Post War Challenges of Educational Delivery in Junior Schools in Bo City Southern Sierra Leone

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Abstract: This study investigated the availability and adequacy of teaching and learning materials, administrative problems and qualifications of teachers relative to their teaching effectiveness in junior secondary schools in Bo city, Southern Sierra Leone. The design of the study was a descriptive survey. The major findings and conclusion were that the junior secondary schools have trained and qualified teachers. The majority of the schools were over crowded with pupils in poorly ventilated classrooms. Three-fourths of the schools did not have science and computer laboratories, libraries, home economics facilities and generally the schools did not have appropriate toilet facilities. The difficult and bureaucratic processes involved in the recruitment of teachers were found to be responsible for the late payment of salaries for newly employed teachers. Teaching and learning materials were grossly inadequate in all the schools studied in the Bo city.

Key words: Bo city, challenges, educational delivery, junior secondary, post war, schools, Southern Sierra Leone

INTRODUCTION

The standard of education in Sierra Leone before and after independence was one of the best around the world and West Africa in particular. With Fourah Bay College, now the University of Sierra Leone established in 1827, Sierra Leone was renowned for its education in West Africa. The educational system however fell on hard times for many years. During the period of neglect (1980-2002), the country experienced an erosion of standards in its educational system. (UNESCO Report, 1979)

After the country’s independence in 1961, the system of education in Sierra Leone was based on “6-5-4”. Students were expected to spend six years in primary schools and five years in secondary schools. Upon successful completion of secondary school education, students who passed the General Certificate of Education at the Ordinary level examination and met the university requirements for admission, proceeded to the university for another four years to pursue undergraduate degree programmes in professional fields of their choice (UNESCO Report, 1979)

In 1994, a major policy shift resulted in the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 system of education. In the 6-3-3-4 system of education, the first six years consist of Primary education followed by three years of junior secondary education for all primary school graduates. The 6-3 block (a total of 9 years) make up for the formal part of basic education. At the end of junior secondary school, students take the “Basic Education Certificate Examination” (BECE) which together with their continuous assessment profile, determined whether they will continue at senior secondary schools or proceed to technical or vocational schools of varying course contents and duration.

Students in senior secondary schools at the end of their programme, take the International Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (ISSSCE) in competition with other students in English-speaking West African countries. The West African Examination Council (WAEC) is responsible for conducting this examination. Students who pass this examination and meet the requirements of the University of Sierra Leone may continue their formal education for four years for the first degree. Some students who are in technical/vocational tracks may, upon graduation, continue their formal education in technical/vocational institutes. Occasionally, they do enter the work force.

In 1999, the government of Sierra Leone in an effort to give education a further boost instituted a free education policy. One such policy was the “Education for All” (UNESCO, 2005). The EFA Action Plan included the provision of teaching and learning materials. The thrust of the policy was to ensure that all children from
class one to Junior Secondary School (JSS) form three level, should have “unfettered” access to education. Since the policy was made, up to date, anecdotal evidence reveals that great success can be counted in the area of enrolment of pupils, especially at primary and junior secondary school levels, but not much has been done to improve the quality of education in schools (Global Campaign of Education, 2004; GCE Response to world Development Report, 2004).

Although rapid progress has been made in the post-war years due to the formation and implementation of new EFA Education Policies, the educational sector is still plagued with multiple challenges. These range from quality of education, financial, human and material resources, the commitments to external aspiration of the education, Integrated Science and Social Studies were supplied to teachers and pupils during 2004/2005 academic year. (Campaign for good Governance) (Lawrence, 2006).

The result revealed variances in the supply of these books. In Kenema and Kailahun Districts respectively 32 and 25% of the pupils interviewed mentioned that they were not provided with books. In Bombali and Port Loko Districts 62 and 64%, respectively, did not receive the books. In Moyamba and Bonthe Districts respectively 17 and 23% of the pupils interviewed gave the same response. In the schools where these books were supplied, they were grossly inadequate. The above statistics speaks volumes. It shows that although great efforts have been made so far, particularly by the government to provide teaching and learning materials, much still remains to be desired. Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), like Plan International and International Rescue Committee (IRC) have been filling some vacuum in the government’s text books supply scheme. Plan International for instance, has been providing core text books to schools in Moyamba District. Over hundred schools and three thousand pupils are benefiting from Plan’s support in Moyamba District alone. Other relevant teaching and learning materials like chalk, dusters, black boards and ledgers were available but insufficient in most of schools studied. (Lawrence, 2006)

**Purpose and objectives:** The aim of this study was to investigate the constraints of teaching in Bo junior secondary schools in post war Sierra Leone. The objectives were to:

- Determine the level of availability and adequacy of teaching and learning materials in junior secondary schools in Bo city.
- Describe the administrative problems encountered by principals of junior secondary schools in Bo city.
- Examine the qualifications of teachers in relation to their subject’s specialization in junior secondary schools in Bo city.
- Identify the delivery problems in teaching and learning environments in junior secondary schools in Bo city.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Study area:** The study was conducted in Bo city in October 2010. Bo is the second largest city of Sierra Leone located in the southern part of the country. The city is located 200 km from Freetown the capital city. It has an estimated population of 270,000 (Sierra Leone National Census Report, 2004). Bo is the home of Njala University, the Bo campus, the only agricultural university in Sierra Leone.

**Study design:** The study was a descriptive survey that used descriptive statistics to report the findings.

**Study population and sample:** The population of the study included all principals, teachers and pupils in the 23 junior secondary schools in Bo city. A census study of all the principals in the 23 junior secondary schools was conducted. Due to the unreliable list of teachers available in each school due to transfers, resignations, death, and sickness, a systematic cluster sample of seven out of a total of 23 schools rather than the school teachers were selected to participate in the study. This meant that each teacher in the schools that were cluster sampled participated in the study. A total of 199 teachers participated in the study. A convenience sample of 45 students was selected from each school to participate in the study because it was difficult to determine the population frame of students in each school.

**Instrumentation and data collection:** The researcher, with assistance from his supervisor, developed the study instrument based on the study objectives and the related literature searched. The questionnaires were used to obtain relevant information from the junior secondary schools’ study populations. The questionnaires were pretested in junior secondary schools outside the study area in Kenema city in the Eastern Province of Sierra Leone and its content validity was established by a panel of exerts in the social sciences in the Njala University of Sierra Leone. The correlation coefficient yielded an alpha
Fig. 1: JSS Principals Perceptions of the availability and adequacy of teaching and learning materials

of 80%, thus indicating that the instrument was adequate both in quality and in content to collect the data from the study population. All the instruments were self administered. The data collected were analyzed by the use of the SPSSPc+ computer programme. Descriptive statistics were used to report the study findings.

FINDINGS

JSS principals’ perceptions of the availability and adequacy of teaching and learning materials: According to Fig. 1 the study revealed that the schools did not have adequate teaching and learning materials. Libraries and equipped computer laboratory facilities were not available in most schools. The science laboratories and home economics departments in some schools were not equipped. Agricultural tools and equipment, fertilizers and agricultural machinery were grossly inadequate or completely absent in most junior secondary schools.

Qualification and experience of JSS teachers: As illustrated in Fig. 2 and 3, most of the junior secondary school teachers were trained and qualified with teaching experience of over seven years. Fifty five percent of the teachers were Higher Teachers’ Certificate (HTC) holders, and 22% graduate degree holders with B.Sc/B.Ed/BA Degrees in education or equivalent qualifications.

Administrative problems: JSS principals’ perceptions of the problems encountered by school administration: According to Fig. 4, 75% of the junior secondary schools had inadequate furniture and sitting facilities for the pupils. Majority of the schools were over crowded with pupils in poorly ventilated classrooms. The toilet facilities were very poor, and they were not properly maintained. Only half of the schools had adequate staff room facilities. One third of them lacked well equipped staff room and most of the teachers were not committed to their work. Discipline was in the hands of a few teachers. It was also concluded that the vast majority of the pupils had poor attitude towards school work. All the principals experienced the difficult bureaucratic processes involved in the recruitment of teachers, which is quite often responsible for delays in the payment of salaries for newly recruited teachers. Most of the schools did not have facilities for the maintenance of agriculture tools. It was
Fig. 4: Percentages of J S S Principals on Problem Encountered by school Administration

Fig. 5: J S S Principals’ Perceptions of the problem Encountered by School Administration
therefore likely that practical classes may have not been conducted in most schools.

**JSS pupils' perceptions of the teaching staff:** JSS pupils perceptions of the delivery problems in school: In Fig. 5, the majority of the pupils indicated that majority of teachers were involved in some unprofessional practices leading to serious delivery problems. These practices included sales of pamphlets, extra classes, conducted outside the school environment for money, and the excessive use of corporal punishment. Truancy, absenteeism, of both teachers and pupils and the negative attitude of parents towards payment of school fees were some of the delivery problems prevailing in the schools. Teenage pregnancy was most common in all the institutions. This was partially responsible for the high dropout rate for girls in secondary schools.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the findings of the study and the literature reviewed, it was concluded that there management problems in junior secondary schools in Bo city and that the majority of the teachers were trained, qualified and had many years teaching experience. It was recommended that:

- Appropriate and adequate teaching and learning materials and facilities such as prescribed text and exercise books; well equipped science laboratories, and libraries be made available to pupils in JSSS.
- Computer facilities be made available to pupils and computer studies be integrated in the schools’ curricula as a core subject.
- The government makes available adequate agricultural science teaching and learning resources as agriculture is a core and very important subject in all JSS.
- Adequate seating accommodation should be provided for the pupils in all class rooms
- All staff rooms be fully furnished and that IT facility be provided for the teachers.
- Effective teaching of indigenous language in the country be extended beyond the Mende language only Teaching policy in schools in Bo city to include other languages such as Temne, Limba, and krio, which are virtually not taught in junior secondary schools in Bo city.
- The salaries and conditions of service for teachers be up graded to meet the high inflation rate in the country to ensure teachers retention in the classroom.
- Extra classes conducted by teachers for money and coercing pupils to attend these classes should be discouraged as the conduct of such classes affect effective teaching during normal school periods, affect quality of education in school and put an increasing financial strain on parents.

**REFERENCES**


