EDUCATION FOR ALL: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examines Education for All in Nigeria, its problems and prospects. Education is the tool through which countries attain their development. In line with this, several policies have been made in education including Education for All (EFA) by the year 2015. Unfortunately, two years to the year, Nigeria is yet to achieve this goal. This has led this paper to examine the problems which hinder the achievement of these laudable goals. The problems include, poor funding of education, poor enrolment, poor education facilities, poor teaching and learning conditions, among others. However, for EFA goals to be achieved, all stakeholders in education including the government, teachers/school administrators, parents, community leaders etc. should ensure that the facilities needed for the achievement of EFA goals are put in place.. By this, mass illiteracy, poverty, child labour among others will be reduced to the naught in Nigeria.

Education has been noted as the bedrock for any meaningful and sustainable development hence the need for continuous emphasis on its attainment. It is a tool through which country's socio-economic, scientific and technological development is achieved. It is also an opportunity through which both individual, group or any nation is economically, socially, culturally and technologically empowered. Education is the instrument for empowering young people with knowledge and skills which provide them access to productive employment (National Planning Commission, NPC, 2013). In recognition of the need for education, the Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004) noted that education is that process concerned with the transmission of worthwhile values; skills, and knowledge suitable for developing learners' potentials for national development. The policy statement further emphasised that education is the most important instrument for change (FRN, 2004). Emphasizing on the role of education Lawal & Wahab, (2011) noted that education is the most important

instrument to enhance human capabilities and to achieve the desired objectives of socio and economic development. Accordingly, Anaduaka & Okafor (2013) noted that the major goal of education in any nation is to prepare its citizens for responsible and productive adult life so as to be able to function honestly, efficiently and effectively in the society in which they live.

To further embellish the need for education, the philosophy of Nigerian education lays emphasis on education that provides equal access to education for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system. Over the years, Nigerian governments have taken some measures in ensuring an improvement in education. In the year 1976 the Universal Primary Education (UPE) was launched. Also in 1990 Nigeria joined other countries, agencies and organisations such as UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund), UNICEF and the World Bank in adopting Education For All (EFA). Nigerian governments did not stop at this. In order to be in line with the recommendations of EFA, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme was launched by the federal government in 1999. UBE was launched to provide access to quality education for all, regardless of gender, ethnic or social background and geographical location. All these policies are in a bid to ensure that every citizen is literate and useful to the society.

However, the attainment of these policies is not without challenges especially as regards EFA. These challenges are obvious considering the Nigeria's heterogeneous Geo-political, socio-economic and cultural setting. Primarily, Nigeria is a very large country of about 160 million with majority of the inhabitants residing in rural areas. Hence, it is not easy to create educational opportunities in some of these rural areas with equal education unfriendly environment.

The paper tends to focus on the problems inherent in the achievement of EFA goals in Nigeria. Thereafter, the paper discusses the role of the stakeholders in achieving EFA and finally presents the strategies for achieving EFA goals in Nigeria.

EFA: Conceptual Definition

EFA means Education For All. When we hear or say Education For All, what comes to our mind? It means – educate every citizen irrespective of tribe, level, status or gender. EFA was an international agreement adopted at the Jomtien World Conference in 1990. The target was to achieve education for all by 2015. The Education For All movement is a global commitment geared towards enabling all children, young people and adults have the human rights to benefit from an education that will meet their basic learning needs, that

which includes learning to know, to do, to live together and to be, thereby developing learners' personalities so that they can improve their lives and transform their societies (Dakar Framework for Action, 2000). EFA has development implication in that it is a means and not an end in itself to ensure total emancipation.

The guiding principle of the EFA programme in Nigeria is the equipping of every citizen with such knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will enable them be useful to the society by contributing their own quota to the development of the community. To ensure its attainment, Nigeria embarked upon sensitization drive through mass media, and involvement of advisory bodies in education such as the Joint Consultative Council on Education and National Council on Education. Despite these and more efforts made for education attainment in Nigeria, the question is, is education really for all in Nigeria? If Yes, to what extent, what are the challenges and if No, why?

EFA Goals

The education for all initiative is an international initiative which was designed to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults by the year 2015. The international community targeted to universalize primary education and massively reduce illiteracy by the year 2015. At the declaration of Education for All, The objectives which EFA seeks to attain include;

Goal 1: Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Goal 2: Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

Goal 3: Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.

Goal 4: Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing Education For All adults.

Goal 5: Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

Goal 6: Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills

To achieve these goals, organizations, agencies, groups and associations represented at the World Education Forum in Dakar (2000) pledged to among other things;

i. mobilize strong national and international political commitment for education for all, develop national action plans and enhance significantly investment in basic education;

ii. promote EFA policies within a sustainable and well-integrated sector framework clearly linked to poverty elimination and development strategies;

iii. ensure the engagement and participation of civil society in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of strategies for educational development;

iv. develop responsive, participatory and accountable systems of educational governance and management;

v. meet the needs of education systems affected by conflict, national calamities and instability and conduct educational programmes in ways that promote mutual understanding, peace and tolerance, and help to prevent violence and conflict;

vi. implement integrated strategies for gender equality in education which recognize the need for changes in attitudes, values and practices;

vii. implement as a matter of urgency education programmes and actions to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic;

viii. create safe, healthy, inclusive and equitably resourced educational environments conducive to excellence in learning with clearly defined levels of achievement for all;

Nations, states and local governments have tried to mobilize their resource for attainments of these goals to ensure that access to school is on increase and for easy transition from one level of education to the other. In an effort to ensure that countries are committed to achieving these goals within the stipulated time, the EFA Global Monitoring Report that is released every year has sought to measure how countries have followed up with other countries in achieving these goals. In Nigeria, all the Global Monitoring Reports since 2008 indicate that the country has continuously left its school age population out of school

(Bayo, 2013). In the EFA development index shown for 129 countries, 51 out of these countries have achieved or close to achieving EFA goals while 53 are in an intermediate position to achieving the goals. 25 countries including Nigeria are far from achieving these EFA goals. The question is what is wrong with Nigeria? Where lies the problem?

Problems of Achieving EFA in Nigeria

A combination of factors has made the achievement of EFA goals in Nigeria impossible.

1. Access to education
2. Inadequate funding
3. Shortage of quality of teachers
4. Poor infrastructural facilities in schools
5. Inadequate supervision and inspection
6. Inadequate teaching/learning facilities
7. Poor learning environment

Some of the problems of achieving EFA goals are discussed below.

Access to Education

Education for All is primarily determined by the number of school children being enrolled in schools. With Nigeria's commitment to EFA, every child is expected to have right to education irrespective of gender, ethnicity, location or religion. In view of this commitment, several Nigerian Governments have made efforts to increase the enrolment of school children. However, it has been observed that enrolment is low especially in the area of access to Early Child Care and Development Education (ECCDE). At Jomtien (1990) and Dakar (2000), the World leaders restated the deplorable state of education and the slow progress towards the achievement of the goals of EFA.

It was noted in 2000 that there were estimates of 113 million out of school children and 880 million illiterate adults (Dakar Framework of Action, 2000). Education Sector National Technical Working Group (2009) noted that in 2009 Education Road Map, the expected enrolment in ECCDE for that year was 22 million but the actual was only 2.02 million. This shows that there was shortfall in enrolment for that year. Again in 2012, UNESCO's data revealed that 61 million children of primary school age are being denied their right to education worldwide. Out of this number, Nigeria accounts for about 10.5 million (Bayo, 2013). Although UNESCO's Institute for statistics show that the number of out-of-school children dropped slightly 2012 compared to 2011. The report revealed that out of about 137 million children who began school in 2011, 34 million were likely to drop out before reaching their last grade (Afisunlu, 2013). Furthermore, at the Basic Education level, reports also show that the rate of enrolment still does not measure with the expected enrolment. Below is the table showing the primary and junior school aged children out of school.

Table 1: Primary and Junior Secondary School Aged Children Out of School (2012)

		Out of School	
Population	**Total**	**Actual number**	**Percentage (%)**
Primary	24.7 million	7.3million	29.6
Junior secondary	10.9million	2.8 million	26
Aggregate	35.6 million	10.1 million	

Source: computed from UNICEF, 2013.

A cursory look at the table above indicates that a good number of Nigerian children are still out of school. Decline in school enrolment has been rooted to cultural factors. In some cultures where early marriage is emphasized, girls are not allowed to attend school by their family members. Also many children do not attend school because their labour is needed at home or to bring additional income to the family. The worry is, is achieving EFA goal feasible in Nigeria or will it be abandoned like other preceding education programmes? This question is to be answered by all stakeholders in education. It is pertinent to note that without progress in school enrolment, poverty reduction may not be attained and the inequalities between Nigeria and other countries will be on increase.

Funding

Over the years, reports have shown that there has been inadequate funding of education in Nigeria. The gross under funding of the educational sector in the country has contributed to the decline in the education system. UNESCO has recommended that 26% of the total budget of a nation should be allocated to education. It has been observed that Nigeria governments have not budgeted up to 26% recommended for education. From 1999 to 2002, Nigerian governments budgeted only 11.12%, 8.36%, 7.00%, and 5.60%, of her total budget to education respectively (UNESCO, 2009; Eze, 2005). In the recent past, Nigerian Government has made efforts to increase education budget. In 2012, the aggregate expenditure proposed for the 2012 fiscal year was ₦4.749 trillion. Out of the budget, ₦400.15 billion was allotted to education. In 2013, an aggregate expenditure of ₦4.92 trillion was proposed for the main budget out of which ₦26.53 billion was for education.

Although education was rated high in the budget but, has this amount allotted to education up to 26% of Nigeria's total budget? The answer is no as the percentage is 8.43% in 2012 and 8.6% in 2013. This implies that between 2002 and 2013 that is after eleven years, Nigeria has recorded only about 3% increase in budgetary allocated to the education sector. The

question is will Nigeria be able to get up to 26% allocation to education within the remaining 2 years left to achieve EFA goals.

The fact that Nigeria spends less in education when compared with other countries cannot be denied. Below is the table showing annual budgetary allocation to education by some selected countries.

Table 2: World Bank Analysis of Annual Budgetary Allocation to Education by Some Selected Countries 2012

S/N	Country	% Budget Allocation to Education
1	Ghana	31.0
2	Cote'd Ivoire	30.0
3	Uganda	27.0
4	Morocco	26.4
5	South Africa	25.8
6	Swaziland	24.6
7	Mexico	24.3
8	Kenya	23.0
9	United Arab Emirates	22.5
11	Botswana	19.0
12	Iran	17.7
13	USA	17.1
14	Tunisia	17.0
15	Lesotho	17.0
16	Burkina Faso	16.8
17	Norway	16.2
18	Columbia	15.6
19	Nicaragua	15.0
20	India	12.7
	Nigeria	8.4

Source: Odiaka, 2013

It is obvious that the budgetary allocations to education for these years contribute to the decline in education system in Nigeria. Those countries whose allocations to education are high have better schools than those with fewer allocations to education. How can EFA be achieved with meager allocation of 8.7% in education that ought to have received 26%? It is a problem.

Shortage of Quality Teachers

It has been noted that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Therefore the quality of education depends on the quality of the teachers who are the implementers. In line with this, the Dakar framework (2000) stressed that governments need to enhance the status, morale and professionalism of teachers to achieve EFA. In Nigeria, the plight of teachers can significantly affect the achievement of EFA. It requires a qualified and competent teacher to be able to implement the planned curriculum. Competency in teaching requires a qualified and skilled teacher. Equally the ability of the competent teacher to implement appropriately depends on the workload and the teacher- student ratio.

The teacher-student ratio in the UBE scheme is put at 1:40. Obviously this is not what obtains in most UBE schools where some classes have up to 70 pupils/students. Teachers' salaries, benefits and allowances ought to be raised to correspond to the task

they perform in teaching. In Nigeria, teachers' salaries relative to those of other professions have declined over the years and are often too low to provide a reasonable standard of living.

Infrastructural Facilities

The number of schools, facilities available for basic education is inadequate for the number of children and youths. Reports have shown that some schools in Nigeria are in a dilapidated state. This trend is witnessed more in the urban areas where the population is on increase. The neglect of the maintenance of the physical facilities, instructional and living conditions have deteriorated in many schools, classrooms, libraries and laboratories are nothing to write home about, all leading to decline in academic standards. In such situations, teaching and learning cannot be effective and therefore the result will be below expectation.

Leadership/Inadequate Supervision and Inspection

Leadership has been noted as one of the problems facing the schools system in Nigeria. One of the problems inherent in Nigerian leadership is lack of continuity or sustainability of policies. Severally, policies have been made and strategies for carrying out those policies put in place but it has been discovered that mostly the problem is not to make a policy but the ability to follow up the policies to ensure proper implementation. Also many schools are not being properly managed and supervised to ensure that teachers teach accordingly. This becomes a problem in achieving EFA.

Inadequate Data for Planning

When the data required for planning is inadequately provided or lacking then decisions made based on such faulty data lead to failure. In planning to achieve EFA, accurate data is needed to ensure that appropriate provisions are made for all concerned.

Prospects of EFA in Nigeria: Need for Improvement

Having x-rayed some of the problems that hinder the achievement EFA, one would ask, is EFA still achievable, of what benefit is it to a developing nation like Nigeria? What is the way forward? In attempting to answer the questions posed, one can say that EFA is achievable with numerous benefits to a developing nation like Nigeria.

Benefits of EFA among others are;

1. Reduction in poverty level of a nation
2. Reduction in child labour
3. Reduction in the rate of crime
4. Reduction of gender imbalance in educational
5. Attainment

Suggestions for Improvement: The Role of Stakeholders

Over the years, Nigerian governments have made concerted

efforts in ensuring that the problems of education system in Nigeria are addressed especially as regards achieving education for all. However, despite these efforts, much still needs to be done to ensure that the goals of EFA can and will be achieved. All stakeholders in education must work together for these goals to be attained. The stakeholders include; Government at all levels, Teachers, Non-Governmental Organisations and community leaders, parents among others. These stakeholders should ensure that EFA goals are achieved through;

Funding of Education

To ensure that Nigeria meets up with the achievement of EFA goals, education system must be funded by the government to incorporate the 26% of the country's budget as stipulated by UNESCO. The funds should be made available to schools and as well be prudently managed (Umo, 2005). Governments must provide the facilities needed for running of the schools.

Provision of Infrastructure and School Facilities

To achieve EFA, unprecedented refurbishing and building of classrooms is needed to enhance access to school and to have a better learning environment. The quality of the learning materials and textbooks must be improved. These learning materials and textbooks should be readily made available to schools and learners.

Motivation of Teachers

Achieving EFA requires qualified, better-trained teachers and competent teachers. It has been noted that nations that have invested in teaching profession achieve high learning standards. Teachers should be motivated through the prompt payment of their salaries and allowances. Teaching aids should be provided to enable them carry out the process of teaching adequately. Also, there should be enhanced incentive for teachers like bursary award.

Recruitment of Enough Competent Teachers/ Training and Re-Training of Teachers

Recruitment of enough trained teachers is imperative for the achievement of EFA goals. Teachers should from time to time be trained though in-service training, attending of workshops and seminars to ensure their productivity on the teaching job.

Effective Monitoring/Evaluation

EFA program should be monitored and evaluated regularly to ensure that every stakeholder involved is committed to achieving the goals and to ascertain the extent of its achievement. The process of monitoring and evaluation in Nigeria will enable the stakeholders know areas of difficulties.

The Role of National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) in Achieving EFA Goals

An attempt in defining open and distance learning will be made in order

to understand its role in achieving EFA goals. Open and distance learning has been given distinct but similar meanings. Open and distance learning is referred to a form of education and learning in which using learning resources rather than attending classroom sessions is the central feature of learning experiences (Mbonu & Ubbaonu, nd). An open and distance learning is one where teaching and learning takes place without the physical contact of both the teacher and the learner through the use of information communication technologies (ICTs) for those unable to access the regular education. Learning can be provided with ICTs such as audiocassette, videocassette, online teaching or it can be through print among others. Therefore, open and distance learning is an avenue for providing effective and equitable learning for people in all situations and of all ages (Ofoha, 2011). By this method, education is accessed by all irrespective of age, gender, status or tribe

In an attempt to concretely establish open and distance learning in Nigeria, National Open University of Nigeria was instituted in 1983 (Amba-Uva, 2007). Ofoha, (2011) noted that the mission of NOUN is to provide functional, cost effective, flexible learning which add lifelong value to quality education for all who seek knowledge. Therefore the mandate of NOUN is to ensure education for all without any barrier.

The role of open and distance learning in the implementation of EFA goals cannot be overemphasized. This role is embedded in the right to education as being described and analyzed in the context of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child. Specifically EFA goal 4 emphasised achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing Education For All adults. NOUN should emphasis on the acquisition of skills which is stipulated in EFA goal 6. The role of open and distance learning towards achieving EFA should be to ensure that life skills are embedded in teaching and learning process thereby equipping the learners with the lifelong skills. Also **a vigorous higher degree programme should be developed.**

Challenges of NOUN in Achieving EFA

Inadequate Human Capacity

Lack of infrastructure and professional competence in open and distance learning is a significant barrier to achieving EFA goals in Nigeria. There is a shortage of qualified staff required for guiding and influencing the development of distance education policies, and for planning, developing, managing, and evaluating distance education programs.

Inadequate Funding

Partly because of inadequate funding of education in Nigeria, open

and distance learning institutions in Nigeria lacks financial resources. Furthermore, due to the fact that most people are not receptive to open and distance learning, some centers tend to have low enrolment. This also affects the funding of open and distance learning.

Delivery Media

There is a limited range of media used in open and distance learning. Most programs use predominantly print-based or radio-based materials without any support media or materials.

ICT Infrastructure

Due to high cost of installing, maintaining, using and upgrading of technology to support open and distance learning, most centers do not procure them. By implication, open and distance learning institutions lack effective delivery and support services and systems. Also the use of ICT facilities has been hindered by some factors such as unavailability of them, power failure, lack of ICT skills, time management among others. This may have been partly why Nigeria ranked 112 out of 144 countries in readiness to use technological tools in the Global Competitiveness Index Report (GCI, 2013)

Quality Assurance

Almost invariably open and distance learning institutions lack effective quality assurance systems. They do not have adequate monitoring, research and evaluation base that is needed to support informed policy choices. Therefore, there is insufficient information on the performance of programmes and this raises doubts about their quality and tends to reinforce negative attitudes towards open and distance learning.

Conclusion

Any Nation striving for development lays emphasis on education. This has explained why Nigerian governments have over the years embarked on programmes that will promote education. One of those ways was joining other nations of the world to promote Education For All which was stipulated to be achievable by the year 2015. However, two years to the period, Nigeria is among the nations noted as may not be able to achieve these laudable goals. For EFA to be achieved, the problem of underfunding, infrastructural facilities, shortage of qualified teachers among others must be addressed. The fact remains that when Nigeria's population of about 156 million, her unemployment rate of about 23.9%, her poverty rate and the number of out-of-school children are considered, one can infer that there is urgent need to achieve EFA goals if Nigeria is to attain the much desired development. This can be done through the collaborative efforts of all the stakeholders in education, although the responsibility remains that of the government.

Recommendations

The rising demand for education at all levels of education system in Nigeria necessitated expansion of its open and distance learning provision. The Government of Nigeria has committed to the development of open and distance learning in its policies within the context of which structures, systems, and human capacity development programs are geared towards improving on the planning and delivery of open and distance learning. Its development, however, is constrained by a variety of factors. In view of that, there is an urgent need to, among other things;

1. Evaluate periodically open and distance learning programmes to ensure their responsiveness to emerging needs in Nigeria and the world at large.

2. Review should be carried out in open and distance learning programmes in educational institutions to improve coordination, inter-institutional collaboration, operational efficiency and effectiveness.

3. Develop quality assurance framework and strategies for open and distance learning.

4. Establish and maintain relationships and partnerships with relevant private and public non-educational institutions involved in open and distance learning and information and communication technology development.

5. Develop human and infrastructure resource capacity to plan, design, develop, manage, and evaluate open and distance learning systems and programmes in Nigeria. Also learning materials should be provided for open and distance learning materials. (**Richard** & **Foster, 2008).**

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