



STEMMING INCREASE IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN: THE VOLUNTEER OPTION

BY

Oluwatoyin Dorcas Ayimoro Ph.D^{1*}, Gabriel Enialola Ayimoro²

^{1,2}Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria



Article History

Received: 11/04/2023

Accepted: 19/04/2023

Published: 22/04/2023

Vol – 1 Issue – 2

PP: - 11-20

Abstract

The rate at which out-of-school children is increasing in Nigeria is alarming! While efforts at stemming it is not yielding desired results, this beams the world's searchlight on the nation. Many children including girls in rural communities in which Kogi State is one find it very difficult to access basic education which tends to add to the number of adult illiteracy. Challenges including poverty, insecurity, cultural factors, and lack of physical structures, teachers, and instructional materials among others have been raised in literature as causal factors for not realising the goal of a right to basic education of every child in Nigeria. However, there is dearth of literature on the option of volunteering as a positive influence on stemming out-of-school children. This study, therefore, explored the dynamics of volunteering and a mix of both indigenous and formal style of teaching in arousing the interest of out-of-school children to attend and complete primary school in rural Kogi. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Twenty-eight participants consisting of both sexes of eight pupils, eight volunteer teachers, eight SUBEB teachers, and four representative heads in Bassa and Dekina LGAs were purposively selected for interview and observation. Findings revealed rich peculiarities in the experience of the participants. It was, therefore, recommended among others that, birth registration should be optimized, full salaries of teachers should be paid while all hands must be on deck to support education in the study area.

Keywords: Increase, out-of-school children, volunteer

Background

The Nigerian Society is blessed with indigenous education which is imbued in her cultural way of life, values, morals, ethics, and knowledge through oral transmission from generation to generation. She was able to take care of her needs, resolve conflicts, offer judicial prowess, enjoy social relationship and affiliation, acquire professional skills, participate in politics without bitterness, and perform spirituality/religious rites among others. All these were achieved through the cooperation and participation of all. For instance, children were taught and taken through the process of adulthood by elders, aunts, uncles, parents, and all members of the community as training and knowledge sharing is seen as the responsibility of all.

Nigeria soon traded her indigenous system of education and communal life for a formal Western education at colonisation and independence. This is so much that her indigenous education has gotten to a very low ebb if not running into extinction. Nigeria has made several reforms in her education system. Tailoring it to the Western style in the name of having a formal system without placing premium to her philosophy, needs, and aspirations. She is a signatory to policy documents on education for all and as a right of every child whereby

formal education is compulsory for children through the basic education schema in primary schooling and probably adult education for early school leavers and as a second chance for those who missed it early in life. This adult education was not well spelt out in the National Policy on Education (NPC, 2004) and also came with hiccups without the reckoning of out-of-school children and its intricacies.

Could it be said that Nigeria fell for the bait through universal funding of primary education from international donors? Even at this, the number of out-of-school children in Nigeria has continued to increase! (UNESCO, 2022). The United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF) Puts the number of out-of-school children in Nigeria at 10.5million (Daily Trust, January 24, 2022) but the Global Education Monitoring Report of UNESCO says presently, Nigeria has become the second nation with the highest number of out-of-school children after India. While this data was faulted by officials of Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria (Premium Times, September 1, 2022) UNESCO claimed that it took care of conflicting data and information by ascertaining that figures reflect reality as closely as possible through the utilisation of multiple sources that was cross-referenced by UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIC) (UNESCO, 2022).

Several reasons that accounted, for increasing number of out-of-school children in Nigeria, include poverty. Nigeria has over seventy million people, about 33 percent of her population living in extreme poverty (World Poverty Clock, 2022 & Vanguard March 10, 2022). These people struggle with basic life needs like food, shelter, clothing, health, electricity, potable water which encouraged child labour. Other factors that could be accounted for high number of out-of-school children include social and cultural barriers like conflicts, insecurity, early marriages among girls, early pregnancy, religious issues, and shortage of teachers, structures, facilities, and needed skills among others. Universal Basic Education (UBE) is yet to reach the hard-to-reach and capture majority of children. One is poised to be curious and have a re-think on the fact that combining both formal and indigenous style though volunteering could yield a better impact. Volunteering is embedded in the culture of the Nigerian people. It is as old as time itself and a part of life of the people.

Nigerians have given their time and resources willingly to people in need in their communities, conflict zones for a common goal of better living and for the benefit of all. For instance, members of the community have assisted in giving out lands for public use like building community schools, church, mosque, health centres. They have assisted each other in building of shelter, farming, child delivery, fetching of water, training of apprentices, aiding in vocations, and sharing of knowledge without financial or material gain but which had contributed to the development of people in such communities and even countries.

Nigeria is home to volunteer of different sorts. There are Non-Governmental organisations and individuals who volunteer in sectors like health, education, conflict, humanitarian, securities among others. They are both found in the formal and non-formal sectors. International organisations like UNICEF, the Educate A Child (EAC) is not left out. In fact the N-Power policy of the Federal Government in teaching is also present. Volunteer is an emerging field in Nigeria presently.

Kogi State is one of the States in Nigeria whose children especially in rural areas has children of school age not being able to access education. For instance, records has it that sixteen percent of out-of-school children in Kogi are boys Premium Times (September 8, 2021), which means that the percentage of girls are higher. Girls in rural Kogi are the worst hit in terms of accessing formal basic education. They are given out to foster parents in cities in order to be enrolled in schools because although, most of the rural areas have primary schools sited in the areas but teachers in such schools are scanty. At most two to three teachers man all the primary classes while some do not have at all. To worsen the situation, evidence revealed that, teachers in Kogi are not paid as at when due, when paid, they are made to access percentages of their salaries (Sahara Reporters, 2021 & NEWSKogi, 2022). Physical structures and necessary facilities for teaching are lacking. The poverty level of rural Kogi is high (Ehinomen, Ugwu & Obi, 2019). Children are utilised on farmlands in

order to have good harvest. On market days, girls are often made to sell in the market rather than attend school. Also, some of the areas are conflict-prone. From time to time neighbours and intruders' farm and fish on each other's farmland and water claiming ownership. About 33.08% of male-headed households and 22.05% of female-headed households live below poverty line 5/7/2022. These among other factors militate against the accessibility of basic education for children in the study area. However, the 'elites' in the rural Kogi are taking strides by devising coping strategies through the utilisation of volunteers. They came together through the Parents Teachers Association to volunteer their sons and daughters who are graduates of Teachers' Colleges and Universities. These live within the vicinity and neighbourhood villages, with the decision to assist in teaching in the neighbouring schools where there are shortage of teachers. To this end, this study examined the option of volunteering in ascertaining the reduction of out-of-school children in Kogi State, Nigeria. It also explored the usage of both indigenous and formal style as a mix to pass instruction to out-of-school aspiring for basic education. The study was guided by these research questions.

Research Questions

- i. How were the volunteering teachers able to register/enroll out-of-school children in rural Kogi?
- ii. What were the methods used in teaching the out-of-school children in the study area?
- iii. What were the options utilised by the volunteer teachers in retaining the pupils in school in the study area?

Literature Review

Volunteerism

Globally, volunteering is not new. It is an act that people perform without even taking cognisance of. From inception, people had volunteered in churches, mosques, hospitals, war fronts, and other places where needed. To volunteer time, energy, and resources are spent without the expectation of financial gain Olaniyi (2021) posited that volunteering includes a wide range of activities done by spending ones time in formal and informal setting without being paid for.

According to Educate A Child (EAC) (2020), there are different dimensions to the concept of volunteerism depending on the perspective of the person, culture, and language. Although, this concept may not actually be volunteerism. For instance, in India, volunteerism is social work. (Aboramadan, 2019 in EAC, 2022). Volunteering is a complex social phenomenon which is mostly woven round assumptions, values, beliefs, and expectations to human development motivated by egoistic or altruistic desires (EAC, 2020). The EAC (2020) says disciplines including economics, sociology, psychology, and political science contribute to the framework of volunteerism.

The functional motivation theory addresses personal and social processes that initiate, direct and sustain action (clary et al 1998 in EAC, 2020). It asserts that volunteerism can be motivated by different considerations and volunteers are often

engaged for several reasons. Whereas, the psychological empowerment theory posits that people act through three important components, namely the intrapersonal, the interactional, and the behavioural (Zimmerman, 1995 in EAC 2020). However, of all definitions, four components were identified by Hustinx et al, 2020 in EAC,2020 namely:

- i. Freewill/choice
- ii. Availability and nature of remuneration
- iii. Proximity to the beneficiaries
- iv. Context in which the volunteering takes place.

The United Nations (2009), asserts that volunteerism is an intrinsic feature of societies and cultures, representing a source of community strength, resilience, solidarity, and social cohesion

Volunteerism for Educational Development

People had volunteered to cater for the need of other people in several areas of needs globally. Volunteering dates back to the twelfth century in Britain where about five hundred hospitals were run by volunteers (Olainyi, 2021). In Nigeria we have formal and non-formal voluntary organisations like the Rotary Club, Lions club, etc donating recreation centres, text books, and writing materials in support of education in schools.

The Federal Government of Nigeria under the administration of President Buhari initiated a programme for tertiary institutions' graduates on June 8, 2016, on the platform of N-Power scheme which is to address youth unemployment and increase social development. Under this scheme is N-Teach, N-Health, N-Agro, N-Tax, and N-Build for non tertiary institutions graduates.

Beneficiaries of N-Teach are to select schools close to them where they all teach for a particular period with a stipend of thirty thousand naira each monthly and an electronic device with relevant content for continuous learning. The first batch taught for forty-three months, the second batch taught for two years while the present third batch will teach for one year. At the expiration of their terms, they undergo entrepreneurship skill under N-Exit where they learn how to start a skill/business of their own, how to grow the business, and how to market it (Blue Print Newspapers Limited September 10, 2020).

Again, there are Non-Governmental organisations in Nigeria whose mandate fall within the education sector. They teach, educate, sensitise, and donate learning materials to schools, marketplaces, community centres, and town halls. Religious organisations like churches and mosques are not left out. For instance, The Catholic, Baptist churches are frontliners in the education of adults and out-of-school children. Mosques are equally contributing their quota. The University Village (UNIVA) Rotary and Lion clubs donate to the cause of education. Foundations found by individuals include St JOAVICS Foundation, The Speaking Voice, Global Help Trust Foundation, Restoration of Womanhood, BRECAN, to mention a few.

Also, the international organisations are not left out in volunteering in Nigerian education. The EAC is one of such organisations taking giant strides through engaging volunteers for the development of education in Nigeria. The EAC deployed fifty-five thousand, four hundred volunteers in projects to enrol and retain out-of-school children in Pakistan, India, Nigeria, Mali, Niger, and Syria in year 2020. This is a project where volunteers are to sensitise the communities on the importance of education, identify and enrol out-of-school children in school on a long term, and support in the maintenance of school (EAC,2020) specifically, the roles of EAC volunteers include:

- a. promoting social change by addressing attitudes and social barriers to education and actively advocating and championing for education and the enrollment of out-of-school children;
- b. sustaining change initiated with external assistance and building capacities of local communities by supporting school-based committees and parents-teacher associations;
- c. actively supporting the learning process by working as community teachers in complementary and non-formal education programmes for the most marginalised out-of-school children. (EAC, 2020 p.2)

According to EAC (2020), volunteerism enables education agenda and development issues to be predicated upon broad partnerships which has a whole-of-society approach where everyone's contribution including the volunteers matter. This makes development more inclusive with opportunities for the active participation, decision-making, and civic engagement of girls, women, and youth (EAC, 2020).

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is another body assisting in the education development of Nigeria. It partners with organisations, like the Muslim World League (MWL), Save the Children (SoC) National Commission for Refugees, Migration and Internally Displaced Persons (NCRMI) Foundation for Justice Development and Peace (FJDP) to give support to the Education of children in Nigeria. The UNHCR is dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights, and building a better future for refugees forcibly displaced and Stateless people. It assures that refugee children have access to birth registration. The MWL funds several projects implemented by UNHCR in southern and northern Nigeria which include supporting the education sector by employing teachers UNHCR (2021), building classrooms and safe places for children, improving quality of education, and providing the necessary materials (MWL,2022). Similarly, it collaborates with NCFRMI, FJDP, and SoC to see to the well-being of hard to reach children by providing food, shelter, healthcare, and their right to quality education (Onu, 2021). During the 2020/2021 school year, UNHCR and others had better enrollment of children, employed volunteer teachers, and built the capacity of teachers and head teachers in schools in Benue, Cross River, and Taraba States (UNHCR 2020/2021 Fact sheet). They also assisted with school kits, built classrooms, provided WASH

facilities, and supported refugees with higher education scholarship. Again,

Again, the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) promotes the right of children in Nigeria. It aimed at promoting development of the knowledge, skills, and understanding of the Nigerian child by supporting cell children to attend school and learn through the application of gender-responsive rights. UNICEF provides a cash transfer programme in which beneficiaries will be able to learn. Also, through its GEP3 programme, it builds the capacity of Headteachers and teachers in the management of schools and the enrollment and delivery of effective learning for girls (UNICEF, 2022).

The World Bank (WB) is a financial group and the largest financial of educations in the developing world. They are working in ninety countries and assist in enabling the country to achieve access to inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030 (WB, 2021/2022) It encourages higher enrollment, especially for girls and others disadvantaged people. Currently, The World Bank asked Nigeria to adopt twelve years of compulsory basic education for all boys and girls to create an enabling environment for sustainable economic development. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The UNDP is assisting in the development of education in Nigeria by providing life skills in community centres as a sort of continuous and lifelong learning for women and out- of- school children. It collaborates with other international organisations and Nigeria to achieve SDG4. For instance, through the regional stabilisation facility for Lake Chad, UNDP is responding to the education crisis in northeast Nigeria by providing access to quality education within a safe learning environment, gaining the skills and knowledge for lifelong learning (UNDP, 2020).

At the launch of the 'Reports' of the independent country-led evaluation of SDGS 3 and 4 in Abuja, Nigeria, supported by the Federal Ministries of Finance, Budget, and National Planning; Health, Education, and UNICEF, Vice President Osinbajo noted that the country will prioritise and increase basic educational financing up to twelve percent at all levels to end extreme poverty, safeguard the planet and enhance basic education. However, the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria, warned that if the present seven percent budget for education was not scaled up to twenty percent with clear accountabilities on delivery, Nigeria might not achieve the global agenda for universal inclusive and equitable basic education for all school-age children by 2030 (Daily Trust, 2022).

Save the Children (SoC)

Save the Children is a global leader working around the world to help children and their communities to prevent, prepare for and recover from climate-induced disasters. It is helping in the rehabilitation and employment of volunteer teachers in disaster rid areas. For instance, it employs and pays a stipend of #30,000 to some volunteer teachers in Cross River and Benue States (UNCHR, 2021). SoC has been working in Nigeria since 2001 to protect children and especially girls,

orphans, vulnerable children, and children affected by conflict from all forms of violence. SoC campaigns to ensure that girls have equal access to education and are protected from child marriage, it immunizes children, increases access to quality education, provides child-friendly spaces for children's learning, and support the re-enrollment of out-of-school children (Save the Children, 2022).

The Foundation for Justice, Development, and Peace (FJDP)

The FJDP was established in 1971 and incorporated in 2013. It is a division of the Catholic Church as a not-for-profit, non-governmental organisation. It adopts rights based approach to programming by protecting in totality the rights and dignity of persons with extreme vulnerabilities. It has a network of reaching the hard-to-reach communities. FJDP has partnered with local and international agencies to implement projects (FJDP, 2023). For instance, it partnered with UNHCR to train one hundred and forty-three teachers on inclusive education, SGBV, and child protection across Benue, Cross River, and Taraba States (UNHCR,2011). It also partnered with UNDP (2018-2023), Search for Common Ground (2021 to date), Irish Aid(2021 to date) Swissland (2011 to date), and GCERF(2016 to 2021) (FJDP,2023).

Religious Missions and Colonial Inputs in Nigeria

Nigeria was a British colony. The Christian missions introduced formal education to Nigeria through their missionary activities. The church missions set the pace for the promotion of formal education through evangelism which the colonial administration built upon (Sarumi, 2011). Southern Nigeria had missions like the Church Missionary Society. The Wesleyan, The Methodist Missionary Society, the Roman Catholic Mission, the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Qua-Ibo Mission, the Primitive Methodist Missionary Society, and the Basel Mission (Fafunwa, 1974 in Sarumi, 2011). Children and adults who were required to participate in evangelism were taken through literacy education, vocations in agriculture, carpentry, bricklaying, joinery, and the like (Sarumi,2011).

The Islamic mission like the Ansarul-Islam Society of Nigeria, Ansar-Ud-Deen of Nigeria, Almadiyya Muslim Jamat, the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria, and the Mahdi Mission of Nigeria a re not left out. The style of instruction range from informal to formal. The stages are divided into four namely: Quaranic stage, The ibtidai, the idadi, and the thannawi stages (Sarumi, 2011). The colonial administration built their educational foundation on the efforts of the religious missions. The colonists needed to rule an enlightened and educated citizenry in the form of educated junior or low-level manpower to assist in administration and Lord Lugard's aim for a constituted authority in Nigeria (Sarumi, 2011).

The colonial masters had selfish agenda for Nigerians and the rest to believe in their policies in order to become useful tools for British benefit. Nigerians were made to reject African ways of life, their needs, culture but embraced western style, they left out modern technologies, emph asised humanities,

promote clerk like and low income personnel. They exported Nigerian resources to feed their home industries to resuscitate their dying economy from the effect of World wars and economic depression (Sarumi, 2011). Thus, education was just a mere privilege with class orientation.

Voluntary and Non-Governmental Organisations

As earlier mentioned, there are voluntary Organisations like the Lions and Inner Wheel, Rotary, Soroptimists, UNIVA, Save our Girls Foundation. Their activities include sponsorships of educational seminars, workshops, conferences, publications, fundraising and direct programming in the interest of the masses (Sarumi, 2011). UNIVA organises seminars and workshops in community education, political education self and health education including literacy education (Sarumi, 2011).

Policies and recent advances by the present administration to boost enrollment of children in school

At the Thailand Conference on Education, Nigeria as a member of the United Nations is a signatory to Education for All. In 1990, Nigeria had a master plan for mass literacy and basic education. The Universal Basic Primary Education metamorphosed into Universal Basic Education (UBE) (Sarumi, 2011). The UBE saw the relevance of adult literacy to national development and adult literacy programmes in order to increase enrollment rates at the primary level and among youths and adults. It has the mandate of formulating and coordinating all programmes of UBE, prescribe the minimum standard for basic education in Nigeria to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance, and poverty as well as stimulate and accelerate national development, political consciousness, and national integration to fulfill the national philosophy and goals of education that underlies with the countries aspiration to social, economic and political development (Wikipedia) thus, embrace formal education up to age fourteen or fifteen as well as adult, nomadic, non-formal education including education for marginalised groups in the Nigerian society. For easy reach, the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) as an upshot of UBEC was established in all States of the federation to address inequality in educational opportunity at the basic level and improve the quality of its provision to learning (Sarumi, 2011).

The present administration of President Buhari initiated the policy of Home Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) to boost enrollment in public primary schools. In its strategic document that was launched in 2018, the government asserted that it would recover seventy percent of children who had dropped out of school and double primary school enrollment from forty-six to ninety percent, and also double both female and secondary school completion rates from forty-two to eighty percent (The Guardian, 2017) the Federal Government handles pre-primary and primary's one to three while the state Government will handle the feeding of primaries four to six. The HGSFP as a component of the social investment plans (SIPs), is to tackle poverty, improve the health and education of children both as a social safety net for children living in

poverty and as part of national educational plans and policies (The Guardian Editorial Board, 2017).

Also, there was the introduction of Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) as a World Bank project with the goal of increasing equitable access for out-of-school children and improve literacy in the States in focus and strengthen accountability for results in basic education in Nigeria (Tribune, 2022) BESDA focuses on seventeen States of the North West and North East geo-political zones Oyo, Ebonyi, and Rivers States (Tribune, 2020). They were given #220Billion grant to fight the scourge of out-of-school children.

The Kogi State government is not left out of taking steps to tackle increase on out-of-school children despite the fact that it has the least out-of-school children in the nineteen States of the north. The State launched its National Identification and enrolment drive and Campaign on out-of-school children. It assented to the Kogi State Education Law 2020 which made it to become a crime for any child of school age to be found outside the school during the school official hours. Any child spotted will be arrested until the parent of that child comes forth to give explanation. The Governor said Kogi was running twenty percent budgetary allocation to education which will be increased to thirty percent by 2022, a Budget of above the UNESCO'S standard of twenty-six percent (Blueprint Newspapers, 2021).

Challenges of accessibility to basic education in Nigeria

The record of out-of-school children from 6.4million in 2000, 7.5million in 2010, 9.6million in 2020, 13.5million in 2021 and 20.2million in 2022 (Guardian, 2022) is quite alarming. There is no indication that efforts towards reducing this menace is yielding any positive effect. A great challenge in dwindling number of literacy in Nigeria is poverty. For instance, in 2018, Nigeria became the World poverty capital. In 2022, Nigeria is no longer the world poverty capital but still has over seventy million people living in extreme poverty; representing thirty-three percent of the population and the highest in Africa (World Poverty Clock, 2022).

Also, Nigeria's hunger level is one hundred and three out of one hundred and twenty-one counties (Oluwole, 2022) Majority of children of school age fend for the family in support of household income. Although, Kogi is said to have sixteen percent of male out-of-school children among the sixty percent found in the north (Premium Times, 2021 & Daily Trust, 2022) the number of girls who reside mostly in the rural areas could not be ascertained about 33.08 percent of male-headed household live below the poverty line in Kogi (Ehinomen, Ugwu & Obi, 2019).

Aside poverty, primary school teachers in Kogi State are inadequate, especially in rural areas. To worsen the situation, they are not paid adequately. Primary school teachers in Kogi state are paid by the State Universal Kogi Education Board. They are on the payroll of Local Government and as such receive percentage salary. Some are said to receive as less as ten thousand naira to six thousand naira (THISAGE, NEWSKogi, Ebira Reporter, 2022 & Punch and Sahara

Reporters, 2021). For more than a decade, Local Government workers in Kogi State and teachers have been receiving percentage of their salaries. This is a reason why poverty level is high in Kogi. Many teachers go to school when they like and on percentage salary received days. The rural areas where there are no accessible roads are the worst hit.

Infrastructure like roads, physical facilities like classroom buildings, WASH facilities, electricity, portable water, instructional materials among others are facilities hindering the delivery and accessibility of quality learning (UNCHR, 2021, WORLD BANK, 2022, Daily Trust, 2022).

Insecurity issues has continued to excavate the out-of-school incidences. There is no State in Nigeria that is completely secure of recent. Children including primary school boys and girls are kidnapped and abducted on a daily basis. Internal Displaced Peoples' (IDP) camps have continued to increase. Flood also dealt debilitating effect on structures to the extent that classrooms have turned to IDP camps even in Kogi State (Iyanda, Olufayo & Savage, 2018 and Daily Post Nigeria, 2022).

Other factors militating against accessibility of basic education include early marriage, unwanted pregnancies, single parenthood, substances use, cultural and religious barriers among others.

Nigerian indigenous education and Language

Nigeria had a very rich indigenous education in a continuum that provided for the needs of her people (Ayimoro, 2019). A good description of Nigeria's indigenous education was evident in the exclamation of Obanya (2007) which said "The education that Africa lost"! Sarumi (2011) reiterated that Nigeria's indigenous education encompasses all aspects of social, cultural, political, economic, oral, intellectual, physical, and spiritual orientations entailing various forms of traditional judicial systems, community, and cooperative affairs. It is evident that Nigeria lost her values during colonisation because she was forced to imbibe and replace the values with foreign culture. This affected her development till date. For instance, her languages and the culture embedded in it are going into extinction.

There had been yearnings to utilise the indigenous languages as a medium of instruction, especially at the early stages in order to promote social interaction, national cohesion and preserve her culture National Policy on Education (2004) as Nigeria is almost alien to her own culture through colonisation and westernisation. It also saw the need to build on her own potentials to achieve her aspiration. But, this has remained a policy statement beset with challenges in implementation.

Recently, the Federal government again approved a new National Language policy which makes mother tongue a compulsory medium of instruction in the first six years of learning to rescue and enhance basic education in public primary schools (ThisDayLife, 2022). The statement indicated that it is aware that the implementation will be difficult as

government will need to develop instructional materials and make qualified teachers available.

The Minister of Education affirmed that so much has been lost in culture and their peculiar idiosyncrasies through the extinction of some local languages (ThisDayLife, 2022) The Minister's statement raises a germane question -when will Nigeria be able to get it right in the correct implementation of the right to education of its citizens?

Methodology

This research adopted the interpretive pattern to explore how the volunteer teachers were able to enroll, teach and retain out-of-school children in the study area. It adopted the qualitative phenomenological approach in order to be able to explore the respondents' personal experiences, observe the uniqueness of the teaching procedure and draw a naturalistic rich experience. More so, that the researcher was moved by her experience of being a guardian of two of such children. The study did this through in-depth interview and observation processes to elicit responses from the respondents through a non-probability sampling technique because of the few numbers needed in the major area where hard-to-reach pupils predominate with high level of poverty.

The target population of twenty-eight respondents were purposefully selected from four rural Local Government Area schools in two Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Kogi State namely: Awawa, Karukwo, Agbelu, and Ogege in Bassa and Dekina LGAs. These comprise of two volunteer teachers and SUBEB teachers each in the four selected schools (eight plus eight, making sixteen), two pupils each from the four selected schools (eight), and one representative parent each that is involved in the management and payment of the volunteering teachers (making four).

I did the interview and observation solely but the interpretation was done by the two children who hailed from the LGA that live with me. A duration of two weeks was expended on the fieldwork. For meaningful interpretation of the raw data, I placed it into categories of a holistic style.

Results and Discussion of Findings

The study had the representation of each sex. One male and a female volunteer teacher each in the four schools (eight) in Bassa and Dekina LGAs. They are between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-two. All of them are graduates of Colleges of Education (NCE). However, the SUBEB teachers were all males (eight). Six of them are NCE holders while two are university degree holders. They are between the ages of thirty-five and fifty-two. All the teachers are married with children.

The four representative heads of two each from the LGA were all males. Three of them are married with at least two wives while only one has a wife. They are between the ages of fifty-three and sixty-one. Three of these men are holders of Grade II Teachers' certificate while only one is an NCE holder. The eight pupils were also drawn on an equal sex basis of four males and four females. They are between the ages of six and sixteen. It is worthy of note here that majority of children in

these LGAs were not registered at birth. A major reason for not starting school on time. They also exhibit evidence of stunted growth because of poor feeding (This is in agreement with UNHCR, 2021 & World Poverty Clock, 2022).

Research Question I:

How were the volunteering teachers able to register/enroll out-of-school children in rural Kogi?

All respondents said that they do visit homes of the children. They visit houses in the village to sensitise the parents about the importance of having educated children. On market days they go to the market to preach that parents should bring their children to school and send girls found in the market back to school. Because of their familiarity with the area, they also talk to and encourage the children on the need for registering them for attendance in school.

Male volunteer teachers in the four schools- Awawa, Karukwo, Ogege, and Agbelu LGA Primary Schools (Bassa and Dekina LGAs)

It is a huge task here to get children to go to school o! Parents are biased on the need for formal education. They often tell us that those of us who are educated do not have government job. It is better for them to train their children on their vocations (farming and trading) so that when they are old their children will be able to fend for them. Some said that there are no teachers to teach the children sef, but we visit homes and markets to sensitise parents and the children themselves. You can now see that they are more than the number you saw on your first visit. In fact, girls don't finish primary school here o! They either marry them off before the age of fourteen or send them to cities where they can gain income for the family. But with our intervention, they have been staying in school. We are role models to them.

This agreed with (Iyanda, Olufayo & Savage, 2018, Ehinomen, Ugwu & Obi, 2019, The Guardian, 2022 & UNESCO, 2022).

Female volunteer teachers in the four schools

Field Study, January 2022

Hmm, you see ma, it is because we are born and bred in the village here! Parents prefer to ask their children to go to farm, market or learn skill to going to school.

Once children are about seven to eight years old here, they send them to Lokoja or other bigger cities to go and learn trade or skill instead of going to school. In fact, the girls are quickly taken away! You know that there are no house help in cities. Parents here will give their children to foster parents thinking that they will send them to school when they get to cities but, it is not always the case. Some parents even prefer to be receiving monthly salaries from custodians of their children than to send them to school.

This is in confirmation of high rate of poverty in Nigeria and in the study area and that children in rural areas do not access education (Ehinomen, Ugwu& Obi 2019, World Poverty Clock, 2020 & UNESCO, 2022).
Field Study, January 2022

Research Question II

What were the methods used in teaching the children in the study area?

All the teachers affirmed that they make use of their Bassa languages with a mix of simple English to teach.

Methods like play ways, roles taking are also used to teach under the tree.

One of them put it succinctly by saying that "Sebi you observed us! Despite the non-availability of classrooms, because for long, the classroom buildings have fallen off. The few left, rainstorms had blown them off but the children are happy learning under tree though, they get distracted by bleating of goats at times. We use folk tales, role play, and our language to teach.

The class is always interactive because the children feel at home with us.

This affirmed (Ayimoro 2019, EAC, 2020 & ThisDayLife, 2022).

Research Question III

What were the options utilised by the volunteer teachers to retain the children in the School.

All of them affirmed that whenever a child is absent from school, they check up with the parents and at home. They visit markets on market days to chase girls away.

Although the feeding programme of the Federal Government did not get to them they get to feed them with at least biscuits from donations from parents.

They teachers are also committed since it is the parents that came together to solve the community need.

Through parents' effort, each of them is made to contribute between five hundred and one thousand naira per child which is used to pay teachers' stipends.

These teachers volunteered with N-Power but at exit, they had no other job, so, they are happy to be engaged and contribute to the development of their communities.

This is in agreement with (EAC, 2020, UNHCR, 2021, UNESCO, 2022 & World Bank, 2022 but disagreed with the Guardian, 2017).

Field Study, January 2022.

The SUBEB teachers were also interviewed, they corroborated the statement of the volunteer teachers.

They said that they are few in the school and not happy because the Local Government under SUBEB pays them percentages as salaries. Some on level 10 and 12 go home with as little as ten to twelve thousand naira monthly.

This is in agreement with (Sahara Reporters, 2021), NEWSKogi, 2022); while it disagreed with (THISAGE, 2022).

The teachers lament lack of instructional facilities and infrastructure. They had to pair pupils to read books in school and for assignment.

They pleaded anonymity and shy away from taking pictures with the researcher as they do not want to be identified as giving out information contrary to the media propaganda of the government in the area.

This is in contrast with Blueprint, Newspapers 2021, and World Bank 2022).

Field Study, January 2022

The children were also observed and interviewed.

A summary of the findings revealed that the children are happy to be in school. They love being in school than going to the farm or market! At times, they are given biscuits and rice. They love it.

A girl who was fourteen years old said if not for the teachers, her parents wanted her to marry one Iman at Lokoja. Another said that she ran away from Osogbo where she was assisting to make, sell food and entertain guests over the night in a restaurant.

On the method of instruction, they affirmed that they feel at home with their teachers, the language used, and the method. This is in agreement with (Ayimoro, 2019 & This Day Life, 2022).

Field Study, January 2022.

The interview session with the representative heads in charge of the management of school revealed these:

The four heads said they came together when it dawned on them that their children will not be able to access education, given the challenges that they are passing through. They all complain of non-accessibility of access road to major towns and villages. No portable water, health care centres. In their schools, there are no classrooms, no instructional materials, and where they have teachers, they are very few. There are villages with at most two public teachers. Villages like Yobu

has no single SUBEB teacher as at the time of compiling this research.

Because of the exposure that they had through the education they received in the city, they had the passion to let the whole village experience the same.

Presently, in Karukwo village, they are contributing towards building mud classrooms

They want to replace the dilapidated classrooms and take children's learning under trees back to safer places.

This is in confirmation with (Iyanda, Olufayo & Savage, 2018 EAC, 2020, UNDP, 2020, UNCHR, 2021 & World Poverty Clock, 2022).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study explored the option of volunteering in stemming increase in out-of-school children in the study area and Nigeria as a nation. It found out that volunteering and a mix of indigenous and formal way of teaching would reduce the incidence of out-of-school children, arouse the interest of the beneficiaries, and stimulate civic responsibilities and development in the education sector, communities, and the nation at large.

It is therefore recommended that:

Birth registration centres should be taken to all nooks and crannies of the nation such that all children are captured at birth.

The government of Kogi State should see to the full payment of teachers' salaries.

It is not enough to enact a law guiding education. The implementation, monitoring, and evaluation is sacrosanct.

The government need to see to the infrastructural decay in accessibility of road networks, hospitals, portable water, energy, physical structures in schools especially in rural communities. Contractors and corrupt SUBEB officials should be brought to book.

It is high time the government do everything in its power to reduce the level of poverty in the nation. It is sad to realise that those who needed to be fed, which would have served as incentive to enrolling and retaining them in school did not benefit from the Federal Government's home grown feeding programme. The government need to correct this anomaly urgently.

Every citizen of Nigeria should take the education of a child as a great responsibility. Such that parents/ guardian of children found hawking or out of school during school hours should be reprimanded.

People should find a way of volunteering their time, energy, and resources to the cause of education.

It is high time we redirect teaching in schools towards our needs, aspirations, and philosophy, such that Nigerians will not become alien to their culture and identity.

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