

## An Assessment of Quality Primary Education in Kwara Metropolis: Issues and Implication for Sustainable Development

Lateef A. Yusuf<sup>1</sup> and Abayomi A. Alaka<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Educational Foundations, Sokoto State University, Nigeria, adedeyemi88@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Department of Educational Management, Islamic University in Uganda, Uganda, yomibunmi1972@gmail.com

### Abstract

This paper examines quality of primary education in Kwara metropolis. The study adopts a descriptive survey research design with questionnaire as major instrument of data collection. One research question and three hypotheses were developed for this study, while simple stratified random sampling technique was used to select 180 respondents across three local government areas that constitute Kwara metropolis. The researchers developed a 15 item instrument tagged “Quality Primary Education Inventory” (QPEI), of 0.82 with reliability index at test-retest was used for data collection. The statistical tools employed are Chi-Square and t-test. Results show that teachers perceived quality of primary education in Kwara metropolis are very low with a total of 914 which represents 34.8%. There exist also no statistically significant difference on the perception of rural-urban teachers, male-female teachers, and headmaster-class teachers, concerning low quality of primary education in Kwara metropolis. Based on the above, there is need to provide the needed resources to ensure quality education at the primary level of education in Kwara State. The research is able to establish that low quality education has very little or no impact on nation’s socio-political and economic development. The Sustainable Development Goal four (4) re-affirms that only quality education would be instrumental for the sustenance of nation’s development.

**Keywords:** Quality; Primary Education; Resources; Sustainable Development Goals

### Introduction

Education is ultimately intended to prepare the child for life and useful living in the society. The term Primary Education is a basic stage of education which is either a self-contained phased (of various length in various countries) or which forms a part of a longer cycle of general education. Primary education leads to other kinds and forms of post-primary education. Education has assumed a complex dimension in the new world of information and communication technology. It is re-defined as a life-long process of training the mind to manipulate information to solve problems, to manage and to create as well as master specialized technical information (Wilson & Davis, 2004). Therefore, to cope well in the 21st century, the child needs at least three basic skills: knowledge information, permanent literacy and reflective thinking.

The product of education is abundance knowledge whether defined as intellectual capital or assets. Akinboye (2003) was of the opinion that when education is creatively managed it results in wealth if mismanaged or wasted, it results in poverty, and lack of sustainable development. As part of a global investment to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. education is explicitly formulated as a stand-alone goal. Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Education is both a goal in itself and a means of attaining all other SDGs. It is not only an integral part of sustainable development but also a key enabler for it. Therefore, it is not an aberration to regard quality primary education as a key strategy in the pursuit of the SDGs.

### Literature Review

According to Akinboye (2003) the future is going to be an information age where every nation’s prosperity will depend on its ability to process information. Also Nomura institute of Japan recently declared that global economic activities have shifted from agricultural and industrial to knowledge and information. Therefore, product of primary level of education needs the skill of

permanent literacy to be able to access information. According to Aggarwal (2008), primary schooling starts at 6 years of age in Europe and the United States at 5 years in the United Kingdom, and at 8 years, after very efficient kindergarten, in the Soviet Union. Primary education is defined as education given in formal setting for children aged normally 6-11. Basically, it aims at giving children the opportunity to develop and acquire skill within the limit of their ability and to enable them function effectively in the society. It also aims at laying a firm foundation for reflective and scientific thinking (Obanya, 2002; FRN, 2004). It is thus, generally considered as the key to success or failure of the entire educational system.

As noted by Indiresan (2003), reflective thinking indicates that having acquired knowledge, child needs to be able to weight consequences of actions before acting. This will promote moral values. The child needs to be empowered right from early age to be able to think for himself. Any educational system without moral values or which promotes bad values is no education. Reflective skills will guide the child's decision in making right choices for life. The inability of our primary educational system to rise to these modern challenges is the reason for low pace of national development. Thus educational objectives are stiffly achieved. Based on the need of Nigeria to rise up to the challenges of post-modern world, there is urgent need to make the primary school work optically. Quality according to Adedeji and Bamidele (2003) is most often defined as fitness for purpose in relation to the user and customer needs. Quality can also be taken to mean that the product conforms to standards, specifications or requirements. Similarly, Obanya (2002) views quality as "a multidimensional concept pervading every action that goes into making the process of education possible. Quality pervades every element of the activities undertaken in the process of educating and the wide array of beneficial results of educational activities on both individual learners and the wider society.

Quality education at the primary level becomes necessary because it is the foundation of the other levels of education. Studies (Gidado, 2003; Alumode, 2006) have established the low quality of public education in Nigeria and the need for Nigeria to rise up to the challenges of post modern world. As noted by Igwe (2004), quality education entails that the output of institutions are acceptable, desirable, beneficial, efficient or effective. Thus, quality education at the primary level could be described as the education capable of achieving .the specific goals as enunciated in the National Policy on Education (2014) and quoted here:

- a) inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy, and ability to communicate effectively;
- b) lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
- c) promote patriotism , fairness, understanding and national unity;
- d) instill social, moral norms, and values in the child;
- e) develop in the child the ability to adapt to the child's changing environment;
- f) provide opportunity for the child to develop life manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limit of the child's capacity;

There is no doubt that these are very laudable objectives and the basic skills that can ensure the attainment of these objectives are literacy and numeracy skills, i.e. ability to read, write and need for competency in simple arithmetic. Ijaiya (2003) submitted that what we have now are uncontrolled and chaotic academic standards in our primary level of education and that our educational standard must be rescued. Digumarti (2004) and Dolphyna (2001) submitted that the basic learning needs towards benefiting from world declaration on education for all, comprises both literacy and numeracy. In a situation, whereby majority of pupils cannot read or write, as affirmed by Reeves (2001) that every other elements of their education is placed at risk. This is the core aspect of primary education in Nigeria. Quality of education refers to the worth of education (with reference to its input, the teaching- learning process and the output/outcome). It is measured against set standards and could either be seen as below, exactly or as above a given standard. Quality of inputs refers to the worth of teachers, trainees, textbooks, technology of delivery, and task or curriculum. Quality of the process deals with the worth of the teaching-learning process that involves lesson plans, delivery methods, classroom organisation and control,

student-teacher interactions, assessment and evaluation, marking, etc. quality of outcome and output involves the academic achievement and attainment, value added through education, results of internal and external examinations, etc (Babalola, 2004).

However, Tawari (2002) reported that quality assurance is different from quality control by being either a before or a during the event process. The best practice is that, quality is designed into the process from the beginning to ensure that the product is produced to a predetermined specification. Many critics, for example Emetaron (2004), point out that “primary level of education system has undergone only quantitative improvements in terms of number of institutions and students enrolment while there has been little development in respect of the capacity to maintain standards and efficiency in the process and product of education. This logically implies that we have been recording enormous quantitative growth at the expense of qualitative development in primary education system in Nigeria. Similarly, Ehiemetilor (2001) conducted a study in Edo State on the management of primary education in Nigeria, with one of the variables of the study being facilities available for teaching and learning and the support system. Findings showed that 87.5% of the schools in the study did not have any kind of teaching aids and there were non- improvised either. This necessarily implies low quality input in the primary education system in Nigeria.

Infrastructural facilities such as classroom blocks and furniture, health facilities and services, Library, Information Communication Technology (ICT) facilities when provided in primary schools provide a reasonable amount of comfort for teaching and learning to thrive, thereby assuring quality (Enu and Omogun 2009; Okuagun and Sokaro 2011). According to Obanya (2004) since no system of education can rise above the quality of teachers, then it becomes mandatory to ensure that only qualify teachers are recruited in our educational system. In this direction, FRN (2004) recommends that the minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession should be the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE). Since, it is such a teacher that can introduce quality teaching and learning initiatives that could result in quality education.

UNESCO is entrusted to coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals as listed below;

1. No poverty,
2. Zero hunger,
3. Good health and wellbeing,
4. Quality education,
5. Gender equality,
6. Clean water and sanitation,
7. Affordable and clean energy,
8. Decent work and economic growth,
9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure,
10. Reduced inequalities,
11. Sustainable cities and communities,
12. Responsible consumption and production,
13. Climate action,
14. Life below water,
15. Life on land,
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions,
17. Partnership for the goals.

### **Research Question**

**Question One:** How do teachers perceive the quality of primary education in Kwara metropolis.

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant difference in the perception of urban and rural teachers concerning low quality of primary education in Kwara metropolis.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female teachers concerning low quality of primary education in Kwara metropolis.

**Hypothesis Three:** There is no significant difference in the perception of head teachers (school administrators) and class teachers concerning low quality of primary education in Kwara metropolis.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, with questionnaire as the major instrument of data collection. One research question and three hypotheses guided the study. Simple stratified random sampling technique was used to select 180 respondents (teachers and head teachers) from 12 public primary schools across three local government areas that majorly formed Kwara metropolis. The local government areas includes; Ilorin East, Ilorin South and Ilorin West. Stratification was based on the dimension of local government areas. Four schools per local government areas and 15 respondents per school were randomly selected

### **Instrumentation**

A 15-item researcher developed questionnaire of 4-likert type rating scale, tagged “Quality Primary Education Inventory (QPEI), was used to generate data for the study. The instrument was a four point likert type rating scale in which participants indicated their degree of compliance by ticking very High, High, Low and Very Low. The instrument was moderated by experts in Educational Management from University of Ilorin in order to promote its face, content and construct validity. Reliability index of 0.82 was established through test-retest, at interval of three weeks. However, 180 questionnaires were administered to the respondents, only 175 were found usable (representing a usable rate of 97%). The inferential statistical tool employed was chi-square and t-tests statistics.

### **Results**

**Research Question 1:** How do teachers perceive the quality of primary education in Kwara metropolis.

#### **Questions on Quality of Primary Education**

- 1) Pupils can competently solve simple mathematical problems independently.
- 2) Pupils can be able to read the time from the wall clock.
- 3) Pupils can write a simple composition about their school.
- 4) Pupils can competently copy notes from the board.
- 5) Pupils can read and understand simple questions on the board.
- 6) Pupils can read and understand simple story books.
- 7) Primary school pupils have good conduct and are always well dressed.
- 8) General performance in primary school examination is always encouraging.
- 9) Basic facilities, teaching and learning resources are generally available in the primary school.
- 10) Student population per class is very encouraging, in terms of Teacher-Pupil Ratio.
- 11) Minimum qualification possessed by primary school teachers in Kwara metropolis is National Certificate in Education (NCE).
- 12) Primary school curriculum is very relevant in terms of community development.
- 13) Primary school learning environment, does promote effective learning.
- 14) School organizational climate in the primary school is very encouraging.
- 15) Adequate instructional provisions are provided in primary schools.

**Table 1:** Chi-square analysis of teachers' responses to the quality of primary school education

Questions	Very High	High	Low	Very Low
1	15 8.6	40 22.8	18 10.3	102 58.3
2	22 12.6	53 30.3	25 14.3	75 42.9
3	3 1.7	61 34.9	80 45.7	31 17.7
4	26 14.9	32 18.3	92 52.6	25 14.3
5	12 6.9	36 20.6	86 49.1	41 23.4
6	1 .6	67 38.3	21 12.0	86 49.1
7	18 10.3	93 53.1	36 20.6	28 16.0
8	33 18.9	29 16.6	20 11.4	93 53.1
9	28 16.0	37 27.4	14 22.9	96 39.4
10	18 10.3	48 27.4	40 22.9	69 39.4
11.	3 1.7	45 25.7	78 44.0	49 28.0
12	- -	29 16.6	28 16.0	118 67.4
13	18 10.3	45 25.7	63 36.0	49 28.0
14	26 14.9	10 5.7	58 33.1	81 46.3
15	40 22.9	83 47.4	17 9.7	35 20.0
<b>Column Total</b>	263 10.0	772 29.4	676 25.8	914 34.8

$$X^2 = 736, df 42, p = .001$$

From the analysis in Table 1, it was discovered that greater percentage of head teachers and teachers perceived quality of primary education in Kwara metropolis as Very Low (a total of 914, i.e. 34.8% responses out of the total 2625 responses to the questionnaire, see table 1).

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant difference in the perception of urban and rural teachers concerning low quality of primary education in Kwara metropolis.

**Table 2:** t-test analysis of rural and urban teachers' perception on the quality of primary education in Kwara metropolis

Location of Teacher	N	X	SD	SE	Cal.t	Crt.T	df	Prob
Rural	73	42.39	2.75	.323		1.92	173	.001
Urban	102	40.76	3.46	.343	0.92			

Cal.t. (0.92) < Crt.t (1.92)

From the analysis in Table2, it was discussed that calculated t value (0.92) is less than the critical value (1.92). This shows there is no statistically significant difference between rural and urban teachers on the perception of low quality of primary education in Kwara metropolis.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female teachers concerning low quality of primary education in Kwara metropolis.

**Table 3:** t-test analysis of male and female teachers' perception on the quality of primary education in Kwara metropolis.

Sex of teachers	N	Mean	S.D	Cal.t	Crt.T	df	Prob
Male	99	41.34	3.15	0.47			
Female	76	4.57	3.45	0.47	1.92	173	0.01

Cal.t. (0.47) < Crt.t (1.92)

From the analysis in table 3, above, calculated t (0.47) is less than the critical T (1.92). This means that there is no statistically significant difference between the male and female teachers perception of low quality of primary education in Kwara metropolis.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference in the perception of head teachers (school administrators) and class teachers concerning low quality of primary education in Kwara metropolis.

**Table 4:** t-test analysis of head teachers and class teachers' perception on quality of primary education in Kwara metropolis

Status	N	X	S.D	S.E	Cal.t	Crt.T	df	Prob
Head teachers	53	41.90	2.55	.352	1.22	1.92	173	.001
Class teacher	122	41.24	3.54	.321				

Cal. t (1.22) < Crit.T (1.92)

From the analysis in table 4, above calculated t (1.22) is less than the critical T (1.92). This means that there is no statistically significant difference between head teachers and class teachers' perception of the quality of primary education in Kwara Metropolis.

## Discussion

Analysis from Table 1 shows that literacy and numeracy level of primary school pupils from Kwara metropolis is not encouraging. For instance, pupils ability to solve simple mathematical problem was very low (58.3%), while pupils ability to read and understand simple question on the board was equally low (49.1%). However, their conduct was encouraging as this was rated high (53.1%) Teacher qualification was also rated low (44.0%). This necessarily implies that majority of the pupils cannot read or write and cannot independently carry out simple arithmetic. The study is line with Ijaiya (2003) what we have now are uncontrolled and chaotic academic standard in our primary level of education and that our educational standard must be rescued.

The view of Emetaron (2004) was corroborative, primary level of education system has undergone only quantitative improvements in terms of number of institutions and students' enrollment, while there has been little development in respect of the capacity to maintain standards and efficiency in the process and product of education system. The study equally supports Ehiemetalor (2001) 87.5% of the schools in Edo State did not have any kind of teaching aid and this necessarily implies low quality input in the primary education system in Nigeria. The public perception is that the quality of primary education offered is low and that standards have dropped. These perceptions are based on the fact from Table 1 that teacher qualifications are low, basic facilities of teaching and learning resources are generally not available. Teacher-pupil ratios are high. General performance in examination was also poor. Required resources such as infrastructural facilities and qualify teachers provide a reasonable amount of comfort for teaching and learning to thrive, thereby assuring quality primary education. It is only such a qualified teacher that can introduce quality teaching and learning initiatives that could result in quality education. Since the basic learning needs towards benefiting from World declaration on Education for All comprises both literacy and numeracy and in a situation whereby majority of pupils cannot read or write, then the specific goals as enunciated in the National Policy on Education (2004) will be difficult to achieve.

## Conclusion

Education is nation's top priority because it is a veritable tool for eradicating poverty and the foundation on which to drive sustainable development. Education is both a goal in itself and a means of attaining all the other SDGs. However, literacy which is the pillar of educational system is already endangered in our schools and for SDGs to be achievable, literacy and numeracy must take a firm root in the primary schools. This is why quality primary education represents an essential strategy in the pursuit of the SDGs.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations were generated from findings;

- 1) Government and relevant stakeholders should urgently make provision for adequate infrastructure and physical facilities in order to make primary school environment more conducive to learning. It has been established that the quality of primary education offered is affected by poor condition of school physical facilities.
- 2) There is urgent need for improvement in the supply of qualified teachers to primary schools. We have to strictly adhere to the minimum qualification for teaching, which is National Certificate of Education (NCE). This becomes necessary because no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers.
- 3) Government must pay adequate attention to national reading policy that can improve our reading culture. The reading policy should stipulate a reading standard at different grades or stages of primary education so that at the completion of primary six, every child should be able to read simple texts and demonstrate comprehension. In this regard, government must encourage writing and publishing of story books.

## Issues and Implication for Sustainable Development

In the new era which the world is now, the most valuable resource of any country is its inherent intellectual assets. Therefore, knowledge which has been acquired through meaningful, constructive, functional and practicable education becomes the new source of economic prosperity and wealth. This is why such education must be qualitative enough to enhance human development and its sustainability. Despite the fact that education is a stand-alone goal, it equally serves as a means of attaining all the other SDGs. Numerous education related targets and indicators, are also contained within other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This implies that the new role in the planning and implementation of primary education need to be more professional in nature to address issues of quality in the system, knowing fully well that, its only quality education that can be instrumental to attainment of SDGs. Education is critical for promoting sustainable development. This means that in developing nations like Nigeria, a plan for sustainable development must address the issue of quality in primary education because it plays a basic intellectual abilities such as literacy, that are crucial to success in a world where knowledge economy is the order of the day.

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