

The Enrolment of Mid Stream Students for Senior Secondary School Examination (SSCE) in Nigeria Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

Secondary education is a bridge between primary and tertiary education which prepares the individuals to be useful members of the society. It is designed to cater for the individuals interests and talents. Unfortunately there is a growing culture of students dropping out of school after Junior Secondary Schools (JSS III) only reappear in third term of Senior Secondary School (SSSI) or SSS II. Some register for senior school certificate examination without passing through SSS I and II. Such pattern of enrolment is adopted because of socio-economic, political cum economic institutional factors. Challenges arising from such enrolment pattern include discipline, supervision and poor quality education. The paper examined how to tackle the challenges and recommended the restructuring of the political and economic institutions to make it more inclusive.

Keywords: Mid-stream students, Enrolment, Extractive, Inclusive Institutions.

1. Introduction

Secondary education is the education given to children after their primary education. It is a bridge between primary and tertiary education (FRN, 2017). The focus of secondary education is to prepare the individual to be a useful member of the society. In order to achieve the above focused idea, FRN (2017) states:

Secondary education shall... cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and future roles..., inspire students with a desire for self improvement and achievement of excellence; raise a generation of people who can think for themselves... respect the dignity of labour; provide... skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development (p.14).

In order to realize the above goals secondary education is divided into two stages-junior secondary one, two and three (JSI-JSIII) and senior secondary one to three (SSI-SSIII). The junior secondary is responsible for equipping students with prevocational and academic skills. After completing JSS the students should be streamed into secondary, technical schools, out-of school vocational training centre, and apprenticeship scheme.

Unfortunately there is now a growing culture of dropping out of school especially among secondary school students. After completing the JSS some of the students who ought to be enrolled into SSSI drop out of school only to re-appear for senior secondary school examination during SSSIII. Some of them transfer to another school to enroll in SSSIII without passing through the curriculum of SSI and SSII. This is the problem staring on our faces as educational engineers in Nigeria. Let us approach the little of the paper from these directions: who are the mid stream students? Why do they adopt the pattern they adopt? What are the challenges arising from their pattern of enrolment for educational engineers? How do we tackle those challenges? Lets examine the above questions.

2. Who are the Mid Stream Students?

The mid stream students are those who are in SSI and SSII. They are senior secondary school students who are not in the terminal examination class (SSSIII). They are students who after completing JSSIII drop out and sometimes re-enroll in the SSCI after one or two years. They are students who enroll into second or third term of SSI or SSII including those students who transfer from one school to another after completing JSSIII yet without transfer certificate.

3. Why do they adopt the above pattern?

The mid stream students adopt some of the patterns of dropping out of school temporarily and returning to school during SSSIII because of some socio-economic, political cum economic institutional factors.

Some of the socio-economic factors are ill health, financial and family challenges. Some of those factors are often rooted in the political and economic institutional framework of the society. How do the political and economic institutional factors, to a very large extent, determine the enrolment pattern of mid stream students? The political and economic institutions include, among others, the constitution, the extent of democratic principles in the country, power and capacity of the state to regulate and govern the society, distribution of political power in the society, ability of different groups to collectively pursue their objectives or stop others from pursuing theirs (Acemoglu & Robinson 2013). Based on the above institutional factors the education industry has been used since after the civil war in Nigeria as a tool for national rehabilitation, reconstruction and unity (Ocho 2005). In order to achieve the above goal myriads of policies and educational reforms were made.

Among those policies and reforms include: publication of National policy on Education in 1977, Federal Government Unity School which started in 1973; National Youth Service Corps which started in 1973, establishment of Federal Universities in almost all the states of the federation; introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1976 and currently universal Basic Education (UBE) which started in 1999.

The civilian government since 1999 appears to be focusing on value orientation of the citizens as the most pressing need for education. This philosophy led to the establishment of Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC), and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in 1999, and National Orientation Agency which was inherited from the military regime. This is because the prolonged military rule has negatively impacted on the values, and attitudinal practices of people hence the need to re-orient the psyche of the citizens.

The above policies and reforms have become very extractive instead of inclusive. They favour the elite participation and interest, exploits the people and creates monopolies, blocks economic incentives and creativity of the greater number of citizens in the society (Mgboro & Eke 2017); individuals have no voice in the political-economic direction taken by the country, and the government does not uphold contracts entered into by the previous government. The above policies and reforms are usually the preferences and values of the elites-political leaders (Dye, 1972). This explains why there is no long term investment in education which is the largest industry in any society. It should be recalled that education has the second longest lag time (Lag time is the time delay between a new idea being proposed and its adoption) of 50 years (kiyosaki 2013).

The picture painted above indicates how the crises in enrolment of mid-stream students stem from the instability and crises of the political and economic institutions in Nigeria. The crisis permeates the entire structure of education because education industry is used by policy makers to drive their interest. In effect the students adopt the above pattern of dropping out of school because the political and economic institutions indirectly do not induce the students to enroll into the mid stream classes (SSI and SSII). Where the students do not receive quality education, there are not enough teachers to teach the few students who enroll into mid stream classes; teachers do not show up for work, and when they ever try to go to work there are no instructional materials to help them impart knowledge to students; there are constant reversal of policies due to changes in leadership, how could the students see the need to be enrolled into classes which have no examination at stake.

4. Challenges arising from the pattern of enrolment of mid stream students

Several challenges face the educational engineers as a result of the pattern of enrolment by mid-stream students. Those challenges are presented under the following subheadings:

- (a) **Discipline:** The unwillingness of some students to enroll in mid-stream classes until SSIII is an indirect, passive aggression and rebellion against the school system and the institutions the school represents (the Government and the society at large). Today we have young people who are no more stark illiterates but carry arms against the school and by extension the society for raising their expectations but frustrating their hopes and aspirations. Research has proved that most of the indisciplinary acts (rape, cultism, truancy, absenteeism, and unhealthy confrontation with constituted school authorities) are carried out by those mid-stream students (Udah 2017). Some of these students shun the idea of going back to the village and would not consider farming as a befitting occupation.
- (b) **Supervision:** Supervision relates to guiding and co-ordinating the work of teachers and others who are involved in school work. The aim is to ensure that student learning is enhanced through planning; and devise ways of improving and releasing the teachers' creative abilities (Ukeje, Akabogu & Ndu, 1992). How does the educational engineer guide, co-ordinate the work of those students, and enhance their learning when the students float from one school to another. Experience reveals that most often the mid stream students hardly come to classes during first and second terms of SSSI and SSII.

Some principals hardly produce an official register of their students during first and second term. The above challenge account, in part, for why supervisors from school board adopt inspectional and production models of supervision (ritualistic inspection of Ministry of Education criteria: scheme of work, lesson note etc, and using teachers as industrial tools to enable students pass external examinations) (Tanner & Tanner, 1987).

- (c) **Retention of students:** There is the challenge of some principals trying to out-smart some others in order to ensure that their schools have more students. The problem is that such efforts are ill motivated. Such principals, irrespective of laid down guidelines adopt different styles to scheme their ways through (two registers might exist for a particular class, official and unofficial ones); illegal levies are collected to enable the principals "service" those who challenge their actions). Examine the EFA Global Monitoring Report attached.

The position advocated here is that each element in the education system within the framework (input section) can only lead to observed standard/quality depending on how the school manage the input (process variables).

- (d) **Poor quality/standard of Education:** The blame game on fallen standard of education shifts from

government perception (no dedication to duties by teachers, and lack of knowledge of what to teach) to parental perception (system decay and poor teaching skills). For teachers the fallen standard stem from poor motivation, absence of instructional materials and inconsistent policies. Notwithstanding who takes the blame it is clear that some mid stream students cannot read, write or speak well. How can they do those things when they cannot be patient to go through the curriculum which will equip them with the above skills. The challenge for the educational engineers is how to focus on the few students who enroll in the classes without eliminating the “masses”.

5. How to tackle the challenges

The main approach towards solving the enrollment challenges of mid stream students is the reformation of political and economic institutions of the society. The inclusive institutions and consequently inclusive education will encourage students creativity, remove fear in the students and consider their life interest. It will help to equip students with the basic skills needed for functioning in the society.

The classroom environment should convey the emotion of respect for students. Where teachers who do not respect students teach the latter, the students do not also respect the teachers. Learning from one who does not respect you conveys an understanding that the teacher does not value your life and future. Such perception from students encourage them to enroll in other schools where they perceive teachers respect them.

Co-operative activities and methods such as group and excursions should be emphasized more than competitive and individualized approach to learning. Individualized approach encourages competitiveness which makes the classroom to be a battle ground for the war of mind. In such a situation students who cannot fight the war either refuse to enroll into a new class or leave for another school. Our slogan should be “friendship first, competition later”.

Supervisors of education and teachers should adopt the liaison person approach. Such approach focus more on solving issues together, having a dynamic relationship with teachers and students in the course of which the perceptions, feelings and justifications of mid-stream students are considered.

6. Recommendations

The challenges of enrolling mid-stream students is rooted in the contextual factors which are responsible for planning, directing and managing the education system. These factors are the political and economic institutions of the country. The institutions should be inclusive and not extractive.

Notwithstanding the dearth of resources, materials and facilities, educational engineers should focus more on how to process the raw materials (students) in their industry. The socio-emotional climate of the school which depict the tone of the school should be emphasized more than any other thing if the mid stream students will be retained in our schools.

Supervision and supervisors should be more friendly. The tag “inspectorate” division of any school board should be changed to reflect the mentoring, partnership and liaison approach which supervision demands.

7. Conclusion

The challenge of enrolling and retaining mid-stream students is enormous. The political and economic institutions of the society indirectly dictate the extent the mid-stream students will be enrolled and retained. For Nigeria to achieve the EFA goal of providing education to all citizens the educational engineers are central to such success. They should focus their attention more on how to influence positively the frustrated students who are the torch bearers of the society where even the educational engineer live in.

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