they need to enhance their learning.

Accessibility of these learning resources is tantamount to making them to be within the reach of every school age child. Ene (2007) is of the view that access to education is not just seeing a school to attend but having the vital learning resources to work with and qualified teachers to also teach. Provision of quality learning resources (inputs) in adequate quantity in the nation's education system is a prerequisite for quality performance of the products (outputs) from the system.

Difference between secondary schools in urban and rural areas in the quality of teachers accessible to students.

The quality of access students have to teaching manpower was compared between schools in urban and rural locations. The result of the data analysis is shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Mean and test of difference between schools in urban and rural areas in students' access to quality teaching manpower.

	Teacher quality indices	Mean rural	Mean urban	t-value	2-tailed sig. value	Remark
1.	Pupil – teacher ratio	15.12	15.81	-0.280	.783	Not sig.
2	Mean weighted qualification	3.09	2.96	-0.800	0.436	Not sig.
3	Teaching subject relevance	2.46	2.66	-1.914	0.048	Sig.

Three variables are used in this study to compare students' access to quality teachers in urban and rural areas. The result in Table 3 shows significant difference in only one variable-which is the teaching subject relevance. This is because for this quality index, the mean for

urban schools is significantly higher than that of rural schools. Hence, the calculated t-value is significant at 0.048, which is lower than 0.05 at which the hypothesis is tested. Therefore, the hypothesis for this variable is rejected. Thestudents in urban schools have significantly better access to teachers as represented by the teaching subject relevance.This evidence is not surprising, considering the fact that teachers are generally known to avoid postings to rural areas because of the harsh environmental conditions prevalent there.

Difference between secondary schools in urban and rural areas in the quality of library services accessible to students.

This hypothesis compared schools in rural and urban locations on the quality of students' access to library resources, using the library access index of space, furniture, relevant reading materials and trained librarians. The result of the data analysis is presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Mean and test of difference between urban and rural schools in the access index of students' to quality library resources

Sn	Library resources access index	Mean rural	Mean urban	t-value	2-tailed sig. value	Remark
1.	% in good condition	78.02	94.62	2.755	0.016	Sig.
2	Access Index	0.032	0.060	3.244	0.000	Sig.

$P < 0.05$

The result of analysis in Table 4 shows a calculated t-value 2.755 for proportion of facilities in good condition and 3.244 for access index. These two t-values are found to be significant at 0.016 and 0.000 for the two indicators respectively. Since these significant values are less than 0.05, significant value at which the hypothesis is tested, it is concluded that the difference is significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected.A comparison of schools in urban and rural areas as shown in Table 4 clearly indicates that relatively speaking, students in urban areas have better access to quality library resources.

Conclusion

Professionally trained teachers are available and adequate in public secondary schools in both urban and rural areas of the state studied. As a matter of fact, the teacher-student ratio is lower than 1:40 as is recommended in National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013). This is because the student population is low. However there is dearth of qualified teachers in some subject areas like Sciences, Mathematics and Home Economics. This situation is more critical in schools in the rural than in the urban areas.

Equipped and functional libraries are non-existent in about 80% of the secondary schools. There are rooms labeled as libraries which seem to be permanently under lock and key. Some that are occasionally open have very outdated reading materials and very few seats. Schools in the rural areas are worse off.

Recommendations

Very urgent efforts should be geared towards revamping the whole teaching and learning environment to avert a total collapse of the public secondary school system. The government should employ professionally trained teachers in the specialized areas like the

Sciences and Mathematics. Provision of adequate and functional library facilities is essential. This can be done collectively by the Parent/Teacher Association of the schools, old students' association, or individually by stakeholders in the system.

Implications for Planning
The findings of this study have great implications for educational planning in Nigeria as a whole and Abia State in particular. Although it is not the responsibility of the educational planners to employ teachers but suggestions could be made to the Ministry of Education on the need to employ and send to both rural and urban located schools teachers professionally trained in the areas of Sciences, Home Economics and Mathematics.It is the responsibility of educational planners to carry out needs assessment exercise in the areas of availability of library facilities to ensure increased access of the students to this all-important learning resource.

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