

IMPACT OF FREE EDUCATION ON IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS' ACADEMIC WORK IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

Excellent performance in academic work demands that there should be availability of study materials and prompt payment of school fees so that the learner will not be hindered. However, socio-economic status of the parents many a time poses problem to the students in the sense that they are not economically buoyant to provide for their educational needs. This study examined the impact of free education on academic work of in-school adolescents in senior secondary schools in Local Education District (LED) in Alimoso local Government Area of Lagos state. The study was descriptive survey of case study type. The population comprised of the in-school adolescents in senior secondary schools in Local Education District, Alimoso from where 90 students who have collected free textbooks were selected through purposive sampling technique. Data were collected via questionnaire titled 'Free Education and Academic Work Questionnaire (PSFEAAQ)'. Three hypotheses postulated and tested at 0.05 alpha level were retained. The result revealed that free education bolstered the students' school attendance, study habits and having of study materials. It is concluded that free education goes a long way in helping students' academic work. It is recommended that secondary education should be free in other states in Nigeria and study materials also provided free to students.

Keywords: *Impact, Free education, Academic work, In-school adolescent*

Introduction

Efforts have been made and are still being made by the Nigerian Government over the years to expand educational opportunities in Nigeria so that every child in Nigeria may benefit from education which is the most vital need of every individual for survival in Nigeria. However, how laudable that objective may be access to quality education in Nigeria is still a mirage to some Nigerian children. Entrance to nursery, primary and secondary schools is not easy for some children, while some of those who entered lack study materials and are not well fed to face the hassles of academic work. Studies from researchers on social class discovered that some parents lack economic power to send their children to school, that children from a high socio-economic class have higher rates of access to education and good academic achievement than those from a low socio-economic background. Sirin (2005) stated that extensive research in the sociology of education has discovered that there is positive relationship between family socio-economic status and academic achievement of learners. This is what (Williams, 2002, 2003) called socio-economic gradient. In addition to this, Akinboye (2006) discovered in the research on how to study and pass examination that poor academic work is connected with social, psychological, financial and health problems.

A child that is well prepared for school in terms of meeting with his or her needs which include; prompt payment of school fees, supplying of study materials, proper feeding etc. has high chances of doing well in school than the child that is handicapped in all these things. Psychologically, physically and emotionally the child is troubled and that has impact on his or her academic work. A child from high socio-economic class family has the opportunity to learn more at home from television set, radio, pictures, toys, among others which help to add to the knowledge he or she acquires from school thereby bolstering his or her confidence and psychological well-being in school. On the other hand, a child from low socio-economic family may not have these facilities and amenities at home to prepare him or her for school.

Family climate has influence on the direction and development of interest, abilities, aptitudes and values of children which is extended to their study in the school. Parents of high socio-economic status have more positive attitudes and security consciousness towards their children plus high expectation and standard for them. The children are motivated to succeed in school. The low socio-economic status family may have a negative attitude towards education perhaps due to their inability to finance the education of their children or because they are not literate. This attitude can tell on their children's academic work negatively, sometimes making them to drop out of school early (Alexander, Entwisle and Kabbani, 2001; Battin-Pearson, Newcomb, Abbott, Hill, Catalano, and Hawkins, 2000; Rubmberger, 2004; Schargel, 2004).

Socio-economic class also affects choice of school by the parents. This is supported by Salami (2001) who stated that nowadays the choice of school for children often depends on the socio-economic status of parents. While the children of the rich attend privileged schools which are well funded and better equipped, their counterparts make do with schools which are characterized by poor staffing, over population, inadequate classroom and furniture coupled with un-stimulating environment. Salami (2001) further stated that in schools the children from high socio-economic status are often perceived as the leaders while their counterparts are looked upon as followers. High socio-economic status parents are more forward looking with lofty plans for their children as opposed to their counterparts. Poor academic work may lead children into antisocial behaviour which Wolpe and Marsh (2007) in Ezeahurukwe (2010) considered to be one of the causes of juvenile delinquency and adult criminality.

The schools admission process seems to favour the privileged more than the less privileged. Parents who are rich and influential are more likely to secure admissions for their children in better schools than parents who are not rich and influential. Thus meritocracy is no longer reckoned with. The outlook of school children could show the type of home where they come from. While the children from a high socio-economic status background are well dressed, confidence and radiant, their counterparts look tattered, unhappy and frustrated. Free education is a vital instrument that can ameliorate the effect which socio-economic status of parents can pose on the academic pursuit and achievement of the students. Free education is a situation where parents and guidians are not paying school fees for their wards in school, the wards being provided with free textbooks, free school uniforms and sometimes free food in the school. It is educational system where the government allows the learners in the school to learn without paying school fees. Some states like Lagos go extra mile by giving the learners free textbooks. With these many parents are relieved from the burden of paying school fees and buying of textbooks which would have been difficult for parents and guardians with poor socio-economic status to provide which could negatively affect academic work of those children. Good enough, the federal government of Nigeria led by Muhamadu Buhari in 2017 introduced free feeding programme in the Nigerian primary education aimed at bolstering the health conditions of the pupils and to encourage them to come to school regularly. With these parents will like to send their children to school thereby reducing the number of people who are illiterate in the Nigerian society, reducing crime rate and promoting peace, social and economic growth.

Statement of the Problem

Effective parenting is the panacea for proper child upbringing. Children who lack good parental care can be lured into all sorts of vices and ills in the society. One of the ways to show that a child is well taken care of is good education. When parents cannot afford to provide quality education to their children, juvenile delinquency, adult criminality and failure may abound. Parental *socio-economic* status affects the provision of quality education and proper socialization of children. In the Nigerian society today there are children who are of primary and secondary school age who are not in school probably because their parents cannot be able to fund their education. Some states in Nigeria are not operating free education system, that has made some children to drop out of school, many are not provided with adequate study materials they need to put in their best in their academics, while some are not sent to school at all

particularly in the northern part of the country. Several states are yet to make secondary education free in Nigeria. This trend has made it impossible to eradicate illiteracy in Nigeria. Hence this study examined the impact of free education on academic work of the in-school adolescents in secondary schools in Lagos, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of free education on academic work of in-school adolescents in senior secondary schools in Lagos State. Specifically, it aims at examining how free education affect the provision of study materials, students' attendance in schools and their study habit.

Research Hypotheses

Three hypotheses were postulated to guide the conduct of the study

Ho₁: There is no significant impact of free education on the provision of study materials for students' from parents of high, middle and low socio-economic status.

Ho₂: There is no significant impact of free education on the school attendance of students from parents of high, middle and low socio-economic status.

Ho₃: There is no significant impact of free education on the study habits of students from parents of high, middle and low socio-economic status.

Methodology

The research design employed for this research is descriptive survey of case study type. The population comprised of the in-school adolescents in senior secondary schools in Lagos state while the target population comprised the in-school adolescents in junior secondary schools in Local Education District 1. A sample of ninety students was selected through multistage sampling. At stage one convenient sampling was used to select Education District 1 to participate in the study. A stage two simple random sampling was used to select Local Education District (LED), Alimoso. At stage three convenient sampling technique was used to select Community grammar school Akowonjo where the sample was drawn. The instrument for data collection was the researchers' developed questionnaire tagged 'Free Education and Academic Work Questionnaire (FEAAWQ)'. Section 'A' solicited information on demographic data of the respondents and section B contained twenty items for respondents to respond. The respondents responded on a four point Likert type of scale ranging from strongly agree, 4 points, agree, 3 points, disagree, 2 points, to strongly disagree, 1 point. The instrument was validated by experts in the field of measurement and evaluation. The researcher administered the questionnaires by hand to the respondents and collected them back. Data was analysed with analysis of variance at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis states that there is no significant impact of free education in the provision of study materials for students from parents of high, middle and low socio-economic status.

The result of the analysis is presented in the table below.

Table 1: ANOVA table on the influence of free education on provision of study material

Sources of variation	Sum of square	Df	Mean square	Cal.F	Crit F
Between groups	58.2	2	29.1	2.64	3.10
Within group	552.1	87	6.27		
Total	610.3	89			

Significant at 0.05; df=2 and 87; critical F=3.10

It could be seen from Table 1 that the value of F. calculated (2.64) is less than the value of F- critical of 3.10 given 2 and 87 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. So the null hypothesis is retained,

showing no significant difference among the three groups in the provision of study materials due to free education.

Hypothesis Two

The second hypothesis states that there is no significant impact of free education on the school attendance of students from parents of high, middle and low socio-economic classes. The result is as presented in table two below.

Table 2: ANOVA analysis on the influence of free education on school attendance

Sources of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	Cal.F
Between groups	60	2	30	2.94
Within group	665.6	87	7.61	
Total	725.6	89		

Significant at 0.05; df=2 and 87; critical F=3.10

The result of the analysis in table two indicated that the value of F calculated of 2.94 is less than the value of F critical of 3.10 at 2 and 87 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significant. Hence, the hypothesis was retained, showing no significant difference among the three groups in the school attendance due to free education.

Hypothesis three

Hypothesis three states that there is no significant impact of free education on the study habits of students from parents of high, middle and low socio-economic classes.

Table 3: ANOVA analysis on the influence of free education on the study habits of the respondents.

Source of variation	SS	Df	MS	Cal.F
Between groups	70	2	35	3.01
Within group	655.6	87	7.61	
Total	725.6	89		

Significant at 0.05; df=2 and 87; critical F=3.10

The data analysis in table 3 above shows that the F calculated of 3.01 is less than the value of critical F which is 3.10 given degrees of degree of freedom of 2 and 89 at 0.05 significant level. The null hypothesis was retained showing no significant difference among the three groups in their study habits due to free education.

Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis one states that there is no significant impact of free education in the provision of study materials for students' from the high, middle and low socio-economic status. The finding revealed that the socio economic status of parents did not affect the provision of study materials to the respondents due to free education. The finding might be so because Lagos state government operates free education at secondary and primary levels and also supplies textbooks free to students in primary and secondary schools in the state. With this the parents will only provide study materials like pencil, ruler, eraser etc. to their children. This finding does not support Salami (2001) who opined that children from high socio-economic class have enough study materials more than the ones from low socio-economic class and thus do better academically.

This can probably happen in the states where there is no free education. Hypothesis two states that there is no significant impact of free education in the school attendance of students from high, middle and low socio-economic status. The hypothesis was retained, meaning that free education made impact on the

class attendance of the respondents. Free education made them to attend classes regularly. The reason the finding is so might be because the students are happy to go to school since the government provides study materials to them in addition to not paying school fees. This finding did not concur to Obe (1998) who stated that truancy and absenteeism are among the problems of adolescents and they are common in students from low socio-economic classes. The statement by (Obe, 1998) could apply to the situation where there is no free education. The finding corroborate Oden (2015) who found in his research that poor home background and lack of study materials lead to deviant behaviours like lateness to school. This means that free education can remove the impact of poor home background on the class attendance of the respondents. Lagos state operates free education at primary and secondary school and this encourages the students to go to school since they are not disturbed because of school fees and study materials.

Hypothesis three states that there is no significant influence of free education on the study habits of students from the different socio-economic classes. The finding revealed that socio-economic status of parents' did not influence the study habits of the students due to free education. In addition Lagos state government introduced reading culture in the schools which begins at 2.30 pm and ends at 3.30 pm. This finding has supported Idowu (2004) who states that parental socio-economic status negatively influences academic achievement of children in school but with free education it might not be so. The finding also supported (Obemeeta, 2006) who attributed low academic performance to the child's family background.

Counselling Implication

The findings in this research call for counselling implication.

Good academic achievement may not be possible under poor conditions of parents' inability to provide the educational needs of their children in secondary school. This inability might be caused by poverty, illiteracy or even negligence of parental duties to children which make parents not to pay adequate attention to their children's education. The government has a lot roles to play in order to save the situation. The government should see the need to provide free education from primary to secondary schools so that education of these youngsters should not be jeopardised which will have negative effect in the nation's educational, economic, social development. Therefore there is need for counselling intervention to educate the parents and the government on the importance of quality education for the adolescents who are going to be the leaders of tomorrow.

Conclusion

The study examined influence of parents' socio-economic status and free education on academic performance of in-school adolescents in senior secondary school in Local Education District in Alimomo L. G.A. of Lagos State. The three null hypotheses formulated were retained. The finding showed that due to free education parents' socio-economic status did not negatively affect provision of study materials, school attendance and study habits of the respondents from both high, middle and low socio-economic classes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendations were made:

1. The government of each state should make education free from primary to secondary education.
2. There should be free text books and chairs provided by the Federal and State Government for the students at secondary schools to ease off problems emanating from parents inability to provide educational materials.
3. Both the Federal and State Government should partner to empower the masses adequately in order to eradicate poverty that is ravaging many families which tells on the education of the children.
4. Parents should be counselled not to neglect their children's education.

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