

COMPLIANCE OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS TO THE NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION IN EDO STATE: IMPLICATIONS ON EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper is on private schools' compliance to the National Policy on Education (NPE). The focus was on private schools' structure and their entry/graduation ages, including how these can contribute to the overcrowded classrooms in public universities, making human and physical resources highly inadequate, leading to ineffective and inefficient teaching and learning experiences, which do not augur well for self and national development and might lead to wastages in Oredo local government area of Edo state. The population of the study was the 145 private schools in the Oredo local government area of Edo state while the respondents were the 145 head teachers of the schools. 80 private schools were taken as the sample size using the simple random sampling technique with the 80 headteachers as respondents. The results revealed that the 80 private schools did comply with the NPE at the level of having crèche/daycare, nursery/KG without the pre basic and having basic 1-5 instead of the basic 1-6 in the NPE. The schools also had upper basic and post basic levels of education. The study showed that the entry ages and ages for graduation at these levels were not in compliance with the NPE and this could have been one of the causes of explosion in enrolments in public universities at 100 Levels with the attendant consequences of overcrowded classrooms, hostels, highly inadequate furniture, computers, among other facilities in public universities. This paper recommended the enforcement of all private schools to restructure their schools in order to comply with the NPE both in structure, entry and graduation ages, including enacting laws backing the NPE and prosecuting culprits of the law among others by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC).

Keywords: Private Schools Structure, Compliance to Entry and Graduation Ages, National Policy on Education (NPE), Universities

Introduction

The National Policy on Education (NPE) in Nigeria is structured in such a way that the age a child starts basic education is known and all things being equal, it is also embedded in the NPE the year the child ought to transit to the next level of education until the child enters the university. So when educational planners are planning for the number of school going age children for the beginning of the lower basic level (primary one) for instance, they already know the age bracket to plan for in terms of all the resources needed for quality education delivery. These resources include the physical resources, like classrooms and furniture, hostels, among others. However it has been observed that many children especially in private schools, start basic education including the lower basic at ages lower than the age recommended in the NPE and thus continue to transit to their next levels of education until they start universities at ages lower than the recommended age for university education (Adeyemi & Famous-Izedonmi, 2018). The resultant effect can be over explosion of enrolments in schools thereby causing possible overcrowded classrooms with highly inadequate classrooms, hostels, laboratories, furniture, including additional institutional costs among others.

This is because when educational planners plan for the enrolments at the beginning of the lower basic level, they will project enrolments for the school going age of six years olds as embedded in the NPE, so that by age eleven they would have completed the middle basic level (primaries 4-6) and transit to the upper basic level (Junior Secondary School) by age twelve, then to post basic level (senior secondary school) by fifteen years and to the university at 18 years, all other things being equal.

In recent times it has been observed that schools especially private schools seem not to comply with the recommended structure and ages of entry and graduation in the NPE and so, they admit children into the lower basic level at age 4, by age 9 they have completed the middle basic level, then they start the upper basic level at 10 years and complete it at 12 years (Agi, 2013). They thus start the post basic level at 13 years and complete it at 15 years; then at 16 years they start university education and graduate at age 19 for four years courses, especially in public universities, all other things being equal. The focus of this paper is on the seemingly unexpected geometric increase in enrolments as a result of age groups not planned for, thereby leading to over populated classrooms and highly inadequate furniture, among others for pupils and students at all levels especially public universities, Could these be the reason for pupils' and students' overcrowded population in our schools, especially universities? Are the structure of private schools in Edo state of Nigeria in compliance with the NPE? Can this situation be curbed? When classes are overcrowded, effective and efficient teaching and learning activities will not take place; same with when furniture and laboratories among others are inadequately provided for, especially in public schools. These probable variables may invariably lead to pupils' or students' poor academic performance including inadequate self and national development as more time will be spent on correcting the pupils and students than on instructing them.

Stakeholders in education are saying that private schools are more culpable in this matter because they seem not to comply with the ages of entering any level of education, even lower basic 1 as stipulated in the NPE because of the structure of their schools, which also appears not to be in compliance with the NPE, with different nomenclatures. The NPE says basic education is from 0-14 years, that is the Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) which includes crèche and nursery education are for 0-2 years and 3-4 years respectively while at 5 years old a child ought to be in pre-basic school, so that by 6 years of age, a child should be in lower basic 1, graduates at the middle basic level at age 11, proceeds to upper basic level at age 12 years, graduates therein at 14 years old, then to post basic at 15 years, graduates at 17 years and enters university at 18 years old, all other things being equal (FRN, 2013).

It has however been observed that in private schools, they seem not to be in compliance with these structure nor nomenclature as embedded in the NPE. The structure and nomenclature used in most private schools if not all are crèche 0-1 year, nursery or kindergarten 2-4 years, basic 1-5 levels at 5-9 years. There appears to be no pre basic class, from basic five at age 9 they jump to basic 7 which is upper basic 1. When a child is supposed to still be in the nursery education level at age 4, as stipulated by the NPE, the child is already in lower basic 1 (Ejireh, 2006). There is also the allegation of some pupils even writing their First School Leaving Certificate examinations from middle basic 1 (primary four) at age 8 and proceed to upper basic at age 9 then post basic levels at age 12 and universities at age 15.

When they enter universities at age 15 and the university was planned to have only 18 years and above as new 100 Level students, the age brackets (15, 16 and 17 years old) not planned for will possibly increase the enrolments making classrooms overcrowded, furniture highly inadequate thereby calling for more funds to provide extra classrooms and furniture, among other resources including poor academic performance. Suffice it to note that government policies on education are statements of intentions, expectations, goals, prescriptions, standards, requirements for quality control and quality education delivery (Obioma & Wike, 2013). In all these, does it mean that the inspectorate departments of States' Universal Basic Boards (SUBEBs) and States' Ministries of

Education are not aware of these levels of non compliance or what? (Ejireh, 2006) Is the Joint Admissions Matriculation Board (JAMB) also not aware of the entry ages to universities? These are the questions being asked by the public. This is because it is the roles of inspectors of education and other regulatory bodies in Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of Education to ensure that all schools and examination bodies comply to the NPE and enforce sanctions on culprits for quality control and assurance but they appear not to be working which is seemingly a surprise to the public and stakeholders of education leading again to these questions: Is it true that the structure of private schools is not in compliance to the NPE? Could these be one of the reasons of overcrowded population of pupils and students in schools, especially in public universities? Are these private schools' non compliance to the structure of the NPE same in Edo state of Nigeria? How can this situation be curbed?

To answer these questions the following research questions were raised

Research Questions

1. What are the structure of private schools in Edo state, Nigeria?
2. Are the structure of private schools in Oredo local government in Edo state, Nigeria in compliance with the NPE?
3. Are the entry ages in private schools in Oredo local government area in Edo state, Nigeria in compliance with the NPE?
4. Can the entry ages to private schools in Oredo local government area in Edo state, Nigeria contribute to overcrowded public universities' classrooms?

Methodology

The *ex-po facto* research design was adopted for this paper because data collected have already occurred. The population of the study was all the 145 private schools in Oredo local government area of Edo state and the respondents were all the 145 headteachers. The sample size was 80 schools using the simple random sampling technique. The respondents were the 80 headteachers using the convenient sampling technique. An instrument named STRUCTURE OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS CHECKLIST (SOPSC) was used. The checklist was in two sections: Section A was about the demography of the school while section B was about the variables in the research questions. The checklist was administered by the researcher and her trained assistants with one hundred percent retrieval. Results from data analyses were presented in Tables. Table 1 answered research questions 1 and 2 while Table 2 answered research question 3. Table 3 answered research question 4.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the structure of private schools in Oredo local government area of Edo state, Nigeria?

Research Question 2: Are the structure of private schools in in Oredo local government area of Edo state, Nigeria in compliance with the NPE?

Table 1: Structure of Private Schools and their Compliance to the NPE at the Basic Level (Lower and Middle) in Edo State

	Complia nce to NPE	Nursery/ to KG	Complia nce to NPE	Pre Bas ic	Complia nce to NPE	Bas ic 1-5	Complia nce to NPE
Crèche/Day care	Benchm ark		Benchm ark		Benchm ark		Benchm ark
80	Complia nt	80	Complia nt	No ne	Non Complia nt	80	Basic 1- 6 Non Complia nt

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork

KG= Kindergarten

Table 1 revealed that the structure of private schools in in the 80 sampled basic schools in Oredo local government area of Edo state, Nigeria is Crèche/Day/Care, Nursery/KG and Basic 1-5. These mean the private schools had no pre basic classes and they had only basic 1-5 classes instead of basic 1-6 classes. The Table also revealed the non compliance of the private school structure with the NPE's benchmark in the provision of pre basic classes and basic 1-6 classes.

Research Question 3: Are the entry ages to private schools in Oredo local government area of Edo state, Nigeria in compliance with the NPE?

Table 2: Compliance to NPE's Entry Ages by Private Schools in Oredo Local

Entry/Graduation Ages in Private Schools and NPE's Benchmarks-Crèche/Daycare to				Middle Basic			
Crèche/ Daycare 0-1Year	NPE's Benchmar k forCrèche/ Daycare, 0-2Years	Nursery /KG 2- 4Years	NPE'S Benchmark for Nursery/K G,3-4Years	Pre Basic Not Available	NPE's Benchmar k forPre Basic 5Years	Basic 1-5, 5- 9Year s	NPE's Benchmar k for Basic 1-6, 6-11Years

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork

KG=Kindergarten

Table 2 revealed that the entry ages from the crèche/daycare classes to nursery/KG classes were not in compliance with the NPE's benchmark. The private schools did not have the pre basic class so there was no age for it while the basic 1-5 is not in compliance to the NPE's benchmark of basic 1-6. The entry ages at lower basic 1 was 5years instead of the NPE's 6years thereby graduating from the basic middle level class at age 9 instead of the NPE's bench mark of 11 years.

Research Question 4: Can the entry ages to private schools in Oredo local government area of Edo state, Nigeria contribute to overcrowded classrooms in universities?

Table 3: Contribution of Entry Ages to Overcrowded Classrooms in Public Universities by Private Schools in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State Nigeria

Entry/Graduation Ages in Private Schools and NPE Benchmarks-Upper Basic to				Public Universities		
Upper Basic 1- 3, 10-12 Years	NPE's Benchmark, 12-14 Years	Post Basic 3. 15Years	NPE's Post Basic 1- 13- 15-17Years	Public Universities 16-19Years a	NPE's Benchmark for Public Universities, 18-21Years	

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork

Table 3 showed that in the private schools the entry ages to upper basic 1 is 10 and graduation age at upper basic 3 is 12 years while the NPE benchmarks are 12 and 14 years respectively. The entry and graduation ages at the post basic level in private schools were ages 13-15 years while the NPE's

benchmarks are 15-17years respectively. The entry and graduation ages for students from private schools to public universities were 16 and 19 years respectively while the NPE's benchmark is 18 and 21 years respectively.

Discussion of Results

The results revealed that the private schools' structure were in compliance with the NPE's structure of having crèche/daycare and nursery/KG but their entry and graduation ages were not in compliance with the NPE. This agreed with (Adeyemi and Famous-Izedonmi, 2018; & Ejireh, 2006). These consequently made the entry and graduation ages to next levels of education non compliant to the NPE. To these end, by the time the students from private schools who complete post basic schools enter universities, especially public universities they would have increased the number of students planned for by government to enter 100 Level in any public university with its attendant consequences of overcrowded classrooms, unexpected inadequate furniture, hostels among others, leading to increased funding. This is because educational planners plan for students coming into that level using approved population of school going age for each level. For instance, for universities the projection to 100 Level is done using the 18 years old benchmark and so, provisions are made for them in terms of human and physical resources; however it is found that at resumption there is this geometric increase in lecturer/student ratios and inadequate facilities for effective and efficient teaching and learning experiences, such as overcrowded classrooms highly above the National Universities Commission's (NUC) benchmarks, which make quality education delivery and production of quality graduates for self and national development difficult.

It is perhaps due to this reason that, it is a common sight and experience to find that the lecturer/student ratios in most faculties in universities if not all, such as faculties of education, is above the NUC's recommended ratio of 1:30, for medicine 1:10, for accounting, business administration, economics and statistics, 1:30 among others. These could also confirm the confession of these students when they are being registered in 100 Level, that they jumped basic 5 or went from basic 5 to upper basic 1 because their private schools' structure do not have basic 6 as stipulated in the NPE. This is a confirmation to Agi (2013). When there is explosion in enrolment into 100 Levels in public universities, it means more money will be needed for infrastructure, facilities and other resources, which may not be readily available, thereby making teaching and learning very difficult and also barely making the goals of education at any level difficult to achieve. This does not augur well for self and national developments including the fact that it makes government to spend more funds than budgeted for. It is the perception that when pupils and students enter schools at ages stipulated in the NPE which educational planners use to project for those to enter the beginning of each level of education, overpopulation leading to overcrowded classrooms and so on in universities will to a very large extent be taken care of if not eradicated and so government will not spend extra funds in a dwindling and developing economy like Nigeria's. In addition teaching and learning will be effective and efficient leading to possible high academic performance thus wastages as a result of failures and repetitions will not occur or will be largely reduced to the barest minimum all other things being equal.

Implications on Educational Planning and National Development

Educational planners plan for the different levels of education based on the stipulated ages in the NPE. When the ages are violated especially by private schools, there will be over population of pupils and students because other ages not planned for will infiltrate and blow up the expected number of pupils and students at the beginning of any level of education; this continues until they get to public universities, thereby increasing the funds needed for additional classrooms, furniture, hostels, laboratory spaces among others. When classrooms are over populated, the attendant consequence is that effective and efficient teaching and learning processes will not take place and when these happen there is the tendency to produce ill equipped graduates, who cannot contribute

meaningfully to national development and possibly compete globally with their counterparts. In addition, failures, repetitions and drop outs may occur, leading to wastages.

Conclusion

It is therefore concluded that the structure and nomenclature of private schools did not comply with the NPE. The private schools did not have pre basic classes, and the basic 1-5 were not in compliance to the NPE's basic 1-6. Furthermore, the ages of entry at the beginning of each level from crèche/daycare to upper basic including their ages of graduation were not in compliance with the NPE. So, these could possibly be one of the reasons why there is this seemingly unexpected increase in enrolments in 100 Levels in public universities leading to possible causes of overcrowded classes in public universities thereby causing increases in government/institutional funding of education to highly inadequate resources, including human, physical and otherwise which will make education delivery and production of quality graduates for self and national developments ineffective, as a result of possible failures, repetitions and drop outs leading to wastages.

Recommendations

It is therefore recommended that, a law should be passed and enforced to back up the NPE, that is, any private school that do not comply with the structure and age entries into any level of education should be prosecuted by seizing the operating license of the school, including shutting the school down indefinitely and revoking the school's landed property. In addition, students entering any public university in 100 Level should be made to present their birth certificates during physical clearance or collection of eligibility cards/forms for sighting (Many, if not all children born in recent times have birth certificates), in order to confirm their ages are in compliance to the NPE. Furthermore, culprits (parents/guardians of the students) should be prosecuted for a jail term of five years without any form of option and the students involved, banned from UTME until one year after they reach the stipulated year.

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