

Nigeria



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SOCIAL CONTEXT OF EDUCATION

Demographics, economy, geography and government

Nigeria is located in Western Africa and borders the Gulf of Guinea between Benin and Cameroon. It is a federal republic comprised of 36 states and one territory and has an estimated population of 133.9 million, with a median age of about 18 years. Annual GDP per capita is about \$800 per year and approximately 60% of people live below the poverty line. As of 1992, the unemployment rate was around 28% (The World Factbook, 2004).

Organization of Primary and Secondary Education

Compulsory basic education in Nigeria extends from age 6 to 15 and includes six years of Primary Education and three years of Junior Secondary Education. Mainstream academic students may continue in Senior Secondary School for three additional years of Education. Technical Schools are also available at the upper secondary level.

Under the international classification system, students enrol in Basic Education (ISCED 1) for Grades 1 to 6 and in Junior Secondary (ISCED 2A) for Grades 7 to 9.

Students then spend Grades 10 to 12 in Senior Secondary School (ISCED 3A) or Technical College (ISCED 3B), or Grades 10 and 11 in Vocational Colleges, Teacher training or mono-technics (ISCED 3C). Alternatively, some students may spend Grades 9 and 10 in vocational training (ISCED 2C), leading to the Certificate of Proficiency.

Education governance and finance

The management and financing of Primary Education in Nigeria are responsibilities shared by the federal, state and local authorities, with the federal government assuming primary responsibility. **According to one report, however, federal funding of primary education amounts to less than 5% of expenditure. At the secondary level, state government assumes greater responsibility for management and finance.**

Equity-related laws, policies, reports and research

Laws and policies

Nigeria's constitution states that, "government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Historically, the development of Primary Education has been left solely to state and local government (Tahir, 2001). The McPherson Constitution of 1951 gave power to the regional governments to pass education laws and provide Primary Education, but unlike the western and eastern regional governments, the northern regional government did not increase primary education enrolment (Aluede, Aguele and Aluede, 2003).

The western and eastern regions experienced "rapid development" of primary schooling, though, and all regions developed secondary grammar schools of good quality (World Bank, 2003).

In 1976, the government initiated the first nationwide effort, the **Universal Primary Education Programme (UPE)** to improve the inadequate development of Primary Education in Nigeria (Tahir, 2001). UPE was intended to address gender and regional inequities in access to Primary Education, but *Primary Education declined because subsequent governments neglected to sustain UPE. This led to decreases in enrolment, attendance, quality and quantity of teachers, infrastructure and facilities* (Tahir, 2001).

The newly-elected government in **1999** identified education as one of its three greatest priorities and at the same time conceptualised and implemented the **Universal Basic Education Programme (UBE)** (World Bank, 2000). *UBE built on UPE by making Primary Education compulsory and increasing its scope by including Junior Secondary School and all children from age 6 to 15* (UBE, 2002). *This federal intervention is intended to improve horizontal equity in Nigeria's education system by being "all inclusive" and ensuring access to free basic education for all children. It is designed to promote effective use of resources and quality control, evidenced by reductions in dropout rates and the acquisition of "appropriate levels" of skills such as literacy, numeracy and life skills* (Tahir, 2001; UBE, 2002). Today, *UBE is supported through a partnership of federal, state and local government* (Tahir, 2001).

Principles and objectives from a number of international efforts to improve Education for All are the basis of UBE (UBE, 2002). These include the Jomtien Declaration in 1990, the Amman Re-affirmation of the Jomtien recommendations in 1995 and the Dakar World Education Forum in 2000. *Although state and local governments are legally responsible for the provision and management of basic education in Nigeria, UBE has been accepted and implemented by all states* (UBE, 2002). *It is considered a bottom-up programme because it involves the general public, including parents, teachers, communities, etc.* (Tahir, 2001). UBE attempts to "raise the consciousness of Nigerians for basic education and mobilise the

populace not only to participate in UBE, but more importantly to embrace it as their programme" (Tahir, 2001).

In addition to initiating UBE, the federal government provides standards for its operations and intervenes in areas critical to UBE's success including the construction of new classrooms (UBE, 2002). The federal government also supports national institutions that are key to the implementation of particular components of UBE, such as the National Teachers Institute and the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Centre, which provide teacher training and curriculum development, respectively.

In contrast, states formulate UBE policies, pay the salaries of Junior Secondary School teachers, and recruit and promote teachers in Grades 7 and above.

Local governments maintain local government educational authorities, support the operations of UBE, and are responsible for recruiting and paying salaries of Primary School teachers.

Reports and research

According to the World Bank, educational standards have fallen and "the regional variations in educational coverage in Nigeria are so large that for many purposes the average national figures have little meaning" (2000; 2003).

Analysis of educational development in Nigeria has found ***inequalities between the northern and southern states***, as well as among the northern states (Aluede et al., 2003).

Inequality across the regions was considered of "serious magnitude" as early 1977 (Aluede et al. as cited in Beckett and O'Connell, 1977).

Inequitable pupil-teacher ratios and primary school enrolment and completion rates are significant issues.

The strain placed on more educationally developed states by the federation's method of allocating resources to states is another concern. Educational inequity in Nigeria often has been discussed in terms of gender and urbanicity, and by geographic region (i.e. northwest, northeast, central, southwest, southeast) rather than by state.

Teacher shortages have been a problem nationally, but especially geographically – some states have had as many as ***70 pupils per teacher*** (Tahir, 2001). Teacher allocation is considered inequitable, with significant variations across states and pupil-teacher ratios ranging from less than 30 in one-third of the states to more than 50 in another third (World Bank, 2003).

Teacher absenteeism, along with resourcepoor school environments and curriculum that is minimally relevant, have been identified as one of the causes of primary school dropout (World Bank). Approximately 19% of Primary School-age children are not enrolled in school, with inequitable access by region (World Bank, 2000). Specifically, the northern region has significantly lower enrolment rates among 6-, 11- and 14-year-olds than the southern or central regions (World Bank, 2003).

In 1999, almost all 11-year-olds were enrolled in Primary School in the southern regions, but only 36% were enrolled in the northeast. In terms of gender, female enrolment rates are lower than male enrolment rates in the north, but are higher than male enrolment rates in the southeast.

As of 1999, the World Bank also notes that urban enrolment rates are higher than rural rates, but that schools in urban areas tend to be overcrowded due to inadequate facilities. Completion rates for Junior Secondary and Primary Education are likewise inequitable, with significant variations across regions, gender, location and household income (World Bank, 2003). For example, completion rates are 78% for urban boys from the wealthiest quintile of households, but 37% for rural girls from the poorest quintile of households in the northeast. Similar patterns are found in the northwest, but completion rates are lower for both groups. Overall, the southwest and southeast regions have much higher primary and junior secondary completion rates than the northeast and northwest regions (World Bank, 2003).

Insufficient funding is another issue since state and local governments depend upon statutory allocations from the federal government to fund primary education and other social services. Across states, per capita state government revenues “vary quite substantially” (World Bank, 2003). About 78% of local government revenues come from statutory allocations from the Federation Account (World Bank, 2003).

As of 2001, almost one-half of these allocations were reserved for primary teacher salaries. Thirteen states had more than 60% of federation allocations deducted for teacher salaries while less than 40% was deducted in 10 other states. According to the World Bank, “The stress on local governments caused by the requirement that they fund all primary teacher salaries varies not only by state, but also across local governments within a state” (2003).

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