

An Appraisal of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy I (NEEDS I) in Nigeria: The Educational Perspective

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Abstract: This paper set out to assess the performance of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS I) in Nigeria in relation to its educational goals. These goals include; increasing enrolment in primary and secondary schools, improving the quality of education, and increasing funding to this critical sector. Several economic reform programmes in Nigeria have been abandoned not because they had no accomplishments, but largely as a result of paucity of studies assessing them. No paper in the Nigerian literature has appraised the NEEDS I vis-à-vis its stated educational objectives. This paper therefore fills this void. In realizing the objective of this study, I adopted the before and after approach, which involves comparing educational performance indicators before the initiation of the NEEDSI and during the programme. The findings revealed improved performance of educational indicators such as female enrolment in primary schools, adult literacy rate, primary school completion rate, and Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations during the NEEDS programme, although achievements were modest. Budgetary allocation to the sector as a proportion of total budget was below 10 per cent and less than the 25 per cent UNESCO recommendation. Funding to this sector should be increased and monitored in order to achieve sustainable improvements in educational outcomes. Completion rate in secondary school was also low. This paper therefore suggests the extension of the universal basic education scheme to the senior secondary level to reduce drop-out rates.

Keywords: *Needs, Enrolment, Literacy, Education*

1. Introduction

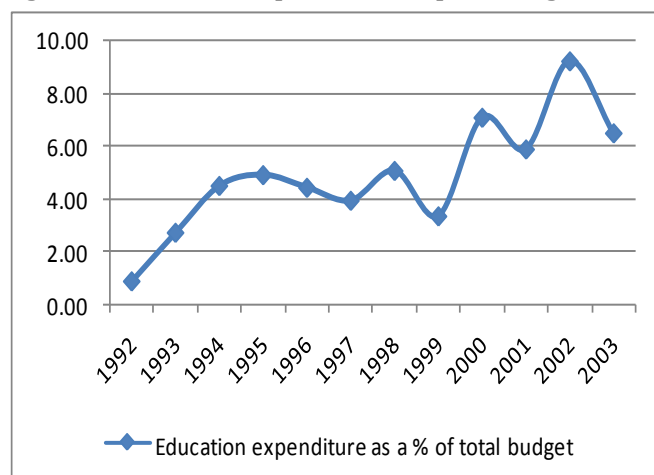
The need to reduce poverty incidence has been a huge challenge facing the Nigerian government. Data from the World Bank quoted poverty incidence at 62.6% in 2010. Poverty in Nigeria is multi-faceted and manifests in joblessness, deprivation of basic needs of life, lack of access to credit, inability to exercise political rights amongst others (NPC 2004). In 1999, when the nation transitioned from a military regime to a democratic government, hopes of the masses were raised. There were indications that succor had come at last for the poor with the initiation of programmes such as the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) and National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) in 2000 and 2001 correspondingly. The democratic government inherited an economy that had been bedeviled in moral, economic, socio, and political decadence. Poverty rate was 70 per cent, and the country was ranked by the Transparency International as the second most corrupt nation in the world¹. Annual growth of per capita GDP (an indicator of economic development) was -1.3%, compared to sub-Saharan Africa's and Ghana's 0.1% and 2.1% respectively (African Development Indicators 2007). Similarly educational performance indicators were on the down-side. The education sector was under-funded, adult literacy rate was 57%, and primary school pupil-teacher ratio was high at 41:1. It therefore came as no surprise in 2004 when the Nigerian government launched the first phase of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) program. This short term policy lapsed in 2007, and second phase (NEEDS 2) was harmonized with the Seven-Point Agenda. The latter has as one of its goals, revitalization of the education sector. NEEDS was posed by the government as her poverty reduction strategy.

¹ See www.transparency.org/research/cpi/overview for explicit data on ranking of countries.

The reform programme was different from other poverty alleviation programmes that had been embarked upon in the past, in that the planning process was highly participatory in nature (NPC 2004). The goals of NEEDS were poverty reduction, employment generation, wealth creation and value re-orientation. One of the thrusts of the reform was people empowerment which can be achieved through increased access to quality education. The role of human capital, particularly education in stimulating economic growth and development has been emphasized in the literature². For instance, Vinod and Kaushik (2007) found that increase in literacy level drives gross domestic product in Nigeria. It is therefore surprising that no study in the Nigerian literature of which I am aware have assessed the performance of the NEEDS I programme in relation to its stated educational goals. This paper therefore fills this void. A study of this nature could provide policy input into addressing the shortcomings in the education sector and identify areas that needed urgent attention. This study therefore appraises the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy I in order to determine to what extent its stated educational objectives were achieved. The rest of the paper is structured as follows. The next section provides some background on the Nigerian education sector before the launching of NEEDS I in 2004. Section three gives a brief review of the assessment of NEEDS in Nigeria, while the methodology is presented in section four. Section five discusses the findings. Policy suggestions are proffered in section six.

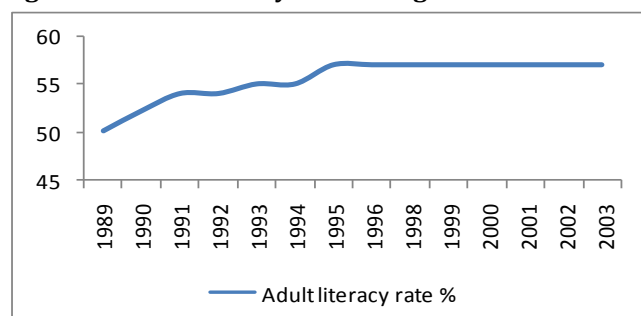
Background

Figure 1: Education Expenditure as percentage of annual Budgets



Source : Drawn using data from CBN Annual Report and Statement of Account of various years.

Figure 2: Adult Literacy Rate in Nigeria



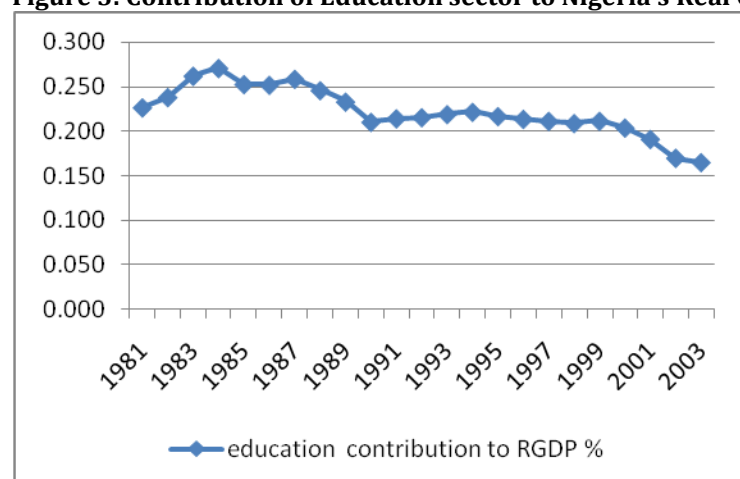
Source: Drawn using data from CBN Annual Report and Statement of Account of various years

² See Bloom et al. (2005) and Mahmood et al. (2012) for some of these studies.

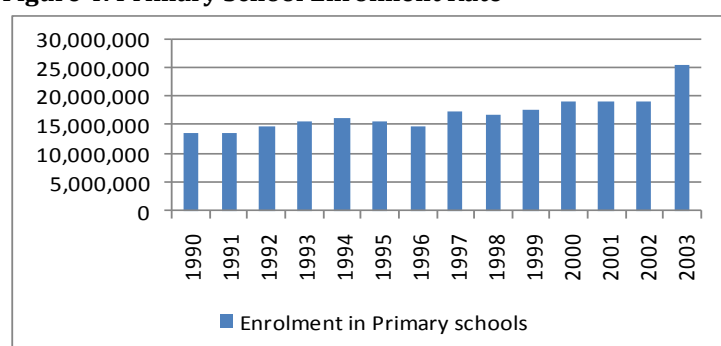
Table 1: Primary school pupil-teacher ratio

	Primary school pupil-teacher ratio
1989	NA
1990	36
1991	37
1992	39
1993	27
1994	37
1995	36
1996	35
1997	40
1998	38
1999	41
2000	43
2001	39
2002	40
2003	43

Source: Economic and Social Statistics Bulletin (FOS) 1986, 1999, 2006

Figure 3: Contribution of Education sector to Nigeria's Real Gross Domestic Product

Source: Drawn by the author using data from CBN Statistical Bulletin (2011)

Figure 4: Primary School Enrolment Rate

Source: Drawn using data from National Bureau of Statistics of various years

Figure 1 charts the total allocation to the education sector (capital and recurrent) as a proportion of the total budget in Nigeria between 1992 and 2003, before the launching of NEEDS I. Apparent is the steady rise in the trend of the education disbursement from 1992 to 1995, after which high instability manifested. The chart

also shows that education expenditure reached a peak of 9.2% in 2002. This indicates that from 1992 to 2003, the United Nations Educational Scientific Organisation (UNESCO) requirement, which stipulated that developing countries should spend at least 25% of their annual budget on education, was not achieved. Figure 2 shows the adult literacy rate among people who are 15 years and above in Nigeria. From 1989 to 1995 there was a slow growth in the literacy rate. After 1995, a constant trend at 57% was observed till 2003. This suggests that in 14 years, the adult literacy rate only grew by 6.9%.

In Table 1, the pupil-teacher ratio is depicted. The pupil-teacher ratio which measures the quality of education and learning condition deteriorated between 1989 and 2003. In 1990, one teacher was available to 36 students in primary schools, while in 2003, it increased to 43 students. Figure 3 shows the continuous decline in the contribution of the education sector to the real gross domestic product. It fell from 0.23% in 1981 to 0.17% in 2003. And it contributed an average of 0.22% in the period under observation. Enrolment in primary schools increased significantly by about 89% from 13,607,249 in 1999 to 25,772,044 in 2003. The sharp increase in primary school enrolment can be attributed to the launching of the Universal Basic Education Act in 1999.³ It is apparent that between 1990 and 1998, enrolment increased by only 24.5%, while it increased by about 44% between 1999 and 2003. Overall, the state of education as depicted by the educational indicators above suggests a poor performance before the inception of the NEEDS I programme. Nevertheless, it is too early to make relative comparisons with the performance during the NEEDS, as this is the major goal of this paper.

2. Literature Review

The literature on the assessment of the performance of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy I in Nigeria is scanty. A large number of studies on the topic are discursive and only appraised its theoretical underpinning, and how realistic the targets are. However, few authors have used descriptive method to assess the reform programme. A plausible reason for the inadequate empirical literature on this topic is the brevity of the programme. This suggests a small sample size, thus making a comprehensive empirical study difficult. Since the goal of this study is to appraise the performance of NEEDS I, I shall focus more on studies that have used data to assess the performance of NEEDS I, and less on those that critiqued the framework of the reform. This is necessary in order to make comparison with the findings of this study. Falokun & Adeoye (2006) examined the performance of NEEDS I with respect to its stated sectoral targets. They used data on sector contribution to the gross domestic product, employment generation, and other indicators. The authors argued that the reform did not increase the agriculture sector's contribution to economic growth as specified in the NEEDS I document. They also observed a decline in employment generation in this sector. Similarly, the target of increasing the annual growth in the manufacturing sector by 7% was not achieved. It was pointed out that NEEDS was unable to improve the potential linkages of the manufacturing sector in terms of its employment and export capabilities. One major goal of the NEEDS I, which was to diversify the productive base of the economy away from crude-oil was also not met. As argued by the authors, oil revenue still constituted 80% and 90% of revenue generated and exports respectively. However, the performance of the service sector improved, with its contribution to the GDP increasing from 11.2% in 2003 to 13.8% in 2004.

Adeyemo et al. (2008) challenged the ideological underpinning and framework of the NEEDS. According to them, the document did not clearly identify any ideology for achieving its stated development goals. They criticized the plan for failing to incorporate the lingering issue of inequality in the system and further imbalance in equity which the short term plan could arouse. Marcellus (2009) extended the literature by assessing the performance of the NEEDS in Nigeria between 2003 and 2007. Unlike the previous study, he used some data to support his arguments and concluded that the programme did not achieve more than past development plans in the country. Specifically, the author argued that the goals of poverty reduction, wealth creation, employment generation, and value-reorientation were not accomplished. More recently, Bambale (2011) evaluated the NEEDS I in relation to its poverty goals and utilized more data than Marcellus (2009). His assessment of the performance of NEEDS is mixed. On the upside, he argued that the average growth rate

³ Under the UBE Act, primary education up to the junior secondary school is compulsory and free.

recorded during the NEEDS surpassed its annual target of 6%, foreign direct investment also increased, and substantial part of the nation's foreign debt was written-off. On the flip side, he argued that poverty incidence and living standard worsened during the reform. Two salient inferences are apparent from the reviewed literature. The first is that no comprehensive study has been done on the appraisal of the NEEDS I, particularly with respect to the education sector. Secondly, the existing findings are not explicit enough to reach a conclusion on the performance of the reform programme. Given this scarcity of evidence, some questions still remain for analysis. How did the education sector perform during the NEEDS I? Were the set goals of increasing school enrolment, raising adult literacy level, amongst others achieved? This paper provides answers to these questions.

3. Methodology

My approach follows the before and after comparison method and the actual versus target technique in assessing the performance of the education sector under the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS I). This technique was adopted by Ojo (1988) and Falokun & Adeoye (2006). Specifically, this paper draws largely from Ojo (1988) in which the author used this method to appraise the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in Nigeria in relation to the agriculture sector. The choice of this method is informed by the short duration of the NEEDS I programme, which makes it difficult for any meaningful empirical analysis to be carried out with such a small observation. The before and after technique compares variables of interest in the period before and after a reform. The actual-versus-target approach however compares actual programme performance key variables to the targets set in the programme. The success of the programme is then measured by the extent to which program targets are achieved. Along this line, I investigated the impact of NEEDS on the education sector in Nigeria using descriptive method. In doing this, the study examined the relevant educational performance indicators such as: total education expenditure, primary and secondary schools enrolment, gender-enrolment ratio, pupil-teacher ratio, adult literacy rate e.t.c. These indicators were examined critically with respect to NEEDS educational objectives which included increased education funding, increased enrolment in schools, especially among female students, and improvement in the quality of education. The data used were sourced from the Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Central Bank of Nigeria Statistical Bulletins and Annual Reports, and Statistical Information on Basic Education in Nigeria.

4. Results and Discussion

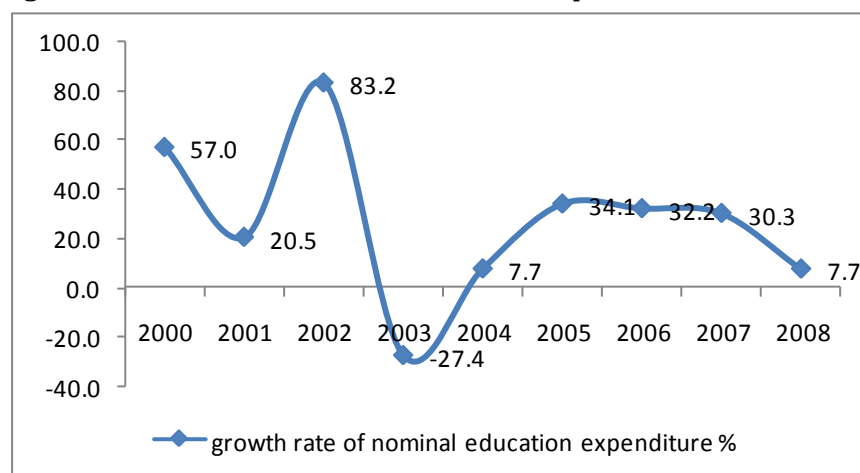
One major goal of the NEEDS was to reduce poverty. This was to be achieved through a set of macro-economic framework which included people empowerment. Restructuring and investing in the Nigerian education sector is one way to empower people as highlighted in the NEEDS document. In this respect, I have analyzed the effects of NEEDS on the education sector by examining to what extent its stated objectives of increasing primary and secondary school enrolment, improving the quality of education, achieving adult literacy rate of 65 per cent by 2007, and increasing funding to the sector were achieved between 2004 and 2007. Table 2 shows the total disbursement to the education sector in Nigeria before the inception of NEEDS I and during the programme. One of the objectives of the reform was to restructure the education sector by increasing its budgetary allocation. Nominal education expenditure increased by 151% between 1999 and 2003 (pre-NEEDS), while during the NEEDS it rose by 148%. However, the worth of this allocation as reflected by the real education expenditure was marginal. Education expenditure increased by only 45.7% and 38.2% during pre-NEEDS and NEEDS period respectively. This clearly points to high inflation rate during the period. For instance, between 2000 and 2007, year-on-year inflation rate average 13%. Figure 5 further shows the year-on-year growth rate of nominal education expenditure. The high volatility of the trend before the NEEDS is apparent. The growth rate declined sharply by -27.4% in 2003. With the initiation of NEEDS in 2004, the growth rate rebounded by 7.7% and continued on an upward smooth path till 2007 marking the end of the NEEDS programme. This growth trend was however not sustained in 2008, as education expenditure grew by only 7.7%.

Table 2: Federal Government Total Expenditure (Capital and Recurrent) on Education (1999-2008) Naira (Million)

Year	Total Expend on education(nominal)	Capital expend as a % of total education expend	Recurrent expend as a % of total education expend	Total Expend on Education (real)	Total Education expend as a % of Total Govt. Expend	Growth rate of Total Education Expend (Nominal) %	Growth rate of Total Expend %(Real)
1999	31,563.8	26.98	73.01	2,977.70	3.33	-	-
2000	49,563.2	21.24	78.75	3,465.95	7.07	57.0	16.4
2001	59,744.6	33.24	66.75	4,345.06	5.87	20.5	25.4
2002	109,455.2	8.41	91.58	6,653.80	9.21	83.2	53.1
2003	79,436.1	18.48	81.51	4,340.77	6.48	-27.4	-34.8
2004	85,580.8	10.57	89.42	3,868.93	6.18	7.7	-10.9
2005	114,737.9	27.83	72.16	4,375.96	6.58	34.1	13.1
2006	151,700	21.55	78.44	4,831.21	7.81	32.2	10.4
2007	197,600	23.68	76.31	6,004.25	8.41	30.3	24.3
2008	212,800	22.93	77.06	5,626.65	6.91	7.7	-6.3

Source: CBN Statistical Bulletin of various years. Figures computed by author

Figure 5: Growth Rate of Nominal Education Expenditure



Source: Author's computation using table 2.

The capital and recurrent education expenditure component presented in table 2 reveals that the latter surpassed the former with wide margin between 1999 and 2008. In fact, in 2002 capital expenditure component was as low as 8.41% and did not exceed 34% all through. This pattern reflects a strong bias towards recurrent spending and shows that a greater proportion of the total education expenditure is incurred on personnel and overhead cost. It is clear that the government has been spending a smaller proportion of education expenditure on capital expenditure and this explains why the educational institutions and their facilities are in a state of disrepair and neglect. Further analysis indicates that during the NEEDS some improvement was recorded over the pre-NEEDS period, as the share of capital education

expenditure increased from 18.48% in 2003 to 23.68% in 2007. In the pre-NEEDS period, capital expenditure component declined from 26.98% in 1999 to 18.48% in 2003. Nevertheless, this marginal increase in the share of capital education during the NEEDS period may not have been sufficient to ensure that the NEEDS I target of guaranteeing that 50% and 60% of primary and secondary schools respectively have conducive learning environments.

It is apparent that when it appears that nominal allocations to the education sector have increased substantially over the years, the relative weight of these allocations was low. This is shown by the total education expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure, in table 2. We would note that it ranged between 3.33% and 9.21%. It has been much lower than the 25 percent recommended by the United Nations Educational Scientific Organization (UNESCO). Education expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure in pre-NEEDS period average 6.3%, compared to 7.2% in NEEDS period. The trend of education expenditure as a percentage of total budget was unstable in the pre-NEEDS period as shown in table 2. In the NEEDS period, a rising trend was observed from 6.1% in 2004 to 8.41% in 2007. It however declined to 6.9% in 2008.

Figure 6: Primary school enrolment in Nigeria

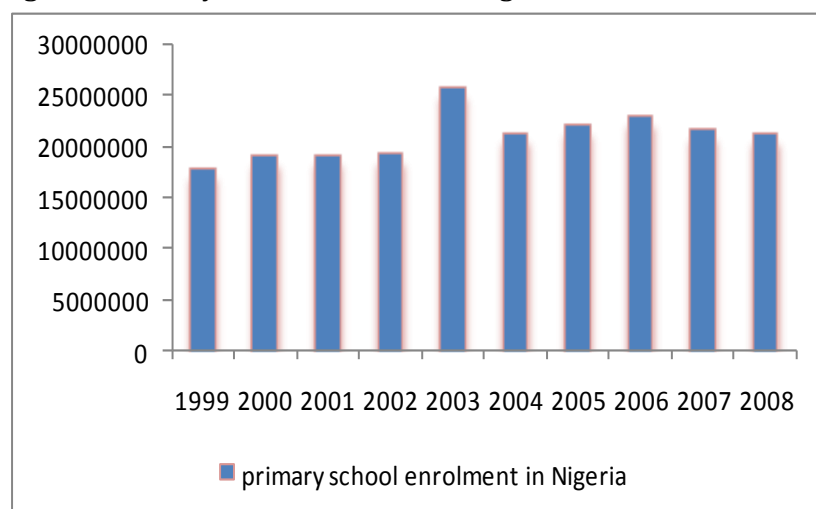


Table 3: Indicators of the State Of Education in Primary Schools in Nigeria

Year	Pry. School Enrolment	Change over preceeding year%	No of Pupils per Teacher	% of Female student	Primary school Gender ratio %	Pry. Six completion rate %
1999	17,907,008	-	41	NA	NA	72.9
2000	19,100,000	6.7	43	44.0	78.5	76.7
2001	19,264,000	0.9	39	43.9	78.2	83.4
2002	19,353,000	0.5	40	45.4	83.1	85.1
2003	25,772,044	33.2	43	43.9	78.2	91
2004	21,395,510	-17	36	44.7	80.8	93.1
2005	22,115,432	3.4	37	44.9	81.4	92.4
2006	23,017,124	4.1	39	45.4	83.1	92.43
2007	21,632,070	-6.0	46	46	85.1	95.3
2008	21,294,518	-1.6	36	46.1	85.5	92

Handbook of Information on Basic Education in Nigeria, National Bureau of Statistics, Federal Ministry of Education, Annual abstract of statistics, Nigeria Gender statistics book. Computations by the Author

Figure 6 and table 3 both show a slow, but rising trend in primary school enrolment in Nigeria. Enrolment increased marginally by 19% between 1999 and 2008, with an average growth rate of just 2.6%. Declines in

enrolment were recorded in 2004, 2007, and 2008. Enrolment in the pre-NEEDS and NEEDS period increased by 43% and 1.1% correspondingly. Increased enrolment in the pre-NEEDS period can be attributed to the launching of the Universal Basic Education in 1999, which provided free education at the primary school level up to the junior high school. The modest increase in enrolment could be partly explained by low enrolment in some States which may have contributed in slowing down the national growth rate of primary school enrolment. Table 4 presents enrolment in primary school in Abia, Kano and Oyo states representing the Eastern, Northern, and Western part of Nigeria respectively. Between 1999 and 2008, primary school enrolment in Abia-state declined by 56.4%, female enrolment dominated except in 2004 and 2005, and primary six completion rate dropped by almost half. This trend is not unexpected as men in the Eastern states of Nigeria are known to give more priority to business activities than education. In addition male children are introduced in their childhood years to business, thus leading to high drop-out rates. In the West, proxied by Oyo-state, enrolment increased by 15.7%, primary six completion rate rose significantly and female enrolment equally matched with male. Enrolment also increased in Kano-state. Nevertheless, primary six completion rate declined and male enrolment dominated female in all the years under observation. This trend can be attributed to the pronounced religious bias against the education of women in this region. Overall, primary school enrolment in Oyo and Kano states increased by 15.7% and 45.2% respectively, while it declined by 56.4% in Abia state between 1999 and 2008.

Table 4: Enrolments by gender, and completion of primary six in Abia, Oyo, and Kano States

State	Year	No of Pupils completing pry six	Total Enrolment M F	Pry 1-6	Total	% Female
ABIA	1999	102,275	336,954	340,284	677,238	50.2
	2000	97,939	324,995	328,478	653,473	50.2
	2001	107,658	362,442	369,169	731,611	50.4
	2002	100,998	333,467	338,128	671,595	50.3
	2003	42,176	138,165	139,278	277,443	50.2
	2004	67,849	196,762	191,175	387,937	49.3
	2005	61,400	202,515	192,871	395,386	48.8
	2006	53,212	119,272	120,415	239,687	50.2
	2007	55,015	133,220	133,737	266,957	50.1
	2008	59,220	143,096	152,055	295,151	51.5

State	Year	No of Pupils completing pry six	Total Enrolment M F	Pry 1-6	Total	% Female
OYO	1999	112,800	399,175	391,430	790,605	49.5
	2000	116,077	404,474	405,422	809,896	50.0
	2001	98,412	350,791	351,836	702,627	50.0
	2002	111,747	388,417	385,986	774,403	49.8
	2003	146,327	498,840	499,448	998,288	50.0
	2004	124,010	414,864	416,475	831,339	50.1
	2005	137,222	437,852	444,565	882,417	50.4
	2006	151,000	458,274	468,129	926,403	50.5
	2007	182,481	528,485	542,148	1,070,633	50.6
	2008	150,120	450,123	464,769	914,892	50.8

State	Year	No of Pupils completing pry six	Total Enrolment M F	Pry 1-6	Total	% Female
1						
KANO	1999	62,741	706,628	476,376	1,183,004	40.2
	2000	169,464	779,116	503,984	1,283,100	39.2
	2001	146,104	603,189	461,165	1,064,354	43.3
	2002	154,809	737,507	501,794	1,239,301	40.4
	2003	191,277	1,036,483	727,624	1,764,107	41.2
	2004	143,993	767,996	561,472	1,329,468	42.2
	2005	151,000	796,520	598,036	1,394,556	42.9
	2006	154,242	965,244	774,248	1,739,492	44.5
	2007	156,184	832,002	678,442	1,510,444	44.9
	2008	155,200	956,155	761,806	1,717,961	44.3

Source: Compiled by the author from statistical information on Basic Education in Nigeria of various years, and the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics

Caution should be exercised when interpreting a rising school enrolment rate. This is because; getting children to school is one thing, keeping them there is another. Many children drop-out before they complete their primary school education. Table 3 therefore presents primary six completion rates. In the pre-NEEDS period, completion rate average 81.8%. This increased to an average of 93.3% during NEEDS I programme. At the expiration of the NEEDS I programme in 2007, primary six completion rate of 95.3% in Nigeria compared favourably with its peers. For instance in Ghana completion rate was 83.9% in 2007 (Ghana Ministry of Education 2009). Overall, primary school completion rate in Nigeria between 1999 and 2008 averaged 87.4%. Leading the agenda of NEEDS I was the objective to increase female enrolment in schools. Table 3 further shows that in the pre-NEEDS period, female enrolment in primary schools average 44.3%. It however increased marginally to an average of 45.3% in the NEEDS period. Similarly, the gender ratio which reflects the balance in male-female enrolment stood at 85.1% at the end of the NEEDS programme in 2007. A gender ratio of 100% indicates parity in male-female enrolment.

Table 5: INDICATORS OF THE STATE OF EDUCATION IN POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

Year	Enrolment in post-primary schools	change over preceeding year%	No of pupils per teacher	% of female students	No of pupils Completing SSS3	Males completing SSS3	Females completing SSS3	SSS Completion rate %	3
1999	3,844,585	-	38	45	511,328	281,689	229,639	23.5	
2000	4,104,345	6.8	31	46	571,089	313,009	258,080	24.0	
2001	4,601,000	12.1	32	47	622,248	346,057	277,191	25.1	
2002	4,866,000	5.8	30	48	653,079	360,971	292,108	25.3	
2003	6,152,000	26.4	34	42	818,572	458,343	360,229	30.4	
2004	6,279,462	2.1	40	43	821,290	465,200	356,090	33.2	
2005	6,397,343	1.9	44	44	843,520	463,963	379,584	33.8	
2006	6,536,038	2.2	32	44.2	854,000	478,240	375,760	41.2	
2007	6,068,160	-7.2	29	42.9	860,310	481,220	379,090	42.6	
2008	6,625,943	9.2	24	44.4	869,708	490,450	379,258	43.1	

Source: Statistical information on Basic Education in Nigeria of various years, Annual Abstract of Statistics of various years SSS3 completion rate was computed by the author using school age 16.

Table 3 also shows the number of pupils per teacher which is an indicator of access to learning and quality of education. The greater the number of students per teacher the lower the access to learning facilities. Overall, pupil-teacher ratio declined from 41 in 1999 to 36 in 2008, which indicates an improvement in learning. Prior to the implementation of the NEEDS programme, pupil-teacher ratio was above 40 between 1999 and 2003, except in 2001, when it declined to 39. During the NEEDS however, the ratio was well below 40, except in 2007, when it increased to 46. In addition, in the NEEDS period, the pupil-teacher ratio average 39.5,

compared to 41.2 in pre-NEEDS period. In Ghana, pupil-teacher ratio was 33.5 between 2004 and 2007. As shown in table 5, enrolment in post-primary schools increased by 72% between 1999 and 2008. A careful comparison of enrolments before the NEEDS programme and during the programme indicates an average growth of 12.7% and -0.3% in that order. This poor growth rate in post-primary school enrolment during the NEEDS programme could be as a result of the re-introduction of school-fees and Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) fees in some states in Nigeria during the period. The male-female enrolment trend shows that male enrolment dominated female enrolment in all the years under review. Female enrolment rose from 45% in 1999 to 48% in 2002, but declined sharply to 42% in 2003. However, with the launching of the NEEDS programme in 2004, female enrolment increased gradually, although declined marginally in 2007.

Table 6: Students performance in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE)

Year	English Language				Mathematics			
	Total Students who sat for English	No of who for	% credit pass	no of students that passed	Total Students who sat for Mathematics	No of who	% credit pass	no of students that passed
1999	757,233		9.71	73,527	756,680		18.25	138,094
2000	636,064		10.82	68,822	643,371		32.81	211,090
2001	1,040,101		26.07	271,154	1,023,102		36.55	373,943
2002	925,289		24.57	227,343	1,078,901		34.50	372,220
2003	939,507		29.03	272,738	939,506		36.91	346,771
2004	1,020,431		29.59	301,980	1,019,524		33.97	346,410
2005	1,064,587		25.63	272,922	1,054,853		38.2	402,982
2006	1,154,266		32.48	375,007	1,149,277		41.12	472,674
2007	1,252,570		30.32	379,831	1,249,028		46.75	584,024
2008	1,348,214		34.90	470,635	1,340,907		57.24	767,596

Source: Computed by the author from the National Bureau of Statistics, various years.

Notes: A credit pass in both Mathematics and English Language is required for entry into higher institutions of learning in Nigeria.

Despite the high overall post-primary school enrolment between 1999 and 2008, completion rate was very low. It average 32.2%. Similarly, in the pre-NEEDS and during the NEEDS programme, completion rates were 26% and 38% respectively. A major inference that can be drawn from this is that despite the modest increase in enrolment, drop-out rate was very high. Comparing primary school with post-primary school completion rates, the data shows a higher rate of completion of primary education. For instance between 1999 and 2008 completion rates in primary and post-primary schools were 87.4% and 32.2% correspondingly. High completion rate in the primary schools could be largely explained by the free basic education in primary schools. This free basic education does not extend to the senior secondary level. However, cost of education is high at this level of education and students often drop-out to engage in activities that will supplement family income. Also, between 1999 and 2008, males completing SSS3 dominated the female. This may be traced to the fact that since educational cost at this level is not free and also expensive, female students drop-out either to assist with family businesses or farm. Also they are married-off at this age or leave school because of teenage pregnancy (UNICEF 2007). Access to learning in post-primary schools as shown by the pupil-teacher ratio in table 5 improved in the NEEDS and pre-NEEDS period by 14.7% and 10.5% respectively. Teacher-pupil ratio of 29 was achieved in 2007 at the termination of the NEEDS I programme. This was a major improvement over the pupil-teacher ratio of 38 in 1999. The performances of secondary school students in the senior secondary school certificate examinations (SSSCE) between 1999 and 2008 is presented in table 6. This is used to proxy the quality of education in secondary schools in Nigeria.

The performance of students in the two core subjects; Mathematics and English-Language are examined. A careful look at table 6 shows an overall poor performance in English Language, although there were some improvements over the years. In 1999, only 9.7% of those who registered for English-Language passed, while the figure increased to a peak of 34.9% in 2008. An intuition that can be drawn from this is that, barring other

effects, each year at least 65% of these students did not gain admission into universities. This is because a credit pass in English-Language is required for entry into the university, In the pre-NEEDS period, average credit pass was 20% compared to 30% during NEEDS programme. This poor trend was mirrored in Mathematics, another core subject. However, there was a slight improvement in the performance over English language in the review period. Only 18.2% of students who sat for mathematics passed in 1999. In 2008 the statistic rose to 57%. Similarly, in the pre-NEEDS period, 31.8% passed, while during the NEEDS period, it increased to 40%. The modest improvement in the performances of students in both subjects during the NEEDS I period reflects the educational accomplishments recorded in the NEEDS I programme. Table 7 shows that the adult literacy rate in Nigeria increased from 57% to 66% in 2008. Pre-NEEDS period was marked with no improvement in the adult literacy rate. However, during the NEEDS period, adult literacy rate increased from 57% in 2003 to 69.3% in 2007. In addition, NEEDS I target of increasing adult literacy rate to 65% by 2007 was surpassed.

Table 7: Adult Literacy Rate in Nigeria (1999-2008)

Year	Adult Literacy Rate
1999	57.0
2000	57.0
2001	57.0
2002	57.0
2003	57.0
2004	62.37
2005	63.1
2006	62.37
2007	69.3
2008	66

Source: CBN Annual Report 2001, 2004 and Annual Abstract of Statistics 2009

5. Conclusion and Policy Suggestions

The performance of the education sector in Nigeria during the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy I (NEEDS I) as indicated by the educational indicators suggest modest improvement over pre-NEEDS years. Although funds earmarked to the education sector did not increase much, a sustained steady and rising growth rate was apparent during the NEEDS I period. Another accomplishment during NEEDS I was the observed gradual increase and decline in the capital and recurrent expenditure component respectively. This indicated increased spending on the dilapidated physical structures and other capital educational inputs. Primary schools are still characterized by low enrolments, although completion rate is high. Increasing number of female students is also enrolling. The quality of education in primary schools as suggested by the average pupil-teacher ratio is on the upside. In secondary schools, despite the increase in enrolments, completion rate is still low, although some improvements were recorded during the NEEDS programme. Performances of students in the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations also improved during the NEEDS programme, albeit modestly.

Based on these findings, it is suggested that educational spending need to be increased substantially in order to achieve greater educational outcomes. Simultaneously, misappropriation of these funds should also be checked and minimized. Efforts should also be made to keep students in schools and curb drop-out rates, particularly at the secondary level. One way of achieving this is to extend the free universal basic education scheme to the senior secondary levels. Apart from the extension of the free universal basic Act, other factors that are known to aid drop-out rates such as lack of educational accessories including uniforms, shoes and proximity of schools to villages should be addressed. Scholarships for girls should be provided to ease the burden of educational financing on parents in order increase girls' enrolments in the Northern part of Nigeria, where there is a high bias toward female-child education. Similarly, strategies to keep male students in school in the Eastern Nigeria should be adopted. By doing this, a balanced school enrolment and completion rates are achieved in all the geo-political zones in the country. The Child Rights Act adopted by Nigeria in 2003 should be enforced and strict penalties imposed on those who still engage children in child labour activities.

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