

Evaluation
In
Theory and Practice

Edited by
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Preface

Prof. Joseph Onogie Obemeata joined the services of the University of Ibadan as a Research Fellow II in the year 1976. By that time, he was already much advanced in age and in experience, having served as a vice-principal in the famous Loyola College, Ibadan, and principal in Fatima College, Ikire. So, it should not surprise anyone that he rose very rapidly through the ranks of Research Fellow I, Senior Research Fellow, and finally as a Research Professor, all within a period of nine years.

In all, Prof. Joseph Onogie Obemeata put in a total of 27 years in the services of the University of Ibadan. During that period, he established himself as one of the leading educational evaluators in this country, as well as one of the foremost educators in economics education. Besides, as a University representative in the Joint Consultative Committee [JCC] of the Federal Ministry of Education, he made very many significant contributions to the development of education in this country. It is on record that a number of the most notable reforms in education, most especially those relating to the Colleges of Education between 1980 and 1993 had very great contributions from Prof. J.O. Obemeata as a result of his membership of the Joint Consultative Committee.

For members of staff of the Institute of Education, Prof. J.O. Obemeata would be best remembered for his very significant contributions during his tenure as the Director of the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan. In particular, he helped the University in fashioning out the instrument establishing the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, as a full autonomous body, as it has become since 1992. It was as a result of the autonomy that the University was in a position to constitute the Faculty of Education and the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan, as a College of Education. These two bodies were able to work smoothly together with the collegiate system lasted.

Finally, Prof. J.O. Obemeata will long be remembered for the special duties performed in the Committees constituted by the Senate of University of Ibadan. Notable among them are the Committee on conditions for the award of emeritus professorship, and the Committee on Subdegree courses, for each of which he served as the chairman.

As is the tradition in the academic circle for professors who have touched the lives of many, the colleagues, associates and past students of Prof Obemeata have put up this Book of Reading in his honour Each contributor has written a well researched paper, and the contributions span the field of Educational Evaluation in particular and Education in general, Each chapter froms good and educative reading.

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Combating Boys' Drop-Out Rate in Nigeria: An Evaluation of Strategies that Work

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Introduction

The manpower development of any nation should be of paramount importance to her leaders and those in relevant positions of authority. This manpower development can well be adequately tackled through the education of the citizens – children, youths and adults. Nigeria appears to have recognized the prime position of education as evident in the very comprehensive National Policy on Education which she has put in place as well as a fairly adequate proportion of her national budget that she annually commits to education. In addition, Nigeria is a prominent signatory to a number of international Educations Related Charters and Declarations such as the Jomtien's 1990 Education for All (EFA) Declaration and the Dakar 1991 renewed declaration. In pursuance of the goal of EFA, Nigeria has made significant progress in increasing pupils' enrolment at the primary and junior secondary school levels as well as made spirited efforts at establishing non-formal education centres to cater for young and middle-aged adults who had not hitherto accessed education. It is however sad to note that all the gains obtained through the efforts enumerated above are as noted by Uwakwe and Emeke (2004) undermined by the persistently large number of pupils who take more than one year to complete a particular class, and / or who drop out of school before completing even the primary (school) cycle

The repeating of class and dropping out phenomenon not only absorbs a large share of the limited resources available for education, thus translating into wastage but it also exerts a terrible personal toll on the pupils involved, as well as create missed opportunities for the individuals, their communities and their entire nation.

Education, which is often seen as “a means of promoting equality, can if not well handled also contribute to inequality in today’s knowledge-based world. Those who obtain a good basic education can continue to learn throughout their lives and thus remain economically viable, while those lacking a solid educational foundation are destined to fall further and further behind” (Uwakwe and Emeke, 2004). Those who drop out of school are excluded from meaningful participation in the economic, social, political and cultural life of their communities. The critical mass of individuals, especially the cohort of boys, falling into this exclusion category in Nigeria is increasing, and this portends growing danger for the polarization of the Nigerian society. It is important that the tide of this danger be stemmed if the Nigerian society will not only continue (as it is already happening) to have her wealth concentrated in the hands of a privileged educated few, but also create a nation that is neither efficient nor just not safe.

The Boys’ Drop Out Phenomenon in Perspective

Before giving a fairly in-depth treatise of the boys’ drop out phenomenon in Nigeria, it might be pertinent to first try to clarify the concept of dropping out generally and to see what the phenomenon is like at the global level.

Defining School Dropout

There are at least two distinct schools of thought or perspectives in literature regarding how school dropout is conceived, with each having its variants. One school of thought views it from the perspectives of school wastage, wherein children enroll in school but for a variety of reasons do not complete the school cycle. The variants in this perspective include:

- i. The situation where for one reason or another, children do not succeed in acquiring the full range of skills offered through primary schooling, and are therefore unable to proceed beyond this level.
- ii. The situation where pupils complete the primary cycle but fail to gain the intellectual, social, cultural and ethnic knowledge and skills that schooling ought to provide. Surveys across many countries of the world (Nigeria inclusive) have shown that a substantial proportion

of children complete their primary school education, without acquiring an adequate mastery of reading. This situation is without distinction between the industrialized and developing countries.

- iii. The situation where pupils/students do not complete their schooling in the prescribed number of years as a result of repeating one or more classes.

The second perspective from which school dropouts is conceived and defined is in terms of non-attendance in school after enrolment. In this situation, children enroll in school but either attend school for just a week or two after resumption and thereafter stop attending, or did not even attend at all after enrolling in school.

On a general note a student is identified as a dropout if he/she

- is absent without an approved excuse or documented transfer and does not return to school by the commencement of the following school year.
- completes the school year but fails to re-enroll in school the following year.
- enters the national workforce before graduation.
- leaves school and enter a program not qualifying as an elementary/secondary school (e.g. fashion designing school, hair dressing or cosmetology school)

Globally, students in the following categories are not included in the school dropout count:

- students who die
- those who are out of school for temporary periods with an approved excuse
- students showing regular attendance at a state-approved alternative program
- those known to have transferred to another public school, adult or alternative education program, or home schooling

- students who move to another class or grade level
- students who enroll in university or other tertiary institution early
- students transferred or assigned to another public institution or state-approved education program

Boys Dropout phenomenon at the Global level

There is evidence to suggest that for decades, the problem of boys' educational underachievement and dropping out in both industrialized and developing countries remained a hidden problem which however has now become exposed. A recent UNICEF study (UNICEF, 2003) of household data from 55 countries confirm that while in a clear majority of countries girls' attendance at school is far lower than that of boys, in some countries, boys are the ones not being reached by the education system. A variety of reasons account for this. The findings revealed that in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Mongolia, the boys' dropping out problem is largely due to the practice of having boys look after family cattle while the men seek wage-earning work. In some other countries like most part of Latin America and the Caribbean, where the pastoral tradition is not ingrained, boys generally have a higher repetition rate in school than girls and according to Brown (2001) they at times outrightly disappear from school after they have earned low academic grades for sometime. As Barker (1999) made known, men in Brazil in 1996 had an average of 5.7 years of formal education compared with 6.0 years for women. At about age 10, boys begin to leave school at a higher rate than girls and by ages 15-17 years, 19-20% of boys have dropped out altogether, compared with only 8.5% of girls. The problem of boys' drop-out from the formal education system in Australia became so much that the Australian government through the parliamentary Education Committee held an extensive inquiry into boy's education (Lungard, Martin, Mills and Bahr, 2002).

The same problem of boys' underachievement and dropping out of school has made government in the United Kingdom, since 1998, required all local education authorities to produce long-term strategies to counteract boys' underachievement. The concern regarding dropping out of school generally prompted the Nebraska Department of Education, develop in 2003 a comprehensive form with accompanying manual that was used in a national survey to obtain information on students who have dropped out

of school. A clear definition was given as to who a dropout is and concrete situational examples were provided as guide to those filling the form. In Pennsylvania, studies revealed that across most of the ages considered (ages 12-21) the dropout rate among boys was higher than that of girls. Students who dropped out did so at an older age with ages 17 and 18 having the larger percentages of dropouts. This pattern prevailed from 1988-89 till 1997-98. Colombia, Haiti and United Republic of Tanzania are some other countries that have had high rates of boys' dropout (UNICEF) 2003).

Boys' Dropout Phenomenon in Nigeria

The phenomenon of boys dropping out of the formal school system in Nigeria appears a relatively recent phenomenon. The problem used to be a challenge for the girl child who was known not only to be the one not given access to western education but was also the one withdrawn from school due to early marriage, teenage pregnancy, family financial problem and a host of other reasons. The boys' dropout problem appears most prominent in the South East and the issue had given a lot of concern to many interested stakeholders in the field of education. Historically, the South-East geopolitical zone (made up of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States) had early contact with Western education, and education therefore, formed the cornerstone of their economic life. Families ensured their children, especially the boys, went to school, and communities took pride in building, equipping, and employing teachers for their schools, without waiting for government assistance (Oranu 2004). But with time, due to a mixed-grilled of factors which include parental neglect, societal neglect, poverty, low returns in education, insufficient time to devote to learning and absence of political will (Uwakwe and Emeke, 2004), boys began to drop out of school. Some found their way to the streets where they became astute in street trading, while some became apprentices to vehicle spare-part dealers, household equipment sellers, mechanic workshop owners etc.

But the problem of boys' dropout is not limited to the South East geopolitical zone. As Uwakwe and Emeke (2004) found out the problem also exist in such Northern cities as Kano, Kaduna and Niger. Lagos, the former capital of Nigeria and the economic nerve-centre of the country, also has a high rate of boys' dropout.

The Needs For Prevention Programmes

Worldwide, it is increasingly being recognized that the issue of dropping out of the school system especially among boy-child and its prevention can not be separated from such issues as poverty, unemployment, social values, child abuse and alcohol and drug abuse. Therefore any prevention strategy to be employed should take adequate cognizance of these issues which should be taken proper care of.

As Woods (1995) rightly observed, there is no one magical quick-fix solution to the drop-out problem. The problem is quite complex and consequently requires a complex array of solutions. Dropouts have different characteristics and therefore need different kinds of intervention programs which respond to their individual circumstances and needs. Intervention programs to be effective need to provide one-on-one intensive attention to at-risk students who often must be convinced that they are competent and can be successful in school. The curriculum put in place by the managers of the school system should include basic educational skills, social skills and more importantly experimental education.

Undoubtedly not all factors related to drop-out reduction among boys are school controllable and solutions to the complex problem of drop-out can not be achieved by the school alone. The interrelated causes and multiple problems associated with drop-out syndrome call for comprehensive community wide multi-service approach and multi-component programmes, if the goals for setting up Universal Basic Education (UBE) and Education for All (EFA) schemes are to be fully realized.

The issues of boys drop-out is a national problem which must be addressed by the whole society. It requires resources that go beyond the school and solutions require a team approach – the combined efforts of students, parents, teachers, and administrators, community – based organizations (NGOS) as well as International bodies in collaboration with the Federal, State and Local Governments.

A Peep into Prevention Strategies in Nigeria that Work

An international body – UNICEF in collaboration with the Federal Government of Nigeria and some State Governments have demonstrated how community involvement in boys' education can make the difference. There are quite a number of child-friendly community programmes being embarked upon by the FGN, State Government and UNICEF which have resulted in many communities benefiting, in the sense that such programmes have helped tremendously in stemming the tide of boys' drop-out from the school system. Some of the intervention strategies include the following:

- i. **Mobilization:** As a strategy embarked up, opinion leaders, community based organizations and traditional heads have been judiciously used to mobilize their subjects in the wake-up call for sustained boys' education. A typical example is the Rigasa community in Kaduna State where colourful posters disseminating the message of the benefits of basic formal education adorned the walls of the secretariat of the district head. The same can be said of happenings in Iheaka in Igbo-Eze South Local Government Area of Enugu State. Research Findings (CASSAD 2004) showed that this strategy has gone a long way in reducing boys' drop-out rate. Outcomes also include improved attendance and higher completion rate.
- ii. **Development of Educational Materials Needs:** Supply of exercise books, basic texts – primers and writing materials to non formal Education (NFE) centers is another response of UNICEF in collaboration with State Agencies for Mass Education (SAME) towards reducing boys' drop-out rate. This strategy has worked tremendously as the target audience find the primers motivating, stimulating and educative.
- iii. **Quaranic Integrated Literacy Strategy:** UNICEF in collaboration with Kano State Government in particular has continued to take very active step in addressing the role of Quaranic schools vis-à-vis children's access to quality formal education. In the Kano Project, four subjects were introduced into the Quaranic school curriculum and more hours are devoted

to formal education acquisition. As a result of the integration of basic education into the Quaranic school system, scores of out of school children especially boys now have a chance to acquire basic education as well as vocational skills along with their Quaranic Education.

- iv. **Enhanced School Climate:** A school climate characterized by safety and orderliness in a location that is accessible and non threatening can make a powerful contribution to dropout prevention. Schools have to be learner-friendly if they are to attract learners and make impact on them. With UNICEF'S assistance a fairly large number of learner friendly schools now exist in various communities. In these schools the surrounding has aesthetic beauty; the classrooms are large; the buildings are solid, impressive, imposing and educative posters adorn the classrooms; clean toilets are available; water points exist to meet the needs of pupils. Convincing evidence (seeUwakwe & Emeke, 2004) abound to show that this learner friendly schools influence positively the psyche of the pupils, especially boys, making schools interesting to them and learning no more appears to be a rigour.

In addition to the initiatives of UNICEF, the Federal and Local Governments to stem the tide of boys' dropout, Civil Society Organizations (NGOS) such as **Care Action** based in Kaduna; **CENFET** in Lagos; **FLAN EDUCARE** in Lagos; **Centre for Islamic Resurgence** in Minna; **Humadu Initiative** in Imo State; **Agape Foundation for Literacy and Rural Development** in Ebonyi State. **Forward Africa Multi-Educational Services Trust (MEST)** and a host of others have also responded to the problem of boys' dropout in Nigeria by adopting two major strategies which include:

- i. **Awareness Creation:** these civil society organizations continually expend a lot of energy, time and financial resources in creating awareness about the values of formal education. Many of them especially **Care Action**; **CENFET** have fliers promoting the value of education. They organize seminars for members of their immediate communities and more importantly assemble youths

and talk to them. Evidence of the strategy effectiveness is an increase in the boys' retention rate in schools and a lower dropout rate.

- ii. **Multi-Pronged Approach:** Research evidence (e.g. Orr, 1987; Dryfoos, 1990; Woods 1995) has shown that one of the reasons why boys dropped out of school is to seek means of livelihood early enough to cater for the now and the later. In view of this, many NGOs especially **Humadu Initiative and MEST** organize classes for boys who have not completed the Junior Secondary school level and later enroll such boys in government approved junior secondary schools to take the Junior Secondary School Certificate Examination. The same treatments are applied to boys who have not completed the senior secondary schools before they dropped out. Classes are also organized for them and later enrolled in schools to take the Senior Secondary Examinations. Evidence of such programme effectiveness is an increase in the course completion rate of students. Also improved rates of graduation from J.S.S and S.S.S levels are reported among the participants.

In conclusion it is important to emphasize that the intervention strategies embarked upon to stem the tide of boys drop-out from schools by such international body as UNICEF; Civil Society Organizations, the Federal State and Local Governments have led to

- i. Attainment of basic literacy by some of the dropouts
- ii. Improvement in the quality of life of the dropouts.
- iii. Progressive and steady march towards the achievement of the goals of Education for All (EFA) and of the goals of the UBE scheme.
- iv. Improvement in school attendance, increase in basic skill competences among at-risk dropouts and a remarkable reduction in the dropout rate.

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