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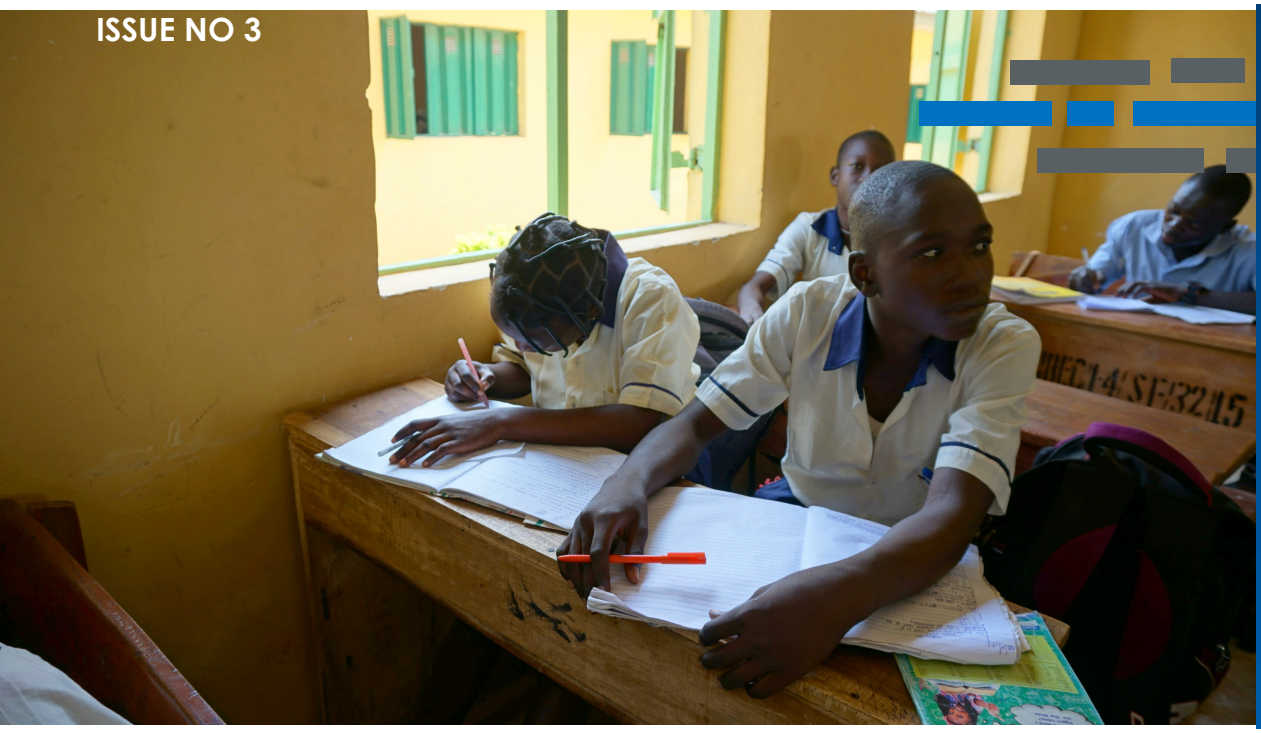

RECENT HAPPENINGS

FG Approves Establishment of National Commission for Secondary Schools

The federal government has approved the establishment of a National Commission for Secondary Schools (NCSS), to regulate the activities of secondary school education in Nigeria. Read more

JAMB Approves 160 as Cut-Off Mark for Admission in Public Universities in 2019

Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB) following the 19th Policy Meeting on Admissions to Tertiary Institution in Nigeria has approved 160 and 140 as the national minimum benchmark for admissions into public and private universities respectively in 2019. Read more

Bauchi State to Declare State of Emergency in Education

The governor of Bauchi state, Bala Mohammed, has promised to tackle the depleting standard of education in the state by declaring a state of emergency in the sector. Read more

NCC Awards Research Grants to Universities

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) has given out 65 million Naira as grants to 11 universities in the country to improve the telecommunications sector. The commission made this decision by selecting 11 out of 63 research proposals who met the set criteria. Read more

DATA SPEAKS

Why Costs Still Play a Role in Out-of-school Children Problem in Nigeria

In 2003, Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme was launched to provide free and compulsory education from primary to junior secondary school. More than 15years since the inception of UBE, it remains curious that many cases of out-of-school children (OOSC) are still been attributed to monetary costs. For instance, the National Education Data Surveys (NEDS, 2015) indicate that 26% (23% public school and 49% private school) of children that stopped attending school in 2015 attributed it to monetary costs and this has consistently been the top reason for dropping out of school since 2004 (See Table 1). Similarly, Table 2 shows that 18% of children of school age not enrolled at all alluded it to monetary costs, which is the third highest reason after distance to school and labour needs of households. However, analysis of the reasons for exclusion as we did below suggests element of costs cut across most of these factors.

Table 1: Top Reasons for Dropping out

Reasons	2015			2010	2004
	Government School	Private School	Total		
Monetary cost	23%	49%	26%	33%	31%
Labour need	15%	11%	14%	17%	21%
Poor school quality	15%	2%	13%	6%	17%
School too far	7%	3%	6%	8%	10%
Engaged/ married/pregnancy	5%	1%	5%	--	--

Source: Nigerian Education Data Survey, 2015

Table 2: Top Reasons for Never Attending School

Reasons	2015	2010	2004
School too far	23%	32%	20%
Labour needed	21%	32%	34%
Monetary cost	18%	25%	23%
Poor school quality	14%	17%	14%
No interest in school	10%	10%	8%

Source: Nigerian Education Data Survey, 2015

What are the Costs of Education?

From an economic angle, three types of costs are incurred in the process of schooling. First is the direct costs, such as expenses explicitly incurred on educational activities. These include tuition fees, feeding, uniform, transportation, books among others. Second, there is an institutional costs that encompass recurrent costs (salaries, teaching aids, utilities, maintenance and repairs) and capital costs (land, buildings, furniture, equipment). The last category is the indirect costs, which is the opportunity costs of time spent by teachers and students in the process of schooling. The indirect costs is in principle, what would have been earned if not in school. It is therefore more relevant in evaluating decision on cost-effectiveness of schooling.

In the private school setting, the direct and institutional costs are tied together and parents are expected to fully bear the costs. For public schools, how much government pays depends on the education policy in place. In Nigeria, the free education policy as stated in the UBE Acts (2004) only covers institutional costs plus tuition fees and to some extent, feeding and books. It therefore means that parents are expected to bear some costs despite education being claimed to be free. In simple terms, what is free under basic education in Nigeria is the costs incurred once a child reaches the door of the school. It is also important to note that a rational economic agent will invest time or resources in schooling only when the perceived benefit is at least equal to the costs.

Institutional and Direct Costs: How they affect school access

Given that government does not fully cover the direct costs, parents bear a proportion of the costs of education. Although contributions from parents are expected to be small, this can still present a significant burden depending on households' income level. Some of the costs reportedly paid by pupils in public schools in Nigeria are shown in Table 3. On average, these costs added up to N25800. For poor households that live below N700 a day, these associated costs amounts to a significant burden to sending their children to school. Essentially, the associated costs of education is the monetary cost that parents were alluding to for children dropping out or not attending school at all.

A further dissection of the costs paid in public schools in Nigeria reveals another dynamics at play. Government has not been sufficiently funding the institutional and direct costs components as promised in the UBE Act. Some of the reported expenses are for items supposedly cover under the free education programme. For example, school development levy, school supplies and to some extent textbook and exercise books are part of the institutional and indirect costs promised under the UBE Act. Invariably, school administrators are using various creative means to transfer the shortfall in government funding to parents.

Furthermore, poor funding could explain other reasons given for not attending or dropping out of school. For instance, 23% and 14% of those that dropped out and those enrolled in school respectively is due to poor school quality. An additional 14% and 13% of those that dropped out and those enrolled in school respectively are due to distance from school. The poor school quality and distance to school are emblematic of poor financing for institutional costs.

Table 3: Associated costs of education by public-school students

Associated costs	Percentage that pays (%)	percentage that did not pay (%)	Average costs incurred (₦)
School lunch	99.65	0.2	2300
Transport/travel to school	98.49	1.3	5000
Exercise books	95.68	4	600
Extra lessons	93.8	6.07	3200
Pen/Pencils	92.84	5.19	300
Uniforms	91.41	8.21	2000
School bags	82.54	17.13	800
Boarding facilities	76.73	20.46	8500
PTA levies	70.48	29.07	400
School supplies	67.48	31.28	200
Examination fees	59.4	40.22	400
Text books	52	47.39	1500
School development levy	37.87	61.53	200
School celebrations	33.02	66.32	400

Source: Nigerian Education Data Survey, 2015

Indirect costs: How they affect school access?

When a child is sent to school, the household and society loss productive hours that could have been spent on adding to family income and invariably gross domestic product (GDP). However, the wage loss is counted as an investment since households and society benefited more in future through higher income and productive labour force.

However, all this rests on the assumption that households are well informed about the benefits of education. In many instances, this is not the case. The second top reason for children dropping out of school (15%) and for those not enrolling (21%) is due to early transition to labour market. According UNESCO (2014), 24.7% of child labourers aged 7-14years in Nigeria are out of school.

The overall trend suggests that many families consider the indirect costs to be very high, and prefer early entrance into the labour market. For instance, the Nomadic group that accounts for almost half the population of the OOSC in Nigeria- It has been observed that children from this group enter early into the labour market to support family business as herdsmen. In essence, indirect costs is arguably the single largest contributor to OOSC problem in Nigeria.

In general, while there seems a multitude of reasons for OOSC problem, our analysis indicates majority of the factors still boil down to costs of education. If direct, institutional and indirect costs, are not sufficiently catered for, it will translate to more population of OOSC and a future demographic burden to the country.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- The observation that costs play a role in reduced school enrolment and to some extent gender gaps in access is not new. Jane Arnold Lincove (2009) has done a nice empirical work on this subject in Nigeria. Specifically, he examined the relative influence of gender, school costs, family wealth, and other factors on access to primary school in Nigeria. The paper incorporates a measure of school costs to the model of determinants of schooling, which has been used in extant literature to demonstrate that background and school characteristics influence enrollment and attainment. Lincove observed that excluding costs from models of determinants of schooling, limits our understanding of household decision-making and bias estimates of other variables. It is likely that high costs keeps some children out of school, especially in contexts where free primary education is limited by resource constraints.
  Using the 2004 Nigeria EdData Survey (NDES) and Demographic Health Survey (DHS), the author applied a model of school costs as a predictor of school access in the Nigerian context. The results suggest that the effect of wealth dominates the effect of costs, and opportunity costs remain a significant obstacle to education for girls. Opportunity costs are demonstrated in provision of childcare for younger siblings and labour on a family farm. Insights from this type of study is vital for analysis of different policy tools such as free primary education or cash transfer programs, as they may have equity implications. The author found chances of receiving free primary education to actually increase with wealth, indicating that these subsidies are not always targeted to assist poor households. Therefore, she recommends policies that increase household resources and reduce opportunity costs as viable complements to free primary education. Find more details about the contributions of this paper and detailed discussion of results, especially relating to education access of girls here.

- Nigeria's education landscape remains tainted with the reality that millions of children are out of school, making it the furthest country away from achieving universal primary education. Northern Nigeria, where the problem of access is concentrated, has a tradition of religious education. Specifically, more than four in five children receive some kind of Islamic religious education. This can be seen as both a constraint and an opportunity to universalizing primary education. Manos Antoninis (2012) used household survey data to provide empirical evidence that supports two arguments about why this extensive non-formal education system in the north has not become a springboard to improve school access.
  First, the author noted that the conditions that made secular and religious education complimentary in the first three decades after independence no longer exist. The statistical analysis showed that currently, receiving religious education has a negative effect on the probability of receiving secular education, after controlling for a rich set of individual and community characteristics. Second, the paper provides quantitative evidence, based on learning outcomes, to support the argument that the poor quality of secular education is responsible for halting progress towards integration. Specifically, the author argues that the poor quality of secular education acts as a disincentive to secular school attendance, hence casting doubts at policy attempts to increase secular school enrolment through the integration of religious and secular school curricula. For more insights about households' decisions related to secular and religious education and the policy implications of the two major findings highlighted, check out the full paper here.