

Managing Inequality of Educational Opportunity on Inclusive Educational Services in Kaduna South Educational Zone, Kaduna State

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Abstract

This study investigated managing inequality of educational opportunity on inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone, Kaduna State. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The population of the study consisted of all the 118 public secondary school principals in Kaduna South Educational Zone, Kaduna State. A sample size of 118 principals in these schools were used. Census sampling technique was used for the study. The instrument that was used for data collection in this study was a 10-item questionnaire titled: "Managing Inequality of Educational Opportunity on Inclusive Educational Services in Kaduna South Educational Zone Questionnaire" (MIEOIESKSEZQ). Cronbach alpha statistics was used to obtain 0.76 reliability. The mean scores and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the z-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The result amongst others revealed that, the factors responsible for widening inequality of educational opportunity on inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone are related to unequal distribution of educational opportunities as a result of gender disparities, wrong standard of educational practice regarding those with unavoidable disabilities, socio-economic factors in relation to the social classes of people, socio-cultural perceptions which influence household decisions on schooling and religious practices which influence household decisions on schooling. It was recommended that, Government and society entirely should continuously fight every wrong standard of educational practice regarding those with unavoidable disabilities and other issues relating to socio-economic, religious, cultural, location and gender issues that deliberately deprive individuals the opportunity of attending schools.

Key Words: Inequality, opportunity, inclusive, Strategies.

Introduction

Education is a powerful tool that offers and equips individuals, groups, men and women, boys and girls, old and young, rich and poor the opportunity to have equal voice and power to drive social mobility, build more cohesive societies and ultimately build greater equality in the society. In a democratic society, education offers individuals the tools to exercise their right to an equal say over the structures and policies that govern their lives. On an individual level, the abilities to read, write, analyze and evaluate different sources empower citizens to engage in civic and political life. Notwithstanding, significant increases in inequality of both income and wealth are leading to larger gaps between rich and poor, men and women and other indices alike. Though inequality is not inevitable but a political, religious, cultural and tradition choices that is practiced by elite or ruling class, leaders and other concerned prominent individuals, institutions and organizations in a particular nation. More so, it is the result of deliberate policy choices made by governments and international organizations (Coady & Dizioli, 2017).

Education is perhaps the only instrument for people to adequately cope with the new trends of the present globalized society in which every nation is connected. Meanwhile, the common belief that expansion of schooling leads to greater equality of access to educational opportunity informs various government measures aimed at off-setting educational imbalance between classes, states, religion, and ethnic or cultural groups in the Nigerian education system so as to progressively admit students whether able or disabled, boys and girls, men and women of all classes to help them in making better living at the same time to contribute to the development of the nation at large.. Conversely, it is now broadly agreed by most global policy makers that extreme inequality is also avoidable, and that concrete steps can be taken to reduce inequality. No doubt Universal free education enhances people's earning power, and can bring them out of poverty. Therefore, low levels of education hamper economic growth, which in turn slows down poverty reduction (Global Education Monitoring Report, 2016).

There have been a lot of discrepancies and inequalities between different regions and people in the education system. It is on this note that Dogra (2011) stressed that, there are some major inequalities in the education system that should be addressed and solved, if the future of the education sector must be secured. On this note, inequality in education is a measure of unachievable, unfair and lack of true opportunity of education among children or people of different social class, ethnic, family, culture/tradition, religion and political interest in education (Nwogu, 2015). If this is the situation, it will require a lot of initiative, zeal and hard work on the part of government authorities, education stakeholders, schools, teachers and other members of our communities to do away with these negative inequalities plaguing the education sector.

Education disrupts persistent and growing inequality by supporting the growth of more decent work, raising incomes for the poorest people. The patterns of educational inequality vary between countries based on historical, geographical or economic factors, common bases of inequality according to Coady and Dizioli (2017) include: rural/urban divides; family income poverty; gender; disability; ethnic, religious or language identity and location. Nonetheless, current trends in working patterns and the nature of employment seem

likely to elevate the importance of good education for all in reducing inequality. This is why many economies are now shifting employment away from agriculture and manufacturing, while demand for high-skilled workers grows. Inequalities of income are compounded with other inequalities of gender, ethnicity, disability and geography to form a suffocating web of exclusion. In a poor rural area of Kaduna, girls are three times as likely as poor boys to have never attended school. Educational inequalities are also driven by policies that encourage commercialization of education and expand private provision of schooling through public-private partnerships (PPPs), which can deepen segregation and stratification in education systems.

This situation has affected the society to the extent that without inclusive educational practice where all classes of persons are given equal right to education, inequality of access to education would definitely cause a lot of social, political and economic damage to those committed to it and the society at large. On this note, inclusive education prominently features in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), notably: SDG 4 (i.e., “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”) and SDG 5 (i.e., “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”). Incidentally, a recent report from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is particularly explicit on the need to tackle the policy syndrome of inequality that is inhibiting most countries from adopting a feasible course to the achievement of SDGs (UNDP, 2017).

Factors responsible for widening educational Inequalities of Educational Opportunities for inclusive secondary education delivery

The patterns of educational inequality vary between countries based on historical, geographical or economic factors, common bases of inequality according to Coady and Dizioli (2017) include: rural/urban divides; family income poverty; gender; disability; ethnic, religious or language identity and location. Inequality of educational opportunity is attributed to so many other factors which according to Udoh, Olowu and Emeni (2020) includes (1) family characteristics (2) region (3) gender (4) social class differences (5) achievement (6) health status, political participation, (7) family background (8) Socio-economic status (9) cultural (10) school based and (11) individual factors.

1. **Family Characteristics:** Family background is one of the most influential factors in which a strong correlation exists between academic background of parent and academic pursuit/success of children. The rich have social network and opportunities to success that is more beneficial than the low-class parents. Other aspects of inequality in this regard rest on races and discrimination, language barrier, less resources, less parental attention to children, gender issue, traditional attitude to gender role, poverty, and geographical issues respectively.
2. **Gender:** Girls in Kaduna, Nigeria is faced with sets of barriers to equal educational opportunity. These include child marriage, early pregnancy, domestic labour and human trafficking. The reason for this is traceable to old customs and values which see female education as unnecessary (Olaitan & Amos, 2016)

3. **Health status:** Sometimes disabilities tend to cause inequality in educational opportunity; reasons being that some children who are of school age and adults who are physically challenged are not provided the opportunity to have their special education programmes.
4. **Political participation:** government might choose to give partial treatment to some aspects to the detriment of others or create an enabling environment for equal access and opportunities.
5. **Religious factors:** It is a known fact that the Southern regions are more advantaged in education than the Northern regions and the source of this inequality is usually traced to religious beliefs and practices that tend to set limit against some class of person in terms of education. Some Muslims who are practical religious dogmatist are against western education and have contributed negatively to socio-economic structure in the country.
6. **Socio-economic Factors:** According to Bola (2008) unequal distribution of educational opportunities has led to social inequality which refers to a situation in which individual groups in a society do not have equal social status, social class, and social circle. Some areas social inequality has affected the social classes of people includes voting rights, freedom of speech and assembly, the extent of property rights and access to education, health care, quality housing, traveling, transportation, vacation and other social goods and services.
7. **Cultural Factors:** Cultural perceptions influence household decisions on schooling and manifest more when household income levels are low. In other words, poor households are more likely to face the challenge of whom to send to school, and because there is a strong belief that boys' education is more valuable than that of girls.
8. **Catchment:** Catchment area is another issue that tries to subject some persons who are most qualifies for educational opportunity to be less accommodated. This policy stipulates that, the states in the immediate vicinity of each university should derive special preferences in terms of admissions.
9. **Personal factors:** Despite the fact that educational opportunity is open to every child of school age, some parents vehemently refused their children to attend western education especially in Northern Nigeria like Kaduna State.

There are many other factors responsible for educational inequalities in Nigeria according to Olibie, Eziuzo and Enueme (2013). These factors include the following:

1. Poor funding which reflected inadequate budgetary allocations and lack of financial support by other public/private institutions to education including the government to provide necessary infrastructures to accommodate every actor in the system.
2. Failure to establish effective policies/ineffective implementation of policies concerning different segments of education.
3. Failure to establish effective institutions that will monitor standards and quality at all levels of education.
4. Corruption in the education system that have deprived many things that would have aid the operation of the educational system.

Strategies to curb Inequalities of Educational Opportunities for inclusive secondary education delivery

According to Segun, Loromeke and Olamrewaju (2014) to build equitable and good-quality public education that can help fight economic, social and gender inequality, policy makers and government through her operative legislations should develop national education plans that focus coherently and comprehensively on identifying pre-existing inequalities in education, producing data on gaps and needs, and developing appropriate strategies to resolve them and ensure equitable teacher deployment, coupled with equitable spending on school infrastructure and learning inputs, to help redress disadvantage. In doing this, the government need to progressively make expansion of access to education without minding cultural, religion, regional or political bias and to support the poorest, minorities, vulnerable and children with disabilities with extra help to redress disadvantage, so that they stay in school learning and pull them from a dark and perpetual illiteracy that is detrimental to economic development.

There are notable barriers that keep girls out of school or learning, such as providing separate bathrooms for boys and girls, addressing the non-fee related costs of schooling, and ensuring curricula and teacher training promote positive gender roles and avoid stereotypes. More so, policies should be reviewed to address cultural disposition that have limited access of females towards schooling (Adesulu, 2014). In this vein, when infrastructures are provided to accommodate the number of students who merited admission it will reduce some kind of inequalities that would have surfaced in the system.

Statement of Problem

In spite of the wide potential of education to tackle inequality in the society, at present, education systems in Kaduna South Education Zone seems to be largely reproducing inequalities. It seems wide disparities in educational opportunities are a mirror image of pre-existing inequalities in this education zone. The education available to the majority is letting children down, because it is often very poor in quality when considered the goals it is meant to fill. The education system is not free; or biased against people who are poor, disabled or the most marginalized. Many girls continue to struggle to go to school; when in school, they have to fight against powerful patriarchal expectations of their roles. This gets in the way of these children realizing their potential, and limits education in its power to transform lives and promote meaningful opportunity.

Growing inequality is contributing to widespread mistrust of democratic institutions in many countries. When governments fail to deliver basic functions expected by citizens, such as quality public services, they feel let down. Schooling remains segregated by class, wealth, ethnicity, gender or other signifiers of privilege and exclusion, this cements inequality. Segregated patterns of schooling build segregated communities, driving a wedge between the haves and the have-nots, right at the start of life. A growing body of evidence has shown that extreme income inequality is preventable through investment in quality and equitable education but the government and other institutions in power seems not to offer equality education in Kaduna State which mostly discriminate the girls and the poor. If this is not addressed, it will only cause a serious setback to the individuals and society.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study investigated managing inequality of educational opportunity on inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone, Kaduna State. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. Examine the factors responsible for widening inequality of educational opportunity on inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone, Kaduna State.
2. Examine the strategies to curb inequality of educational opportunity for inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone, Kaduna State

Research Questions

To guide the study, the following research questions were used.

1. What are the factors responsible for widening inequality of educational opportunity on inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone, Kaduna State?
2. What are the strategies to curb inequality of educational opportunity on inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone, Kaduna State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were used to guide the study.

- Ho₁ There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the factors responsible for widening inequality of educational opportunity on inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone, Kaduna State.
- Ho₂ There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the strategies to curb inequality of educational opportunity on inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone, Kaduna State.

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The population of the study consists of all the 118 public secondary school principals in Kaduna South Educational Zone, Kaduna State. A sample size of 118 principals in these schools were used. Census sampling technique was used for the study. In doing this, all the principals that make the population were used as sample size for the study representing 100% of the population. The instrument that was used for data collection in this study was a 10-item questionnaire titled: Managing Inequality of Educational Opportunity on Inclusive Educational Services in Kaduna South Educational Zone Questionnaire” (MIEOIESKSEZQ). The questionnaire was divided into two sections: section A was used for collection of demographic data. Section B was based on the 4- point modified Likert rating scale of (Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points; Agree (A) = 3 points; Disagree (D) = 2 points; and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point). Cronbach alpha statistics was used obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.75. Mean scores and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the z-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Data Analysis and Empirical Results

Research Question 1: What are the factors responsible for widening inequality of educational opportunity on inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone, Kaduna State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of Principals in rural area and Principals in urban area on the factors responsible for widening inequality of educational opportunity on inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone.

S/N	Item	Male Principals in (72)		Female Principals (46)				Remarks
		\bar{X}	SD ₁	\bar{X}	SD ₂	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	
1	Unequal distribution of educational opportunities as a result of gender disparities	2.80	1.36	2.63	1.13	2.72		Agreed
2	Wrong standard of educational practice regarding those with unavoidable disabilities	3.30	1.38	2.98	1.22	3.14		Agreed
3	Socio-economic factors in relation to the social classes of people	2.72	1.94	2.99	1.25	2.86		Agreed
4	Socio-cultural perceptions which influence household decisions on schooling	3.65	1.60	3.28	1.36	3.47		Agreed
5	Religious practices which influence household decisions on schooling	3.02	1.23	3.20	1.32	3.11		Agreed
Grand mean and standard deviation		3.10	1.50	3.02	1.26	3.06		

Table 1 indicated that items number 4 had the highest mean scores of 3.47 followed by item 2 with 3.14, items 5 with 3.11, item 3 with 2.86 and item 1 with 2.72. Therefore, all the items had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 indicating that, the factors responsible for widening inequality of educational opportunity on inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone are related to unequal distribution of educational opportunities as a result of gender disparities, wrong standard of educational practice regarding those with unavoidable disabilities, Socio-economic factors in relation to the social classes of people, socio-cultural perceptions which influence household decisions on schooling and religious practices which influence household decisions on schooling.

Research Question 2: What are the strategies to curb inequality of educational opportunity on inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone, Kaduna State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of Principals in rural area and Principals in urban area on the strategies to curb inequality of educational opportunity on inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone, Kaduna State.

S/N	Items	Male Principals in (72)		Female Principals (46)				Remarks
		\bar{X}	SD ₁	\bar{X}	SD ₂	\bar{X}	\bar{X}	
1	Government operative legislations should develop national education plans that focus comprehensively on identifying pre-existing inequalities in education and restrict them	2.89	1.21	3.17	1.17	3.03		Agreed
2	Government equitable spending on school infrastructure/learning inputs to help redress educationally disadvantaged individuals to pull them from perpetual illiteracy that is detrimental to economic development.	2.8	1.14	2.89	1.18	2.85		Agreed
3	Government progressive expansion of access to education without minding cultural, religion, regional or political discrepancies	3.01	1.23	3.19	1.31	3.1		Agreed
4	Setting proper standard on curricula and teacher training to promote positive gender inclusiveness and avoid stereotypes	2.7	1.36	2.66	1.32	2.68		Agreed
5	Tackling inequality by making infrastructural provision to accommodate the number of students who merited admission.	2.9	1.19	2.92	1.14	2.91		Agreed
Grand mean and standard deviation		2.86	1.23	2.97	1.23	2.91		

Table 2 indicated that items number 3 had the highest mean scores of 3.1 followed by item 1 with 3.03, item 5 with 2.91, item 2 with 2.85 and item 4 with 2.91 respectively. The various scores are above the criterion mean of 2.50. It simply means that, the strategies to curb inequality of educational opportunity on inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone is that, government operative legislations should develop national education plans that focus comprehensively on identifying pre-existing inequalities in education and restrict them, government equitable spending on school infrastructure/learning

inputs to help redress educationally disadvantaged individuals to pull them from perpetual illiteracy that is detrimental to economic development, government progressive expansion of access to education without minding cultural, religion, regional or political discrepancies, setting proper standard on curricula and teacher training to promote positive gender inclusiveness and avoid stereotypes and tackling inequality by making infrastructural provision to accommodate the number of students who merited admission.

Test of Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the factors responsible for widening inequality of educational opportunity on inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone, Kaduna State.

Table 3: z-test Analysis of the Difference between the Opinions of Male and Female Principals on the Factors Responsible for Widening Inequality of Educational Opportunity on Inclusive Educational Services in Kaduna South Educational Zone, Kaduna State

Subject	n	X	SD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Level Sig	of Remark
Male Principals	72	3.10	1.50	116	0.30	1.96	0.05	Accepted
Female Principals	46	3.02	1.26					

The result of table 3 showed that the z-calculated value of 0.30 is less than the z-critical value of ± 1.96 at degree of freedom of 116 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted and upholds that, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the factors responsible for widening inequality of educational opportunity on inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone, Kaduna State.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the strategies to curb inequality of educational opportunity on inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone, Kaduna State.

Table 4: z-test Analysis of the Difference between the Opinions of Male and Female Principals on the strategies to curb inequality of educational opportunity on inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone, Kaduna State.

Subject	n	SD	Df	z-cal.	z-crit.	Level of Sig	Remark
Male Principals	72	2.86	1.23				
			116	-0.46	1.96	0.05	Accepted
Female Principals	46	2.97	1.23				

The result of table 4 shows that the z-calculated value of -0.46 is less than the z-critical value of 1.96 at degree of freedom of 116 at 0.05 level of significance. We therefore retain the null hypothesis and uphold that, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female principals on the strategies to curb inequality of educational opportunity on inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone, Kaduna State.

Summary of Findings

1. It was found that, the factors responsible for widening inequality of educational opportunity on inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone are related to unequal distribution of educational opportunities as a result of gender disparities, wrong standard of educational practice regarding those with unavoidable disabilities, socio-economic factors in relation to the social classes of people, socio-cultural perceptions which influence household decisions on schooling and religious practices which influence household decisions on schooling.
2. It was also found that, the strategies to curb inequality of educational opportunity on inclusive educational services in Kaduna South Educational Zone is that, government operative legislations should develop national education plans that focus comprehensively on identifying pre-existing inequalities in education and restrict them, government equitable spending on school infrastructure/learning inputs to help redress educationally disadvantaged individuals to pull them from perpetual illiteracy, government progressive expansion of access to education without minding cultural, religion, regional or political discrepancies, setting proper standard on curricula and teacher training to promote positive gender inclusiveness and avoid stereotypes and tackling inequality by making infrastructural provision to accommodate the number of students who merited admission.

Discussion of Findings

Factors responsible for widening educational Inequalities of Educational Opportunities for inclusive secondary education delivery

The result of this study as revealed in the summary of findings is in consonance with Udoh, et al. (2020) whose works revealed that, the factors responsible for widening inequality of educational opportunity includes (1) family characteristics (2) region (3) gender (4) social class differences (5) achievement (6) health status, political participation and (7) family background (8) Socio-economic status (9) cultural (10) school based and (11) individual factors. It also corroborates with the work of Olibie et al (2013) who found such factors to include poor funding which reflected inadequate budgetary allocations and lack of financial support by other public/private institutions, failure to establish effective policies/ineffective implementation of policies concerning different segments of education, failure to establish effective institutions that will monitor standards and quality at all levels of education and corruption in the education system.

Strategies to curb Inequalities of Educational Opportunities for inclusive secondary education delivery

The result of this study as revealed in the summary of findings coincides with the findings of Segun, et al (2014) who found that, to tackle inequality in education, government need to build equitable and good-quality public education that can help fight economic, social and gender inequality, policy makers and government through her operative legislations should develop national education plans that focus coherently and comprehensively on identifying pre-existing inequalities in education, producing data on gaps and needs, and developing appropriate strategies to resolve them and ensure equitable teacher deployment, coupled with equitable spending on school infrastructure. This is also in line with the work of Adesulu (2014) whose work revealed that government should make such provision of separate bathrooms for boys and girls, addressing the non-fee related costs of schooling, and ensuring curricula and teacher training promote positive gender roles and avoid stereotypes.

Conclusion

There is the need for an appreciable level of equality of educational opportunity in Kaduna South Educational Zone. This is so because, the goal of achieving quality, excellence and improving the Kaduna South Educational Zone, lies on improving inequalities existing in the education sector. When inequality to educational opportunity is reduced with the right means, it would be able to control some of the social problems found among our youths today, such as: armed robbery, prostitution, gangsterism, cultism, examination malpractice, forgery, hooliganism, and mass illiteracy which would help in developing the individual and the economy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommended that:

1. Improving access to quality education at all levels of education sector including special education, inclusive education and education for special target and marginalized groups

should be well articulated by the government without compromising the chances of others to gain access to education.

2. Government and society entirely should continuously fight every wrong standard of educational practice regarding those with unavoidable disabilities and other issues relating to socio-economic, religious, cultural, location and gender issues that deliberately deprive individuals the opportunity of attending schools.

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