



Analysis of Joint School Section Practice of Private School under Universal Basic Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the threat posed by schools operating a joint section under Universal Basic Education to students' academic activities. The method adopted for this study was the quantitative survey design. Fifteen schools from The Upper Basic School I, II, and III students were selected purposively in the Ilorin metropolis for the study. The structured interview with content validity and 0.77 reliability index was the only instrument used to elicit the necessary data. The findings of the study revealed that upper basic school students were seriously distracted, it meant to cater for in many ways. This study recommends among others who have the same allocated time to allocate since they used the same compound to decrease distraction and confusion of the students. Sections should be structured in different locations to reduce overpopulation, thereby making teaching and learning more effective.

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INTRODUCTION

The National Policy on Education (NPE) was developed to eradicate illiteracy at all levels of human existence and provide affordable education for all Nigerians irrespective of class, religion, ethnic origin, or physical appearances. The policy was driven by a desire to eradicate poverty, increase indices of National Developments, increase political consciousness, and encourage issues of National Integration. These basic objectives of the National Policy have not been realized. In pursuance of the aforementioned objectives of the National Policy, the Federal Government under the

Federal Ministry of Education have from time to time introduced different educational reform programs with the hope of realizing their objectives. One such programs for educational reform is the Universal Basic Education.

The concept of Basic Education is not a relatively new concept for the Nigerian Educational System (Yoloye, 2004). Within the last decade, it has assumed global significance and its meaning has assumed a wider dimension. The expanded vision of Universal Basic Education (UBE) comprises the universalizing of access and promotion of equity, focusing on learning and

enhancing the environment of learning and strengthening partnerships. The Universal Basic Education Act of 2004 represents a significant educational reform that addressed the lapses and loopholes of the Universal Primary Education (UPE).

Universal Basic Education is formulated to be the bedrock of lifelong learning that will impact reading, writing, and acquisition of the other relevant skills for sustenance and development. This education comprises of formal and non-formal acquisition of basic skills. The objectives of Universal Basic Education (UBE) include the following:

1. Provision of free and compulsory education for the first 9 years or level of education beginning from the primary to the junior secondary schools.
2. The sanction for parents who fail to send their children to school.
3. For the policy to succeed, there should be public enlightenment, social mobilization, student recruitment, and training, provision of infrastructural facilities, review of the then existing curriculum, adequate budgetary provision, and Basic Education and skills acquisition programmes (Universal Basic Education Commission, 2008).

Since 2004, efforts made to implement the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program has not been without some difficulties and challenges. In recent times, the Universal Basic Education Act has been reformed to emphasize nine basic compulsory education for all. This means that the first three years of a child will be spent in the Lower Basic (Basic 1,2, and 3), the second three years in the Middle Basic School (Basic 4,5, and 6) while the

last three years will be spent in the upper basic school (Junior Secondary 1,2 and 3). The upper basic schools have been merged with the lower and middle basic schools to make up the 9 years of compulsory continuous education. It is hoped that this will consolidate the objectives of the 9 years of Basic Education.

Issues have continued to arise around the workability of the Universal Basic Education Act in the organization, maintenance, and structure of schools in the nation. However, dividing schools into the lower, middle and upper basic tends to constitute a very serious challenge to head-teachers and proprietors. This is because most school owners do not want to release their pupils to other proprietors or school owners immediately after the completion of their six years (lower and middle basic) in school. Also, the popular demand by most parents of these children prompted most school owners to operate the two systems in the same compound for two main reasons. One either to cater to the needs of the parents or secondly to manage their available physical and human resources.

This is what referred to as joint-school system schooling, it is a system of schooling whereby the school provides education for two different categories of the school-age population in the same compound of the school day (Linden & Woodhall, 2011). This system of schooling is a characteristic of developing countries where human and material resources are very scarce and where finance for the education sector is very limited (Bray, 2000). Many developing countries Nigeria inclusive adopted the

policy to cater to the increasing enrolment in schools resulting from educational policies geared towards improving access to education, such as the abolition of school fees in public schools in many African countries. Policymakers also adopted the policy so that schools could use the existing and very scarce educational facilities such as classrooms, playgrounds, sporting facilities, and libraries, among others, to cater to both pupils at the lower and middle as well as the students at the upper basic section. It is also a school system whereby the same subject teachers of particular subjects teach across the section (Adesina, 2007). It is the example of a civic education teacher in the middle basic is also the social studies teacher in the upper basic class. In all developing countries introducing this system, policymakers adopted it initially as a temporary measure because of financial constraints, but it tended to become permanent policy for addressing resource constraints on access to public schools. The role of environmental structured as observed by Sorigan (2014) remains as one of the major focuses of contemporary scholarship.

Running both elementary and secondary school in the same school compound is consider an idea of minimizing space to maximize profit. This simple act of profit-making might result in a population explosion whereby both the pupils, students, and their teachers will have to be competing for spaces and facilities. No wonder Barrick (2016) study revealed that a combined school system causes overpopulation that is the population will have to overstretch the

existing school facilities and also created a high level of distraction of attention to both the students/pupils and their teachers.

Therefore, a high population of students/ pupils will pose a challenge to students/pupils level of conformity to school rules and regulations. This is was corroborated in the finding of Obioma and Ohuche (2015) which found out that running both lower basic (Primary and upper basic (Junior secondary) within the same facilities and structures poses a serious threat to the maintenance of school discipline among the students/pupils. Stressing this further is the finding of Awuwoloye (2015) which showed that double-shifting/ combining school systems in the same academic environment is a poor form of implementation of the free Universal Basic Education by proprietors. In essence, the learning environment has a substantially greater effect on attainment than on intelligence.

Also, socialization as well as social interaction is key when schools of different categories are separated, which is not run together in the same compound. This allows the students to learn and adjust to new learns and changes. Peters (2010) stresses that when students change class within or between schools, they learn to adjust to new surroundings, become familiar with new teachers and peers, learn new ways of working, and make sense of the rules and routines that operate in their classes. Thereby adjusting themselves to the social changes that happen when changing schools and classes. This is what sociologist refers to a transition process, that is vital in the life of every student.

Especially after graduation from elementary/primary school and moving to secondary school, this period is often characterized by social change in the life of the students that they will have to learn how to adjust to. Also, emotional stability that they need to learn to cope with and lastly physiological changes that will involve both body and the new physical environment they find themselves. Peters (2010) finding identifies four key benefits that pupils will be exposed to when they migrated from one elementary/primary school to a new secondary school. The benefits are as follows:

1. This change offers students the opportunity to develop a good level of curiosity, develop critical thinking, and be ready to deal with challenges that come their way in the new school.
2. Develops in the student's good social life and helps them to know about themselves and the new environment.
3. It helps to enhance physical development in students, through exploration and constant navigation of the new school environment.
4. It builds in the students a high level of emotional development and stability needed to survive.

Statement of the Problem

The introduction of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria has helped to change the financial status of private school owners. This is because the policy now allows for a smooth transition from primary school which the lower and middle basic to upper basic which is the junior secondary school. What private schools did was to add more blocks of classrooms and in some instances arrange

with the existing classrooms or structures to be able to take care of the new section. This now allowed them to operate the two sections in the same educational facilities and structure.

This is not different from what the State Government did in the state hold secondary school, where schools were divided into two sections with the appointment of new school heads and management team for the newly created sections in the same school facilities and structures.

This arrangement comes with different school activities and programs for each of the two sections such activities include: assembly time, the difference in the time allotted for each period of the sections in which 30 minutes is allotted from lower and middle basic while 40-45 minutes is for the upper basic, and school bells will be sounded at different times. Also, break time allocation, sporting activities take place in the school within the first three periods differently for these sections, as for the lower and middle basic it is always on a Wednesday and Thursday is for the upper basic. And lastly, closing period, one section closes earlier than the other section.

Other facilities like the playground are also shared, which might create a serious bullying threat to the pupils. A study of Juvonen and Graham (2014) report on age categories that involved in bullying shows 10-15 ages range are more. This is the age range of students found in upper basic classes. bully their younger which is the pupils more. The finding of Espelage, Hong, Rao, and Thornberg (2016) also revealed that when school

facilities are shared such as the school playground, and library. Besides bullying, there are possibilities of confusion and distraction in the school either the pupils, students, or their teachers.

However, having these two categories together in the same compound in private schools created a might have some influence on the pupils and students in questions, either positively or otherwise. It is on this basis that the researcher investigated from the students (that is upper basic) that are attending this type of schooling system to know whether having these two categories together has any influence on their academic activities?

Purpose of the Study

The study assessed the threat which joint school section practice of private school under universal basic education posed to students' academic activities in the school. Specifically, the study examined Upper basic Students' assessment of the threats in joint school section under Universal Basic Education, and how that system affects their academic activities.

METHOD

The study adopted a quantitative form of descriptive design, the choice of this design was in line with Sambo (2008) who maintained that quantitative research designed is appropriate when the study is involved collection and analysis of numerical data that can best be presented in patterns and averages, make predictions, test causal relationships, and making generalization of the results to wider populations. Thus, this study dealt with data obtained from first-hand observation, interviews from the sampled

respondents, and process the data collected in percentages count. The target population of the study was a private school operating a joint school system of free Universal Basic Education in the Ilorin metropolis. There is a total of 321 private schools operating a joint school system in the Ilorin metropolis. Three local government areas make up the Ilorin Metropolis, they are Ilorin Central, Ilorin South, and Ilorin West. The composition of 321 private schools is in the ratio of 124 Ilorin Central: 78 Ilorin South: 119 Ilorin West respectively. A total of 15 private schools were purposively sampled, this is in line with Sambo (2008) who stated that if a researcher finds a characteristic of interest in a population it can be purposively sampled for the study. Upper Basic School one, two, and three students of 15 sampled private schools operating Universal Basic Education System in the Ilorin metropolis were the target respondents. The 15 school (6:4:5) respectively has a total of 4,281 students from Junior school 1, 2, and 3. Out of which 1,176 were sampled. This is in line with the Research Advisor's (2006) table of sample selection which stated it that the best sample size for a population of 5000-7500 with a confidence level of 0.05 and a margin of error of 2.5%, 1,176 is appropriate. Therefore, 1,815 respondents for Ilorin central, 1,126 for Ilorin south, and 1,340 for Ilorin west. A proportionate sampling procedure was adopted in the selection of respondents as follows: 499, 309, and 368 respectively. Then simple random sampling through a luck dip was used in the selection of students from various sampled schools.

A 10 items researcher's designed structured interview with content validity and 0.77 reliability index of 0.71 was the instrument used to elicit the needed data from the respondents. The researcher visited the schools during school hours to interview the respondents alongside personal observation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The first research question was presented based on an item-by-item analysis of the instruments which is on the challenges that the joint school operating system on its recipients.

1. Only 948 out of the total of 1,176 respondents from the sampled schools had younger ones in the lower section of their schools. This represented 80.6% of the sample while 19.4% did not have younger ones. This is an indication that many of these students have younger ones that will need their attention at one time or the other even despite the difference in their timetable and programs.
2. Only 12.3% of those students with younger ones in the lower basic section stated that their younger ones did not come to their class during break time while the remaining 68.3% showed that their younger ones came to them during break time thereby constituting a distraction to them in class since they observe breaktime differently.
3. Closing times for both lower and upper basic differs which poses challenges in terms of distraction to the upper basic. They all confirm the fact that the lower and middle basic classes much earlier than the upper basic and since most of them have younger ones in the school.

These younger ones move around to play and check on their senior siblings who are still in class attending to the lesson. In most cases, the last subjects slated lastly on the class timetable suffer low concentration from the students. More so, most parents of those students with siblings don't come to pick them up until the school closes for all the sections. This gives the pupils that close early ample opportunity to play around the school while waiting for their senior siblings.

4. Ninety-six percent of the total respondents testify to the fact that the school bell indicating a change of lesson from the lower section always constitutes a serious distraction to them. Most times teachers leave their classes before the expiration of their official time due to distraction from the sound of the bell for change of lesson. This was the case in 60% (9 schools) of the private sampled.
5. Sporting of the lower and middle basic classes is always on Wednesdays' on the school calendar while upper basic classes are on Thursdays' respondents see this variation in the sporting activities as a distraction, they always felt attracted to the sporting activities and lost focus in class.
6. Usage of some school facilities like the library, computer room, laboratory both for Science and home economics were shared by the two sections. This was the comment of the student, that at times the two sections cannot make use of the facilities at the same time.
7. A sum of 925 respondents affirms the fact that combining both sections of

the school system in the same compound with the same school gate, the same facilities constitute a serious distraction and a threat to concentration in the class.

8. Compliance with school rules and regulations by the students was reported to be another challenge.
9. It discourages exploration, reduces curiosity, and social change, this is because they are still in the same school, nothing is new, no new friends or new teachers, no innovation expect the same environment that they have been used to for the five-seven years. Since many started from Pre-school to Nursery 1 and 2, and then Basic 1 to 6 and now find themselves in the secondary section, only their school uniform changed. This was the assessment of 1,093 students.
Research Question two: What is the students' assessment of the effect of the joint school Operating System under Universal Basic Education on their academic activities?

In response to the second research question, Nine hundred and eighty-one of the total respondents attested to the fact that the system of having both lower, middle, and upper basic together does affect their academic activities negatively. By causing distractions and limit their level of explorations and curiosity as well as exposure to new ideas and social interaction.

Discussion

The study findings show that students of the school operating joint school system for all three categories of students do face some challenges as they

attend such school. Here are some challenges as assessed by the respondents: it was evident from the findings of the study that students in the upper basic in substantial numbers had younger ones in the middle as well as lower basic sections of their school. This implied that the siblings of these students would always have one or two businesses with their elders once during their break period. Just like the common practice that most parents have, once a parent is having more than a child in a school, it is obvious that the eldest once are always saddled with the responsibility of taking care of their younger ones, including attention even before break period among others.

The difference in the timing of the break periods both long and short also constituted a distraction of attention and well as obstruction in their academic stability. Therefore, 68.3% of the respondents attested to the fact that their younger ones always showed up in their classes or waited at their classroom windows to make their request especially when the lesson was ongoing. This act they complained about caused a distraction to them.

A meaningful sum of the respondents also attested to the fact that they got distracted in the middle of an interesting lesson when they heard the sound of a bell. At first, they will think the lesson had come to an end. After some time, they would realize that it was not theirs, so they could continue with their lesson. This caused the loss of attention and concentration to the majority of these students.

Also, during the lower-level extracurricular activities like games and sports, they experienced a lot of distraction of attention and mindset. They felt very disturbed; this became possible because, in most private schools in Kwara State, the early hours of Wednesdays are always dedicated to sport most especially at the middle and lower basic school level. This seriously distracted students' attention in class and lesson. They disclosed that they were attracted to the sporting activities going on outside the class and lost focus in class. As for the upper basic students, their sports days are always on Thursdays. This is an indication that during the upper basic students' sporting period, the lower and middle basic students would experience the same thing.

Bullying of the pupils by the upper basic students was also reported as one of the major challenges. This was reported by 78% of the student who reported that most times their younger siblings are always bullied by the upper basic students most especially in the school bus, on the playing ground, libraries among other facilities that they shared. In essence, that school rule and regulation that prohibit bullying was not strictly adhered to by the students. Thus, sharing the same space, environment, structures, and facilities of the basic school is a challenge to effective academic activities and even learning. All these challenges tally with the findings of Sorigan (2014) whose finding pointed at school environment as a constituting factor to effective academic activities, also that of Barrick (2016) whose findings argued joint school operating system as a way of implementing the new nine years

free and compulsory universal basic education as creating distraction of attention to both the students/pupils and their teachers by overstretching the school limited facilities and resources. Corroborating this is another finding of Obioma and Ohuche (2015) that discovered that running both lower basic (Primary) and upper basic (Junior secondary) within the same facilities and structures poses a serious threat to the maintenance of school discipline among the students/pupils.

It was also evident from the findings of the study that the joint school system operating as a way of proprietors' implementation of the new free and compulsory nine basic education has negative effects on its recipients. It affects their attention in a classroom during very interesting lessons. Affect their concentration in the class also especially when co-curricular activities such as sport are going on while other levels are the class, among many others. Also, its negative effect was evident in their socialization, it denies them the opportunity of meeting new students and making new friends, new teachers, reduces their zeal of curiosity since they are not exposed to anything. This is result did not tally with the finding of (Peters, 2010) because it failed to help students in the joint-school operation system to identifies the four key benefits of Peters's findings.

CONCLUSION

The result of the study showed that the school operating joint system under the universal basic education, (the six years of lower and middle basic and three years of upper basic) in the same compound

affected the students it is meant to cater for in many ways. The distraction of those who had their younger ones as well as those who did not have in the other section of the school, when their younger ones came to their class during lesson periods, due to the difference in the period allocation to the daily activities of each section. Given this study, the following recommendations were hereby made:

1. The same period should be allocated to both sections since they use the same compound to reduce the level of distraction and confusion in the school.
2. The sporting activities should be scheduled for the same day and period to mitigate disturbance and lack of concentration of those who will be in class when others are outside in the compound playing.
3. The structures of the two sections should be sited in different locations to make teaching and learning conducive and in a well-planned. This will eradicate distractions and confusion of the students as well as reduce overpopulation in the compound.

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