

**EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FREE AND COMPULSORY  
EDUCATION AND STAKEHOLDERS' ROLE IN PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION  
IN AKWA IBOM STATE**

**BY**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Education is characterised as a light that illuminates both the individual and the society. An assessment into the free and compulsory education launched in Akwa Ibom State in 2009 is the hallmark of this work. This study examined the roles of stakeholders in the implementation of the programme. Three research questions guided the study while three null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance to make decisions on the issues under investigation. A descriptive survey research design was adopted in the study. The research instrument for the study was a structured questionnaire for both teachers and parents. The sample of the study was 200 teachers and 100 parents selected by simple random sampling technique. The results of the findings showed that factors such as government subventions, overcrowded classrooms and teachers' lack of commitment to duties affected the implementation and success of the free and compulsory education programme. There was a significant effect in the three variables listed in the three hypotheses. Based on the results of the findings, it was recommended among others that well placed individuals, groups and companies should partner government through scholarships, grants, construction and donation of school classroom blocks, laboratories, libraries for effective learning.*

**Key Words: Policy evaluation, programme effectiveness, free and compulsory education, programme implementation, stakeholders' role.**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary defines education as "the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, an enlightening exercise especially at a School or University". Furthermore, Harmon, Oosterbeek and Walker (2000) see education as the act or process of imparting or acquiring knowledge; skill development, and powers of reasoning and judgment, thereby preparing one for a matured and acceptable role in the society. Educational institutions on the other hand are built to promote the acquisition of skills and knowledge as well as moral development of the learners. Significantly, the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions are designed to produce varied workforce for an economic need for different types of skilled labour (Goswami, 2012). The first definition which professes giving systematic instruction, proves that

education ought not to be just quantitative but qualitative. Albert Einstein reasoned that the education of the individual, in addition to promoting his own abilities, would, attempt to develop in him a sense of responsibility for his fellow men in place of the glorification of power and success in our present society. In 2007, Akwa Ibom State Government spearheaded by its governor, Chief (Dr) Godswill Obot Akpabio made the first ever educational policy of free and compulsory education from primary to secondary for every resident in the State. Over the years, education has been categorised as the best legacy any assiduous government, leader, parent or guardian could leave for his or her people, children or wards. The axiom seems to be the guiding principle of His Excellency, Chief Akpabio who has not declared free education in Akwa Ibom State but has made it compulsory for every child from primary school level up to senior secondary school level. This feat is highly commendable as it caters for both indigenes and non-indigenes who are residing in the State.

This educational scheme was launched in 2009 with the allocation of free textbooks to schools, books for libraries, science and technical equipment for science and technology laboratories. In addition, most schools that hitherto were dilapidated have been renovated and more schools and classroom blocks built across the state to cater for the anticipated mass enrolment. Governor Akpabio argued and quite rightly that illiteracy compounds poverty while education does not only enlighten but also empowers (Goswami, 2012). We should prepare our people to be good and productive citizens with relevant knowledge and with the right values and orientation (FRN, National Policy on Education, 2004). In short, to transform our nation, we must first of all invest in human capital including education. In South Korea, the largest government expenditure is on education. This country is believed by many to have the best education system in the world. Education is so important to South Korea that the minister of education was recently elevated to the position of Vice Prime Minister. In South Korea, education is mainly state-funded and is compulsory for all children from the age of 6-14 years, although most parents send their children to school from the age of 3 years. In his autobiography, the former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair wrote that at the time he took over as the leader of the labour party, he felt that the nation needed a re-birth; a complete rejuvenation in accordance to the vision of the “new labour”. His three priorities were firstly, education; secondly, education, and thirdly, education. This is because as he argued, no society could be transformed unless its education system has been transformed. To transform educationally is simply a question of how we define our priorities. In any case, if education is expensive, we have no choice because we have tried the alternative, that is, ignorance, and it is simply not working. Therefore, the current transformation in the education sector requires conscious tactical planning that would produce generation of educated and knowledgeable manpower. In all these, the success involves government and the citizenry. Obanya (2000) suggests that government co-ordinates the resources properly as the co-ordination will aid in providing quality graduates from the education programmes. Babalola (2006) postulated that school managers should carefully and efficiently handle both financial and human resources in their custody. The researcher is completely aligned with this view that the above have to be areas of concentration if we are to consolidate on the gains of the free education policy to transform our education and make our people the needed change agents in our society.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The policy of free and compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State has been plagued by many factors. Before the introduction of this programme, the existing public primary and secondary schools were able to cope with students' academic needs like accommodation and other learning facilities. Obviously, an unprecedented explosion in students' admission has resulted in scarcity of learning materials, lack of classrooms' space and so on. Emem (2014) studied the implementation of this policy by Akwa Ibom State government, observed the government's demonstration of laxity in the provision of subventions, construction of new classroom blocks, provision of recreational facilities and other basic infrastructures. Again, the National Policy on education stipulates that a teacher should take charge of 35 pupils only in a class. Unfortunately, almost all public schools in the state are thickly populated. Presently, a teacher handles not less than 50 to 60 students in a class. Some teachers have also exhibited lack of commitment to their duties due to fatigue experiences. Therefore, the problem of this study is the failure of harnessing the necessary raw materials, man power, personnel and other materials at the disposal of the government and other stakeholders for the implementation of the lofty policy of free and compulsory education.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions were posed to guide the study. Thus:

1. To what extent does absence of subvention to school heads affect free education?
2. To what extent does an over-crowded classroom affect effective learning?
3. How does teachers' lack of commitment affect the academic performance of students?

## **HYPOTHESES**

The study was guided by the following formulated hypotheses. These hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant effect of absence of subvention to school heads on free education.
2. There is no significant effect of over-crowded classrooms on effective learning.
3. There is no significant effect of teachers' lack of commitment on academic performance of students.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The subjects used for the study were randomly from teachers and parents from Akwa Ibom State. The population comprised the above stakeholders in education sector. Three hundred respondents were selected and used for the study. A structured questionnaire called Assessing the Impacts of Free and Compulsory Education Policy Questionnaire (AIFCEPQ). The questionnaire was pilot tested. The ratings of the items on the AIFCEPQ were on a four point scale as follows: very effective 4, effective 3, ineffective 2, and very ineffective 1. The sample of the study was 200 teachers and 100 parents selected by simple random sampling. Two statistical methods were used in the analysis of data obtained; the mean score and the standard deviation. The decision rule for interpretation of the

results of the data analysis was that a mean of 1.9 and above was considered as effective and below 1.9 ineffective. A standard deviation which was less than the mean score was accepted.

**RESULTS**

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does absence of subvention by government affect free education?

**Table 1:** Teachers’ Response on Provision of Government Provision of Subventions for School Management.

(N-200)		
QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS	$\bar{x}$	SD
Assessing the provision of allowance per term for each pupil	2.22	0.86
Provision of textbooks and other teaching aids	2.10	0.72
Effective use of the learning materials	2.50	0.97
Proper management of government resources for teaching-learning	2.45	0.96
Involvement of teachers by government in educational budgeting programmes	1.99	0.52

The results of the analysis of the data above shows that the government was conscientious in the budgeting provision of subventions to schools for the actualisation of the free and compulsory education programme with an average mean score of 2.25. The standard deviation of their responses is 0.81 which is low. The analysis also showed that teachers’ response to the provision of subvention for the running of the free education scheme is positive.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent does over-crowding of students in classrooms affect effective learning?

**Table 2:** Teachers’ Response on Over-crowding of Students in Classrooms

(N-200)		
QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS	$\bar{x}$	SD
Free education causes schools’ overpopulation	2.35	0.76
The usual classroom size has unusual student number	2.45	0.89
There are many streams for one class	2.50	0.73
There are no new buildings/construction of school blocks	2.42	0.66
The schools are not selective in admission of students	2.31	0.61

Significantly, from the various responses, it was obvious that the scheme has resulted in an unprecedented students’ explosion occasioned by non-selective and non-restrictive admission of students. Over-crowding of students takes a mean score of 2.41 which is above 1.9 with a SD of 1.83. Teachers attested to the fact that the introduction of the new policy of education may be the cause of over-crowding and population explosion of students in public schools.

**Research Question 3:** How does teachers’ lack of commitment to duties affect academic performance of students?

Table 3: Parents’ Response on Teachers’ Lack of Commitment to Duties and Academic Performance of Students.

**(N-100)**

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS	$\bar{x}$	SD
Teachers are not punctual to school	1.20	0.55
Teachers are not always found on their duty posts	1.75	0.84
Students academic reports are poor	1.80	0.91
Teachers do not cover scheme of work	1.46	0.59
Teachers leave school before the closing time	1.50	0.62

Table 3 explains that on the average, parents rated teachers as very ineffective in the area of commitment to duty with a mean score of 1.54. The standard deviation was 0.70 which is also low. This explains that parents are of the opinion that teachers are not doing well in their statutory role of teaching. This has made manifest in the students poor performance in both terminal and external examinations like WAEC and NECO.

**Hypothesis 1:**

There is no significant effect of provision of subvention by the government on the effectiveness of free and compulsory education.

Table 4: Effect of Government Subvention on Effectiveness of Free Education in Akwa Ibom State.

Source of Variation	Degree of Freedom	Sum of Square (SS)	Mean Square (MS)	Fcal.	Fcrit.	$\alpha$	Decision
Factor	2	1751.5	875.75	14.29	3.05	0.05	Significant
Error	46	2818.3	61.27				
Total	48	4569.8					

The table above indicates the results of the hypothesis testing of the effect of the provision of government subvention on the effectiveness of free and compulsory education. Details of the analysis showed that f-cal. was found to be 14.29 while f-crit. was 3.05 at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, f-cal. is greater than f-crit. indicating that there is a significant effect of the provision of government subvention on the effectiveness of free and compulsory education in Akwa Ibom.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant effect between over-crowded classrooms on effective learning.

Table 5: Effect of Over-crowded Classrooms on Effective Learning .

Source of Variation	Degree of Freedom	Sum of Square (SS)	Mean Square (MS)	Fcal	Fcrit	$\alpha$	Decision
Factor	2	1228.4	614.2	14.0	3.05	0.05	Significant
Error	33	1562.7	47.4				
Total	35	2791.1					

Table 5 explains the fact that there is a significant effect of over-crowded classrooms on effective learning. This is expressed by the higher value of Fcal. being 14.0 than Fcrit. which is 3.05.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant effect of teachers' lack of commitment to duties on academic performance of students.

Table 6: Effect of Teachers' Lack of Commitment to Duties on Academic Performance of Students.

Source of Variation	Degree of Freedom	Sum of Square (SS)	Mean Square (MS)	Fcal.	Fcrit.	$\alpha$	Decision
Factor	2	650.7	325.35	7.69	1.65	0.05	Significant
Error	22	930.5	42.30				
Total	24	1581.2					

It could be deduced from the results that f-cal. is 7.69 higher than f-crit., which is 1.65. Consequently, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant effect of teachers' lack of commitment to duties on students' academic performance is rejected. This explains the fact that there is a significant effect of teachers' lack of commitment to duties on the academic performance of students.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study sought to ascertain the workability of the lofty programme of free and compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State. In response to the first research question which sought information on the release of government subvention to both public primary and

secondary school heads, 65% showed positive response while 35% showed negative response. This stand is supported by Dominic (2014) who declares that in the release of subventions to schools by the government though not regular, the goals of the scheme is achieved above average rating. The result lends credence to the fact that schools in Akwa Ibom State do benefit from the government benevolence of one hundred and fifty naira per pupil in public primary school and three hundred naira only per student in public secondary schools across the state. The second question raised the issue of over-crowding in schools as a result of admission explosion. FRN (2004) states the number of students that must be admitted in a class. However, this is not adhered to as parents pool out their children to school for mass literacy. One fact is outstanding: the school cannot reject any student brought for admission despite limited classroom space.

On teachers' lack of commitment to duties posed by the third question, Akpabio and Sammy (2010) extensively discuss the panacea for the achievement of free and compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State. Five items presented on table 3 were all accepted because their mean scores were high. Tables 1, 2 and 3 contain questions on availability of government subvention on the realisation of the free educational policy, over-crowding of classrooms by students and teachers' lack of commitment to duties respectively. In all three tables, the respondents accepted the fact that these were significant in the achievement of the objectives of the programme. Importantly, the findings have also pointed out that government does not regularly make the subventions available for the effective implementation of the scheme.

## **CONCLUSION**

There are factors that enhance the effectiveness of free and compulsory education in Akwa Ibom State. The researcher has painstakingly carried out investigations on those factors which include provision of government subventions, over-crowded classrooms and teachers' lack of commitment to duties among others. From this work, it has been observed that most times the government fails in its responsibility of making funds available for the success of the scheme. The teachers equally have shown lack of commitment to duties in terms of seriousness and diligence. In the face of these challenging situations, free and compulsory education in Akwa Ibom is yielding noticeable positive results.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study exposes the fact that free and compulsory education in Akwa Ibom is achieved with tremendous effort. Massive school enrolment should be backed with correspondent provision of enough classrooms and other infrastructures to facilitate worthwhile learning. The government and the teachers are the key stakeholders and players in the execution of the policy. Teachers need to be engaged in the planning and implementation of the government budgetary provisions. It is equally incumbent on teachers to justify the huge government expenditure on education by being dedicated to duties.

The priority of every stakeholder in education should be a focused and concentrated effort for the success of the scheme. The gains of free education cannot be over-emphasised. There has been re-instatement of the dignity to the Akwa Ibom people who were before now known as experts in domestic staff and lacking in the league of the highly educated states in Nigeria (Akwa Ibom was among the educational less developed states). Finally, the scheme has brought an

awakening to even the young ones that they stand a chance among their contemporaries globally and can look at the future with hope being assured that there is no height they would not attain in life if they vigorously pursue their education.

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

1. The educational stakeholders should ensure more of qualitative than quantitative education.
2. They should be introduction to a research based teacher education programmes that would prepare teachers not only in content but educational theory in order for them to research and proffer creative academic solutions for teaching.
3. The government should develop shared understanding and common reasons among groups and stakeholders to achieve coherence and continuity of the system.
4. Teachers should approach teaching with passion knowing that the job of shaping the future of millions lie in their hands (teaching should not be seen as a last resort when you cannot get a job).
5. Well placed individuals, groups and companies should partner with government through scholarships, grants, construction and donation of school classroom blocks, laboratories, libraries for meaningful learning opportunities.



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