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THE ACTUALITY OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION AND SCHOOLING OF ALL CHILDREN IN RURAL ZONES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
The introduction of 'compulsory education' by the national government into the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme raises questions as to whether the mandate is actually liberating all children from the issues that disadvantage them from schooling, especially in the country sides, across Nigeria. This survey was consequently conducted to investigate whether compulsory education is actually influencing schooling to benefit all children in state primary schools in rural zones in Nigeria. Two research questions and hypotheses were developed to guide the study. A sample of 1000 children was drawn from 10 rural communities across five geopolitical zones to participate. The Compulsory Education and Schooling for All Children Questionnaire (CESACQ) was employed to generate data. Based on the human capital development theory, the simple regression was used to analyse data via the Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program (JASP). Findings revealed that the law on compulsory education and provision of schools have a significant predictive influence on making schooling actual for all primary age children in rural zones in Nigeria. Legal and social deficiencies are affecting the way compulsory education can mandate the engagement of all children in schooling in context. It is recommended that stakeholders are to activate the relevant laws to make schooling actual for all children in rural areas. Adequate and well-equipped primary schools should be established in rural communities to ease the activation of the policy on compulsory education to its full potentials in those places.

Keywords: compulsory education, schooling, all children, primary schools, rural zones.

1.0 Introduction

Over the last two decades Nigeria has continued to pursue a reform that can guarantee compulsory education for all primary age children in local community schools under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme nationwide. The concept has a strong connection with the law as

regards the education of children and the duration of schooling. Compulsory education suggests a legal mandate which prescribes the period within which every child, irrespective of background, must receive education in (primary) schools (*cf.* Galera, 2020). Following the introduction of the UBE in 1999 (Ewa and Ewa, 2019; Universal Basic Education Commission – UBEC, 2004), 'compulsory education' is added to the programme apparently as a legal procedure to really guarantee the rights of all eligible children to school within a nationally defined time-frame. The notion came into the fore assumedly not as a spontaneous action, but as a carefully thought-out idea intent to help actualise children's aspirations towards schooling. It is a policy instrument for achieving the participation of more children, especially those from the disadvantaged group, in schooling (Harmon, 2017). Prior to 1999, however, was the Universal Primary Education (UPE), the predecessor of the UBE, which had been operational across the country. All through its lifespan, this education scheme experienced certain challenges, which appeared to restrict opportunities for some children to get school placements especially in rural zones. It is so because the policy seemed not to possess adequate capacity capable of keeping in check whatever issues e.g. location and local culture that may prevent children from going to school.

'Compulsory education' has since become the third pillar for enabling an unhindered primary education for all children, the others being free education and universal access (UBEC, 2004) in that order. The change serves as an innovative method to tackle the vulnerabilities surrounding children in regard to schooling. More so, not only has the reform in education occasioned the rebranding of the old programme from UPE to UBE, it also serves to expand the provisions of the new one and reposition it for better service. Again, it indicates how government has decided to raise her commitment to more effectively ensure that the entitlements of all primary age children to schooling is seen to be protected. It is a measure which seems to be in accordance with the human capital development (Brown, 2000; Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1960) efforts of the government. The enactment of the compulsory education produces a wider impact on the chances which the marginalised population has to enter and to stay in school. While this enhanced policy provision looks impressive it is unclear, however, whether the compulsoriness of primary education is just a concept or an actual experience on the ground in context. Up until now, government and stakeholders still appear to be grappling with the issue of out of school population and this tends to be persistent across the country. An assessment of the policy paints a picture to indicate whether the purpose underpinning compulsory education is indeed translating to increased and sustainable participation of all children in schooling. This raises concerns about whether the policy is achieving the objective which is to establish deterrence and compel that all children are to be in school, even in rural Nigeria.

As regards the human capital development which was stated previously, Brown (2000), Becker (1993) and Schultz (1960) have espoused the concept in their various researches. Based on the perspectives of these authors, it is a theory that can help clarify and deepen understanding about the role of compulsory education in the ways primary age children are able to gain access to schools sited within rural communities in

Nigeria. The human resource development concept is located within the realm of Economics and exerts impact on education. It seeks to explain the economic value of developing children via education. Compulsory education is a legal strategy for guaranteeing and sustaining the educational development of children and national development. It tends to be so because an increased commitment to the education of children by making it 'compulsory' indicates a further investment to bringing about an improved capacity of children to participate effectively in production and service. An educated person is capable of supplying a substantial amount of useful productive effort (McConnell, Brue & Macpherson, 2009) in the labour market.

'Compulsory education' resembles an enforcement language, commanding compliance from parents to ensure schooling for children. That potentially clears the atmosphere for the children to be in school to be able to develop knowledge, skills and abilities (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development - OECD, 2001) necessary for them to contribute to the growth and development of their communities. In other words, the initiative also positions itself as a 'safeguard' to the entitlement of children to education, thereby enabling schooling for all of them in local community schools in rural settlements. Such effort by government suggests enormous value accorded the education of children. It recognises the fact that children, as humans, are the most important capital; the other being the material capital. Children preserve the human race. And the school is established not merely to evidence political achievements, but very importantly, to start the process of building the capacity of children for functional living. Their education is therefore key in national development efforts. Further analyses of the overall issue under research are being performed in depth based on the following sub-themes:

1.1 Law on compulsory primary education

Primary education can be made compulsory when there is a concrete legal instrument to actually mandate that all eligible children are to be in primary schools regardless of background and circumstance. Compulsory education came into education policy as a potent force to free the universal access from whatever encumbrances so as to facilitate schooling for all children in local communities in Nigeria. The policy draws from the Child Rights Convention (CRC) which obligates all nation states to undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognised in the convention, including rights to education (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child - CRC, 1997). As a signatory to this declaration by the United Nations (UN), Nigeria moves to perform her part of the obligation by ensuring that all children receive a nine-year basic education unbreakably, including six years education in primary schools and three years of education in the junior secondary schools in the country (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). The focus herein, however, is on the first component which is the six years compulsory education in primary schools. Schools are to also allow over aged children to enter, attend and successfully complete the full cycle of primary education as prescribed by policy. Section 18(2) of the 1999 constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria,

as amended, gives backing to the policy by mandating the government to provide a free, compulsory and universal primary education as a means to eradicate poverty among the citizenry (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Since the introduction of the right to compulsory education, the number of pupils in primary schools have risen in rural communities (Jayesimi and Shoaga, 2020; Ekundayo, 2018). It can be understood then that it is unlawful for parents to restrict or deny any child his or her right to schooling.

Education is a fundamental human right of every child. Bearing that in mind, it implies that all children, be it male or female, must have access to free, qualitative and equitable primary education (Bhagoe, Castelen & Rudge, 2023). A significant number of families domiciled in the rural areas are poor and cannot afford formal education for their children. Quite a number of them are ignorant and illiterate. Many children were consequently excluded or marginalised in education. For this and other factors, government rose to the occasion to perform critical service, ensuring at least basic education for the citizenry (Tomaševski, 2001). This intervention by the state in dealing with the social, economic and cultural challenges of parents is in exercise of its constitutional and moral responsibilities. It motivates children to assert their rights to education. In the view of Shehu (2013), it bridges the inequality gap between the rich and poor children. However, laws that cover children's rights to compulsory education in primary schools arise from the realisation that rights are sometimes deprived and abused, hence it is the task of government and stakeholders to reveal such denials and abuses in favour of the target beneficiaries. Also, there are cases in which some children are unaware of the existence of such rights for them. Some families and adults exploit the situation and block the child's access to such knowledge perhaps as a means to shirk their responsibilities or deny him or her the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for a gainful engagement in the labour market. This gives an indication that parents are taking advantage of the lacuna to dictate the terms and course of the policy to suit their whims and caprices.

Making primary education 'compulsory', nonetheless, leaves no room for choice as to whether a child is to be in school. He or she must be in school provided the person meets the eligibility criteria, including age and nationality. Government holds the diktat; not parents. The effort made by government in this direction is manifestly demonstrated as expressed in the codification of such right in national education policy (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2013). Granting compulsory education in the actual sense portends efforts to de-risk the opportunities for schooling for all. It is to indicate that the liberties conferred on children to be able to access a school is unnegotiable. By implication any violations to that right is subject to prosecution in the court of law of competent jurisdiction. As impressive as it looks, the legality of compulsory education, nonetheless, appears to be a paper tiger. Making education compulsory requires that stakeholders are to match policy with practice and promise with performance (Tomaševski, 2001). The fact that thousands of children are still out of school is a signal that the policy is somehow ineffective (Jayesimi and Shoaga, 2020) or it is not being regarded in rural locations. As at 2023, Nigeria still has the highest number of out-of-school children in the world, with approximately 10.5 million children aged 5-14 not receiving formal education (Oyekan,

Ayorinde & Adenuga, 2023). That means one in every five out-of-school children in the world is a Nigerian (United Nations Children Fund – UNICEF, 2022).

Till date you are likely to find primary age children participating in income generation activities, over-engaged in farm work or in domesticity during school hours rather than being in school. Latest evidence of such engagements of the children in rural Nigeria is documented in Nigeria Child Labour Survey (2022), AjaNwachuku (2016) and International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2013). Anti-compulsory education practices such as these persist because some parents regard the policy as one of government's pronouncements, having no clear implementation and sanction procedures. For instance, there is no evidence of anyone who has received an official warning or been arrested by the police for contravening children's rights to education. It is unclear whether there are legal measures to forbid children who dislike schooling. In addition, there is no evidence of any court that has prosecuted or convicted anyone for breaching the rights of children to education. Children have continued to experience denials and violations of their rights to education in primary schools because there are no deterrence and/or concrete disciplinary measures against offenders. These problems are also lingering because education officials do not perform a regular and effective inspections within communities. These are signs that efforts on that front are relaxed. Government and stakeholders appear not to be able to sustain the momentum in guaranteeing compulsory education for all children. May be government is over-optimistic without having a follow-up line of action in that direction. All of these feed into the narrative that compulsory education is probably a much-hyped component of the UBE policy rather than one intended to deliver hope for disadvantaged children. This puts a question mark as to whether the law is articulate and effectively framed at the national level (Akingbehin, 2021). Some primary age children are likely to continue facing threats of exclusion and marginalisation from education when there is no robust policy that operates to compel all of them in all nooks and crannies to be in school.

1.2 Provision of primary schools

The formulation of compulsory education alone is inadequate to guarantee schooling for all in rural areas. It is also contingent on the establishment of primary schools to accommodate the primary age children in those locations. The state owes the citizens the duty to provide enough public primary schools across the geographical areas lying within her national borders. And government have built schools following the introduction of the compulsory education. It is a measure that can very effectively ensure universal access of children to free formal education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Schools serve as a source of motivation for families to allow their children access to primary education. According to (Oyekan, Ayorinde & Adenuga, 2023, p.2), 'schools are the key drivers of educational access'. The provision of schools is concrete evidence of the re-commitment of the state to education for all. Implicitly, the pronouncement of compulsory education alone is not too meaningful. The provision of adequate and well-equipped schools in rural communities helps to confer more meaning and substance to it. That does not only bolster the policy statement further,

it can also bring about the fruition of it to benefit children in those places. The school is an educational resource, a material capital for attaining educational goals (*cf.* Effiong and Akpan, 2020).

Having schools, in the first place, fosters the participation of children in learning in formalised settings, and it elevates children's aspirations (Redding and Walberg, 2012) for higher achievements in the society, akin to their suburban and urban peers. Schools are not just established for the sake of it or to score political points. They are built because there are children to attend. Other researchers have also made contributions on the subject-matter. For example, Center on Education Policy (2007) stated that schools are to serve all children who reside within their boundaries, and even beyond. Writing on *'the value of school'*, Mishra and Close (2020) and Mitra (2011) added that schools are places where children meet with teachers who guide them to get knowledge, develop skills and values which they use throughout their lifetime. Schools, in this sense, are being provided by government for the common good of all. Private schools are, therefore, capitalist and selective, targeting children from financially advantaged backgrounds. They are established as enterprises for profit making. Contrariwise, the state adopts a socialist stance by establishing public schools not to generate revenue or for profit. Rather, so that it can be seen that government is protecting the welfare of every child by providing an unhindered access to basic education based on the 'compulsory' mantra. This resonates with the notion of 'no child left behind' in education. In contrast, the absence of school and/or the inadequacy of it undermines government objective towards ensuring unrestraint rights of all to access educational institutions.

Regrettably, rural communities in Nigeria have an unequal amount of government owned schools to serve the huge population of children residing in those areas. Some villages, especially those in remote and deprived locations, do not have any school at all. Evidence from World Bank (2019) findings indicate that out of school population is prevalent in mostly remote rural areas due to limited schools or a lack of it. In places where there is a school, it is poorly equipped. Views shared by some Nigerian researchers align with the documentation made by World Bank on this issue. Dike (2004), for instance, stated that a significant number of the primary schools in rural areas do not have classrooms, lessons are conducted under trees or makeshift buildings. Many schools do not have seats. Sometimes the walls of the buildings have cracks (Isa, Bashayi, Umar & Babayo, 2019), thereby posing a serious risk to the lives of the children and their teachers. Just as Isa et al. have opined on the subject, since 2004 there has not been any significant changes made to enhance the situation on grounds in rural zones. Not much differences can be seen in those places. This is one factor which accounts for why many teachers reject postings to schools in rural communities. Such a state of affairs constitutes a huge barrier to the actualisation of compulsory education in rural centres. An effective strategy for achieving the UBE is by providing good primary schools, but it appears a majority of them are established in urban centres. Concentrating schools in the townships deprives children access to (quality) education in the country sides. Disparities in the number of schools built in the villages and cities can widen the gap in

attendance in favour of the urban children. With fewer schools, rural children may develop an apathy for formal education.

As stated earlier, the reforms made in Nigeria's recognises the rights of all children to compulsory education. The measure provides an additional layer of legitimacy to the policy, mandating families to ensure that no primary age child is left behind in schooling. This acknowledges the child as a very valuable capital which must be developed through education. The intention of the government in this direction therefore is probably to tackle persistent cultures and practices which continue to impede the access of all children to primary schools to receive education under the UBE scheme, especially in remote communities.

Even with that the government still tends to be wrestling with the issue of out of school population and a significant amount of that seems to be children who reside in rural zones. It appears the government has yet to support such a policy with the appropriate law/s for it to be able to translate to a realistic experience in the field. Empirical research on the subject is unsubstantial. More so, it is not clear whether primary schools are being provided to arrest any obstinate issue which continues to block the chances for the children to go to school. This raise concerns regarding whether compulsory education actually serves as a clear mandate requiring all children to be in school in rural centres in the country.

2.0 Purpose of the study

The research examined whether the compulsory education policy is actually influencing schooling for all children in state primary schools in rural zones in Nigeria. It specifically investigated the influence of the:

1. Law on compulsory primary education on schooling of all children in rural areas in Nigeria; and
2. Provision of primary schools on schooling of all children in rural locations in Nigeria.

3.0 Research questions

These questions were posed for the study:

1. What is the extent to which the law on compulsory primary education influence schooling of all children in rural areas in Nigeria?
2. To what extent does the provision of primary schools' influence schooling of all children in rural zones in Nigeria?

3.1 Statement of research hypotheses

The following null hypotheses (Ho) were formulated to guide the study:

Ho_1: The law on compulsory primary education does not significantly influence schooling of all children in rural areas in Nigeria.

Ho_2: The provision of primary schools does not significantly influence schooling of all children in rural zones in Nigeria.

4.0 Research method

The quantitative research approach is being adopted to address stated research hypotheses. It is strictly empirical, taking a

statistical measure in data generation and analyses as well as in the report of the research findings. Always this method follows the positivist/empiricist worldview which requires compliance to the scientific values of objective, validity, accuracy, reliability and general is ability. Also, the method will facilitate the achievement of the intention of the inquirer. Implicitly, the study jettisons the qualitative and mixed methods methodologies with all of the characteristics as they do not fit into the purpose of the current research. The research is, nonetheless, limited by a lack of triangulation by the qualitative component.

Following the chosen methodological trajectory of the research, the survey research design is consequently being adopted. It helps to provide a picture about the study. Furthermore, surveys enable the use of questionnaires to collect numerical data from a potentially large population. Nigeria served as the location of the study. She is one of the sovereign states in West Africa. The capital is FCT Abuja. However, the research specifically involved state primary schools established in rural communities across five (5) of the six (6) geopolitical zones in the country. One zone was excluded due to insecurity issues. Focus on the rural districts is due to the fact that the national policy on compulsory education also affects all primary age children residing in those places. Public schools in these communities are established and managed by the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) under the UBE scheme.

All primary age children living in rural communities across five geopolitical zones of the country constituted the research population. Quite a number of them seemed to have had some form of primary education. A representative number of children was drawn to reflect the size of the population. 1000 children, comprising 500 females and 500 males, aged from 6 – 14 years, was consequently recruited to participate. These were recruited from amongst the children residing in the communities. 200 children, made up of 100 females and 100 males, were therefore selected from each of the five geopolitical areas. The sample size was drawn this way to enhance generalisability of findings. Subjects were selected via the multi-stage random sampling method. Each geopolitical zones had at least five (5) states. One (1) state was randomly selected from each geopolitical area. Following that, one (1) Local Government Area (LGA) was randomly chosen from each of the already selected five (5) states. Two rural (2) communities were also selected randomly from each of the LGAs, totalling 10 villages. Within each of these villages, the cluster sampling procedure was applied to recruit 100 children to include 50 females and 50 males.

One data source codenamed, Compulsory Education and Schooling of All Children Questionnaire (CESACQ) was employed to facilitate gathering of quantitative data from the respondents. CESACQ was developed by the researcher using clear and very simple English to make it easy for the children to complete. It had three sections: (A) participant information, (B) biodata and (C) scaling item. Information about the research is contained in section A. Section B required information about the age and gender of participants. The section C contained ten (10) statements, five (5) for each hypothesis, were phrased using two Likert scale of ‘YES’ and ‘NO’. The 10 items were carefully selected so as to address stated research hypotheses. The quantity of the items is to enable a timely

response to them, taking into consideration their attention span. All subjects are to place a tick in the boxes provided to express their view to each statement.

However, from a positivist/empiricist perspective the evaluation of the research is conducted based on validity, reliability and generalizability (Mertler and Charles, 2014; Muijs, 2011; Creswell, 2003) serving as relevant canons by which to ensure trustworthiness in quantitative researches. CESACQ was constructed by the researcher who is a research active person. The document was submitted to colleagues who are also competent researchers to perform member checks (Muijs, 2011; Creswell, 2003) and psychometric scrutiny. After passing the various layers of scrutiny, CESACQ was trialed in one rural community using 40 children, including 20 females and 20 males, of primary age so as to test it in a real research situation. Data emanating from the pilot study was analysed via Cronbach Alpha facilitated by a computer program called Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program (JASP). It produced an outcome of .88, indicating that CESACQ is reliable and suitable for use in the main study.

Following that field work lasting six months and based on a preplanned calendar was conducted. The calendar was prepared to allow enough travel time between participating communities, and to administer the CESACQ to participants and retrieve same. Sometimes research assistants were used to help translate information in the CESACQ verbally into local languages for respondents who had some reading difficulties. Data generation and preparation were completed within one month in each geopolitical zone, totaling five months. The sixth month was used for data analyses. All respondents returned completed questionnaires. One mark was allocated to each variable in the section B of CESACQ. However, each item in the section C was scored as follows: YES = 6 marks, NO = 4 marks. Data was entered into JASP to initiate the process of analysis.

4.1 Ethical considerations

Approval was received from community leaders and parents for the research. They helped to identify primary age children within their communities. Children cannot self-consent to participate in research. As such, their parents provided consent for them to take part. Data collection activities took place in the community squares and town halls. All participants were given the opportunity to withdraw participation from the study at any time without giving a reason. A contingency community was placed on standby in each of the zones for the research to continue in the event of the occurrence of unforeseen and unpleasant circumstances. All items in the questionnaire were worded in a way that would not raise emotive issues in the participants. Names of respondents and communities are written in pseudonyms and their data is held securely by the researcher.

Results

Section A of the CESACQ was just to provide information to participants about the research. Data in sections B and C of the questionnaire was analysed via simple percentage. However, the simple linear regression was adopted to analyse data from section C of the questionnaire based on hypotheses. The JASP was deployed to

analyse data. See summary of JASP output in tables 1, 2 and 3:

Table 1: Participants' Bio-data

S/N	Category	Variable	Number	Percentage (%)
		Female	500	50
1	Gender	Male	500	50
		Total	**1000**	**100**
		6-10	562	56.2
2	Age	11-14	438	43.8
		Total	**1000**	**100**

Data on table 1 illustrates that 1000 children participated in the study. From that number, 500 of them representing 50% are females and another 500, also representing 50% of them are males. It shows that an equal number of girls and boys took part. In terms of age, those aged between 6-10 years were 562 in number, representing 56.2% while their peers aged from 11-14 were 438, representing 43.8. It suggests that a significant number of primary age children participated in the study. Also, it gives a hint that a considerable number of them in the rural areas who are eligible were out of primary schools.

Table 2: Simple regression analysis of the law on compulsory primary education and schooling of all children in rural zones in Nigeria.

Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandardised coefficient		Standardised coefficient	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower bound	Upper Bound
1 Constant	-4.701	3.020		-1.352	.000	68.332	102.420
Law on compulsory primary education	.140	.36	2.01	2.134	.000	0.324	1.220

Dependent Variable: Schooling of all children in rural areas in Nigeria

Result of simple linear regression is shown on table 2 above. Estimates of the coefficients are presented in the B column. Constant (β1) = -4.701; law on compulsory primary education (β2) = .140; P-value for the two coefficients as given in the Sig. column = .000. The calculated t for β1 = 2.134 is higher than β2 = -1.352 and P-value = .000 at 95% confidence interval for B. As such, the null hypothesis that states: the law on compulsory primary education does not significantly influence schooling of all children in rural areas in Nigeria is rejected; the alternative hypothesis is retained. It suggests that the law on compulsory primary education has a predictive significant influence on making schooling actual for all children in rural areas in Nigeria.

Table 3: Simple regression analysis of the provision of primary schools and schooling of all children in rural zones in Nigeria.

Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandardised coefficient		Standardised coefficient	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower bound	Upper Bound
1 Constant	-4.701	3.020		-1.352	.000	68.332	102.420
Provision of primary schools	.137	.36	2.01	2.206	.000	0.324	1.220

a. Dependent Variable: Schooling of all children in rural areas in Nigeria

The outcome of simple linear regression is shown on table 3 above. Estimates of the coefficients are presented in the B column. Constant (β1) = -4.701; law on compulsory primary education (β2) = .137; P-value for the two coefficients as given in the Sig. column = .000. The calculated t for β1 = 2.206 is greater than β2 = -1.352 and P-value = .000 at 95% confidence interval for B. As such, the null hypothesis that states: the provision of primary schools does not significantly influence schooling of all children in rural areas in Nigeria is rejected; the alternative hypothesis is retained. It suggests that the provision of primary schools has a predictive significant influence on making schooling actual for all children in rural zones in Nigeria.

5.0 Discussion of findings

Findings arising from data analyses are being discussed herein based on hypotheses as follows:

5.1 Hypothesis One

The result of hypothesis one indicates that the law on compulsory education has a significant predictive influence on making schooling actual for all primary age children in rural zones in Nigeria. A majority of out-of-school reside in disadvantaged and deprived rural districts. Among them are children who belong to peasant farmers, castes, scavengers, displaced families and those who live in orphanhood and in difficult terrains. The law casts a moral responsibility on the government, community, parents and guardians to enable all eligible children to be admitted into (The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009) and made to complete primary schools. Impliedly, nothing is to prevent any child from accessing school. It is a mandate barring all responsible authorities from allowing any issues, social or cultural, to make any child to be left behind in formal education. Furthermore, the law combines with the child labour law to prohibit families from keeping children in income generation activities, and to rather send them to school (Carr, 2022).

The law on compulsory primary education, however, appears to face resistance and constraints within rural communities. That is creating barriers to children's access to local community primary schools. Many parents are still being encumbered by local cultures that place a low priority on the education of children in schools. Across rural areas in Nigeria agriculture serves as the mainstay of the economy. And parents use children as major sources of labour on the farms, and construction sites. The practice often makes a considerable number of parents and guardians very likely to ignore the compulsory schooling policy at the expense of the children's education. Government is also not seen to utilise its law enforcement agencies, like the police and customary courts, to cause families to comply with the law. Such situations indicate that government is failing to match policy with practice (Tomaševski, 2001) in some geographical areas. For this reason, Jayesimi and Shoaga (2020) concur that compulsory primary education is not effectively implemented nationwide.

5.2 Hypothesis Two

The finding for hypothesis two suggests that the provision of primary schools by government has a significant predictive influence on making schooling actual for children residing in rural districts in Nigeria. Available and adequate schools are a source of motivation for schooling for children in the country sides. Having good schools in the rural centres helps to decongest the population for the ones located in the urban environments. Parents are likely to feel comfortable to keep their children to receive primary education in the rural areas since those schools are comparatively good. Also, the establishment of schools shows concrete commitment on the part of government towards enabling schooling. It is so because enacting laws to guarantee an unhindered access of all children to formal education does not in itself ensure schooling. Schooling occurs if a school exists. Put in a different language, Oyekan, Ayorinde & Adenuga, (2023, p.2), stated that 'schools are the key drivers of educational accesses. World Bank (2019) findings on the subject, however, revealed that primary schools are limited in most remote rural areas, leading to a prevalence in out of school population among children living in those places.

Adding to that, Dike (2004) stated that a significant number of primary schools in the rural areas do not have classrooms, lessons are being conducted under trees or sheds. Many schools do not have (adequate) seats. Worst of the situation is the fact that there are cracks in the walls of some classroom buildings (Isa, Bashayi, Umar & Babayo, 2019) and that exposes the children and their teachers to life-threatening dangers. Children and their parents are attracted to schools when the available infrastructure and equipment therein are enough and in good conditions. Children sometimes feel the urge to attend a school that is beautiful and comfortable. They feel proud to talk about it and like to identify with it; not the one that is in poor state in terms of resourcing.

6.0 Conclusion

Recent changes in Nigeria's education policy have occasioned the issuance of a mandate by government for all eligible children to go to school nationwide, including those in the rural communities. The mandate is enshrined in the UBE scheme to serve as a legal instrument to cover the education of children in state primary schools across the country. However, compulsory education appears to suffer some hindrances, thus constituting a risk to the rights of children in the rural centres to education in primary schools. The real experience on the ground provides certain indications that this mandate is far from achieving its purpose. Due to that, the issue of out-of-school children remains persistent in the country. A significant number of primary age children are still being left behind in education. Research hints to the fact that the gaps in and barriers being experienced in the implementation of the compulsory education are exerting significant influence on schooling of all children in the context. Following that, certain suggestions were being proffered to address these challenges so as to actually free the policy from whatever constraints for it to also thrive in rural areas.

7.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings above, it is recommended that:

1. All stakeholders need to activate the relevant laws to actually make schooling possible for all children in the rural areas;
2. Well-equipped and adequate primary schools should be established in the rural communities to facilitate the activation of the policy on compulsory education fully in those places;
3. More empirical studies on the issue should be conducted to help advocate policy review so that the term can be more articulate in concept and effective in action; and
4. Community education inspectors need to conduct regular checks to prevent violations of the rights of all children to schooling in remote areas.

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