
Parental Awareness and Involvement in the Achievement of Educational Policy on Universal Basic Education (UBE): Implication for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

By

DAVID OTU EFFIOM, (Ph.D)

*Department of Educational Foundations & Administration
Cross River University of Technology
Calabar Campus.*

ELIZABETH USHANG APEBENDE, (Ph.D)

*Department of Educational Foundations & Administration
Cross River University of Technology
Calabar Campus.*

AKPO OFFIONG BASSEY, (Ph.D)

*Department of Educational Foundations & Administration
Cross River University of Technology
Calabar Campus.*

And

MBANG EKONG IMONA, (Ph.D)

*Department of Educational Foundations & Administration
Cross River University of Technology
Calabar Campus.*

Abstract

This survey research study investigated the awareness and involvement of parents in the achievement of educational policy on UBE. Three research questions were formulated as a guide to the study. The Stratified Random Sampling Technique was used to draw one hundred and forty eight parents (148) male and female for the study. The instrument used to gather information was a questionnaire tagged “Parental Awareness Provision and Supervision Questionnaire” (PAPSQ). The result of the findings revealed that: (1) Parental

awareness of government effort to education in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State is a little above average, in some cases while in others the situation is a little below average. (2) The level of parental involvement in provision of children school requirements and general care is positively high; and (3) A high involvement of parents in school supervision of the children was also revealed. It was therefore recommended that parents should be provided with information on MDGs right from the grassroots and sanctions should also be implemented.

Education is the pivot of development in all spheres of life. It plays a vital role in enhancing handling of situations based on understanding of problems and better ways of solving them. According to UNESCO (2002) education is an indispensable means of unlocking and protecting human rights by providing the scaffold required to secure good health, liberty, security, economic well being and participation in social and political activities. It is therefore, the key to national development and modernization because what a nation becomes is dependent on the type and quality of education provided for the citizenry (Adokoye, 2008).

The Nigeria government in recognition of the need for quality education, introduced the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program in 1999 prior to the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Universal Basic Education (UBE) was targeted at making education free and compulsory from primary to junior secondary school with the objectives of liberating illiteracy, empowering individuals to make personal and social choices for better standard of living. The under girded principle being that if the foundational level of education be solidly laid, the subsequent higher levels will invariably be progressive instead of retrogressive. In spite of this, most developing countries of the world providing children with basic education have not been able to meet their stipulated desires due to extreme conditions that challenge most homes and the uniqueness of education.

To ensure that every man derives benefits and contributes meaningfully to his nation, the United Nation declared that every individual has a right to dignity, freedom of speech, quality education, a basic standard of living that exclude hunger and violence. These were to be achieved within fifteen years period through the following targeted goals:

1. Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achievement of universal primary education
3. Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women
4. Reduction in child mortality rate
5. Improvement of maternal health
6. Combating HIV & AIDs, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensuring environmental sustainability
8. Developing a global partnership for development

These laudable goals gave rise to formation of many policies in different developing countries of which Nigeria is one. In the education sector, the policy stressed the provision of free basic education for all children. The fifteen years set by the United Nation is almost at hand, yet there are still many problems militating against the achievement of these goals. It is therefore imperative to address parents on the need for them to be actively involved in the achievement of these millennium goals.

Parental involvement in education according to Apebende, Bassey, Idaka and Ifere (2010) implies parents' investment in the education of their children for the much desired development of the children and the development and stability of the nation. Desforges and Aboudoor (2011) posit that this takes many forms including good parenting at home, the provision of secure and stable environment, intellectual stimulation parent-child discussion, good models of constructive social and educational values and high aspirations relating to personal fulfillment and good citizenship, contact with schools to share information, participation in school events, work of the school and in school governance.

In as much as most parents may want to be involved in their children's academic achievement, many studies have shown reasons why parents can not. Africa Renewal (2005) found that while Africa has made some modest progress in increasing school enrolment among others, it has enormous challenges. These are able to inhibit the approach to the Millennium Development Goals achievement by 2015 unless both African Countries and international communities mobilize far more efforts and resources. Even with these, the goals will continually be minimally achieved without individual home parental involvement.

Randle (2004) from her studies in Senegal found that many people especially those in the rural areas live at or near poverty levels and have no idea about Millennium Development Goals and ways of achieving them neither are they aware that school enrolment is free. When parents are ignorant of the rights of their children, they can not work towards encouraging them to benefit. This therefore supports Guarcello, Nealli and Rosati (2002) who found out that poor families pull their children out of school to provide labour as a strategy to minimize income stress instead of encouraging them to stay on at school for a brighter future. Rankin and Ngwenya (2000) in the assessment of the level of public awareness of MDGs in 46 countries found a positive relationship between likely achievement of MDG indicators and level of awareness in selected countries. This indicates that MDG awareness increases a country's likely achievement of MDG indicators. They also found out that countries with higher Gross Domestic Product Index (GDPI) or Human Development Index (HDI) exhibited lower levels of awareness and a proportionally lower likelihood of the achievement of MDG indicators. They therefore, called for strong public support for the MDGs to take precedence in political and social space at a higher global standard of human development.

Thus, with parental awareness, they are bound to be involved in the education of their children through the provision of necessary learning materials such as text books, exercise books, school bags, uniform, school lunch and adequate medical care which positively influence academic achievement. Riley (2011) found high level of parental involvement to correlate with pupils willingness to try harder and achieve more at school. McNeal (1999) found that parental involvement improved school performance and reduced behavior problems that may interfere with learning.

School based activities like helping with home work, encouraging reading and school attendance boost the academic achievement of children who are already doing well and ensure fair effective interventions for children with academic concern. Findings from studies by Olatonye and Ogunkola (2008), Fan and Chen (1999), Hong and Lee (1999) revealed that parental involvement in the supervision of their children at home by establishing rules for television viewing and homework were strongly associated with academic success and more positive attitudes toward homework. Further, parental awareness of MDGs will foster the establishment of relationship with teachers and school administrators and other parents in order to get important information about the school policies and behavior expectation. (Eptein and Sanders (2002). This may be through parent/teacher conferences, and participation in fund raising activities, inter house sports, etc. These processes therefore enhance parents ability to shape their children's capabilities (Uzoehina and Obidike, 2008; Akinwumi, 2004; Jaiyeoba and Atanda, 2004 and Yonezawa, 2000),

A conducive home environment with an equally conducive and stimulating school environment go a long way to ensure children's health. This implies a state of reduced stress, anxiety and depression. Parental awareness of MDGs can easily foster the provision of stable emotional health for children. Where children have emotional well being, they are bound to perform well at school Harper and Lynch, 2007; Lewallen, 2004). A study by Gumora and Arsenio (2002) also support the assertion of positive influence of health on academic performance.

Education in Nigeria is indeed undergoing serious changes in the area of reconstruction, readjustment and refocus to meet its demand as targeted in MDGs. It is therefore imperative at this point to consider parental involvement towards achieving the MDGs or education.

Statement of the Problem

The United Nations having identified the problems facing the poor nations of the world especially the undeveloped nations and the third world countries have set up goals to be achieved in a period of fifteen years. The target period is almost at hand and so it is important to take stock of the effort that has been put in and how far these goals are being achieved. The process of achieving these goals is not supposed to be left in the hands of government alone but should be the concern of all, both government, parents, individuals and even the children. As a result of this, government has set up educational polices to achieve the set goals. The emphasis on this study is on goal No.

2. (The achievement of the Universal Primary Education by the year 2015). The question is how many parents are aware of the educational policies. How many are willing to send their children to school and how many parents can afford to provide, monitor, supervise and help children to acquire education at the primary school level. These are questions this study seeks to answer.

Research Questions

Three questions were set to guide the study. These include:

1. What is the level of parental awareness of government effort in education in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State.
2. What is the level of parental involvement in the provision of school requirement and general care of their children and wards.
3. To what extent are parents involved in the school supervision of their children.

Methodology

This study adopted a survey design. The population of the study comprise of all parents in the south Senatorial District of Cross River State. The stratified random sampling technique was used to sample one hundred and forty eight (148) parents both male and female from this district.

The instrument for this study was a sixteen item questionnaire Titled Parental Awareness, Provision and Supervision Questionnaire (PAPSQ). The Questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section was based on the respondents demographic information, and the second section was based on the variables identified for the study. The variable had six items, the second had seven items and the third had five items. Each of these items has questions based on how much, parents are aware of governments effort in Education, provide and supervise their children in the achievement of education. A 4 point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Disagree (D) and Strongly disagree was adopted.

The instrument was validated by one of the researchers who happens to be an expert in psychological testing. He scrutinized each of the items and made sure it measured what it was supposed to measure.

Results and Discussion

For the purpose of case of understanding, the results of data analysis are presented and discussed in the order at which the research questions were asked.

Research Question 1

What is the level of parental awareness of government's effort in education in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State?

Data gathered with regards to this question was analyzed by calculating singly percentages from frequency counts of response on items 1-5 of section 2 of the research instrument. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Measure of Parental Awareness of Government Effort in Education in Rank (N=48)

S/N	Parental Awareness on Governments	Frequency (%)	Rank
1.	Establishment of pre-primary sections in public schools	286 (48.3)	5 th
2.	Policy of free education for 3-11yrs aged children	294 (49.7)	4 th
3.	Policy of Compulsory education for 3-11yrs aged children	349 (59.0)	1 st
4.	Sanction on parent’s refusal to allow their children education right	327 (55.2)	2 nd
5.	Policy of equal education right for boys and girls	312 (52.7)	3 rd
OVERALL TOTAL		1,568 (53%)	

The result Table 1 indicate that parental awareness of government’s effort on education in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State is a little above average in some cases while in others the situation is a little below average. For instance, the first rank is parental awareness on policy of compulsory education for 3-11yrs and above, with the score of 349 (or 59%). This was followed in rank by parental awareness of sanction on parents refusal of their children’s right to education (second 327 or 55.2%). The 3rd in rank is awareness on policy of equal education right for boys and girls with the score of 312 or 52.7%. Awareness of free education for 3-11yrs and above ranked 4th with the score of 294 or 49.7% while awareness of the establishment of pre-primary classes in public schools rank 5th with the score of 286 or 48.3%.

Table 1 also shows an overall total level of parental awareness score of 1568 or 53%.

The result of the findings from research question I indicates that parental awareness to education in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State is a little above average in areas of policy on compulsory and free education for 3 – 11years and above aged children (59%), sanction on parents refusal to allow their children educational rights (55.2%) and on policy of equal education rights for boys and girls (52.7%).

On the other hand, parental awareness of government’s effort in that same study area was found to be below average in areas of policy of free education for 3 – 11 years and above aged children (49.7%) and on establishment of pre-primary classes in public schools (48.3%).

These findings of a little above average of parent awareness of government’s effort in education is in agreement with Pandle (2004) that many people especially those in the rural areas have no idea of MDGs and ways of achieving them. This may

Parental Awareness and Involvement in the Achievement of Educational Policy on Universal Basic Education (UBE): Implication for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

be one of the reasons why most parents of poor families pull their children out of school to provide labour as a strategy for minimizing income stress instead of encouraging them to stay in school as found by Guarcello, Nealli and Rosati (2002). The researchers are of the view that since government sanctions on parents are not effectively carried out, it is therefore not unusual to find children of school age hawking wares during school hours or being used as labours in most homes.

The findings of a little below average as found in the study is in support of Randle (2004) who also found that parents are not aware of the policy of free education for 3 – 11years and above children. The researchers had also observed in some of the schools visited that parents were charged unauthorized levies, books were bought by parents and no food subsidy for children as stipulated by the policy of MDGs. Thus, where level of awareness of MDGs is low there cannot be strong support for it. This agrees with Rankin and Ngwenya (2000)

Research Question 2

What is the level of parental involvement in the provision of school requirement and general care?

The result which was derived from the simple parental analysis of data in the frequency count of respondent items 6-11 of section 3 of the research instrument was computed as presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Measure of Parental Involvement in the Provision of School Requirement and General Care n Percentage Rank (N=148)

S/N	Parental Provision Items	Frequency (%)	Rank
.	Health Care	503 (85%)	5 th
.	Feeding (food)	520 (87.8%)	1 st
.	Affection	520 (87.8%)	1 st
.	School Uniform, shoe, etc.	520 (87.8%)	1 st
0.	Books/Learning Materials-pen, ruler etc.	492 (83.1%)	6 th
1.	School Fees	507 (85.6%)	4th
	OVERALL TOTAL	3062 (86.2%)	

The results in Table 2 indicate a high positive parental involvement in the provision of food (520 or 87.8%); Affection (520 or 87.8%) and school uniforms/shoe,

(520 or 87.8%). Similar nature of high scores are recorded for the provision of fees (507 or 85.6%) and health care (503 or 85%). The overall total score also show a high level of positive parental involvement (3062 or 86.2%).

The interpretation is that the level of parental involvement in the provision of children school requirement and general care is positively high.

The findings of the second research question on the level of parental involvement in the provision of school requirements and general care also revealed a high positive parental involvement in the provision of children’s school requirements and general care. This is in consonance with the findings of Apebende, Bassey, Idaka and Ifere (2010) that parental involvement in education include provision of necessary learning materials such as textbooks, exercise books, school bags, uniform, school lunch and adequate medical care, which foster the academic performance of children. The finding is also in agreement with the findings of Riley (2011) that high level of parental involvement correlates with increased pupils self confidence and will trigger them to work harder and achieve more at school. With emotional well being, they are well able to excel at school (Harper and Lynch, 2007 and Lewallen, 2004).

These findings are obvious as all parents are expected to ensure their children’s physiological and psychological needs even when they are least aware of the MDGs.

Research Question 3

To what extent are parents involved in the school supervision of their children?

To answer this question, the simple percentage statistical analysis on the frequency counts from responses on items 12-16 of section 4 of the research instrument was done as presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Measure of Parental Involvement in the school Supervision of their Children (N=148)

S/N	Parental Supervision Items	Frequency (%)	Rank
2.	Punctual at School	517 (87.32%)	1 st
3.	Attendance at School	507 (85.6%)	3 rd
4.	Disciplined Behaviour	511 (86.3%)	2 nd
5.	Home Work (Assignment)	504 (85.1%)	5 th
6.	Peer Involvement/Relationship	506 (85.5%)	4 th
	OVERALL TOTAL	506 (85.5%)	

The results in Table 3 show a significantly high involvement of parents in the school supervision of their children. In all the five variables measured. The score ranges between 504 or 85.1% and 517 or 87.3% with an overall total score of 2545 or 86.0%.

The findings of the third research question on parents involvement in school supervision of their children revealed a high involvement by parents. These findings are in support of Olatonye and Ogunkola (2008), Fan and Chen (1999) and Hung and Lee (1999) who found such acts of supervision as, encouraging reading, school attendance, rules for television and homework were strongly associated with academic success and more positive attitudes towards homework.

Naturally, parents are interested in their children's general well being. With knowledge of the crucial need of education for brighter future of their children, parents should very much be effective in the supervision of their children.

Conclusion and Recommendation

From the study, it can be concluded that the level of parental awareness in the achievement of educational policy on UBE is very low. However, their involvement in areas of provision of school requirements and general care and supervision in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State in Nigeria were very high.

It is therefore recommended that both the Federal and State Ministry of Education and all education agencies should rise to the challenge of ensuring the awareness of the MDGs by the general public. This could be carried out through door to door talks, display of banners using both the indigenous and official language of diverse local government areas within senatorial districts.

Sanctions should be equally spelt out and well implemented to ensure that all children become literate through formal education.

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Parental Awareness and Involvement in the Achievement of Educational Policy on Universal Basic Education (UBE): Implication for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

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