

CREATING ACCESS TO FREE, QUALITY AND COMPULSORY EDUCATION FOR ALL IN NIGERIA.

Looking at report of the 2016 RTEI conducted in Nigeria by the Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All (CSACEFA) which was also conducted by other national education coalitions and organisation in 15 countries across the globe, data emanating from the questionnaire keeps one in doubt if the country education system is geared towards achieving globe development agenda e.g. the SDGs.

What is Right to Education Index (RTEI)?

The right to education Index (RTEI) is a new global index designed to drive accountability and progress towards realizing the right to education. RTEI



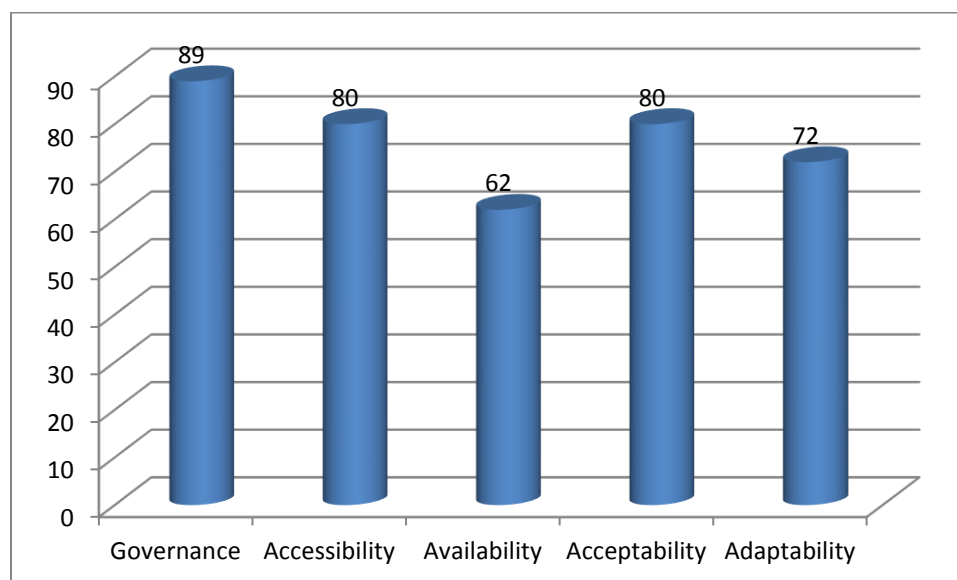
works with civil society, research institutions and governments to collect data on a wide variety of indicators of the right to education to identify progress being made towards the fulfillment of the right to education as well as obstacles to it. RTEI is conducted on a biennial basis to track such progress, identify trends, and support efforts towards the right to education.

The RTEI looks at 5 themes; Governance, Accessibility, Adaptability, Availability and Acceptability in determining how countries have fared towards guaranteeing right to education. Looking at the 4As in the right to education, as a country, we have not fared well towards implementation and achievement of the right to education in schools.

Nigeria RTEI results

The overall RTEI result is calculated from the *RTEI Questionnaire* conducted which provides a country specific index result measuring how well a country respects, protects, and fulfills the right to education for its citizens. It is similar to other index-based initiatives, such as the International Budget Partnership's Open Budget Index and the Global Integrity Index.

The general score in the 2016 RTEI for Nigeria is 77 which comprise of the 5 themes in the RTEI namely Governance, Accessibility, Availability, Acceptability and Adaptability.



The results in the 2016 RTEI shows we still have issues in the following 3 major areas;

Area 1: Child unfriendly schools/classrooms.

The public school system at all levels has often been characterized by dilapidated buildings, poor learning outcomes as a result of poor teaching and learning environment. The learning environment across schools at all levels especially in basic education is in a bad shape. Many of the schools especially in the rural and semi urban areas can often be found to be in a poor state as pupils sit on broken floor without furniture, some learning under a tree, dilapidated buildings, and overcrowded classrooms, etc. Other child unfriendliness issues in schools and classrooms are:

- Non fencing of schools and encroachment of school land by community members
- Inadequate school furniture for both teachers and students
- Poor library facilities and inadequate textbooks for teaching and learning
- Poor Water and sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities etc

The poor state of schools in Nigeria is worrisome for education stakeholders, especially civil society as the government is not paying adequate attention to public schools which has given rise to a proliferation of private schools in the country.

Area 2: School Safety and Security.

Despite the intervention of government and international development partners in supporting the education of the Boko Haram affected children in the north east of Nigeria, millions of children are still unable to access education. The issue of school security and safety is a priority

that the government should take into consideration. Since the abduction of the Chibok girls in Borno state Nigeria by the Boko Haram sect there have been several reported cases of violence and attacks in schools in the north east and other parts of the country.

Education is a human right and ensuring that children stay safe in schools is a right that should be ensured by the relevant authorities. Either in the north or south, there has been incidents of violence and attacks on schools, teachers and students across the country. This incessant violence and attacks on the school system, ranging from kidnapping, rape, abduction, bombing etc have forced many children to drop out of school and many schools to shut down. For example, in Borno state, since the attack on Chibok girls over two years ago, schools in have been closed down, in some states or schools, attacks have disrupted the academic calendar and in some cases girls have been forced to drop out of school due to attacks and violence. Security and safety of children in schools is important and should be given adequate attention by the government as the insecurity in schools at all levels today has heightened parents fear from sending their children to schools. Recently students and staff from the Turkish International School in Ogun state were abducted and this is following similar story in October 2016 when the vice principal and 4 children from Lagos Model school Igbonla were kidnapped. <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/01/breaking-two-staff-3-students-turkish-international-school-kidnapped/>

Violence, attacks, abuse, kidnapping or bombing of school and any other form of insecurity in schools have affected the students and the school in general. One of the problems is that all forms of insecurity or violence in schools badly affect the girl child. The issues of insecurity in schools has led to an increase in the number of children that drop out of school, affects learning outcomes as most children are traumatized, and academic calendar disrupted, school properties and lives destroyed.

Area 3: Poor Budgetary allocation

Over the years, poor budgetary allocations by government at all levels have been a big challenge in the development of the education sector in Nigeria. At the federal and state level, budget allocation to the education sector continues to decline as it fails to meet up with the 20% UNESCO recommendation budgetary allocation to the education sector. In 2016, the budget allocation to education at the national level was a paltry 8% of the national budget. In 2017,



there has been a decline in the budgetary allocation at the national level. Out of the budget presentation of N7.298 trillion, education got N50 billion out of which N398 billion is allocated to recurrent and the balance to capital. In 2016, 33 states of the federation had allocated N653.53 billion

(10.7 percent) of their combined total budget estimates of N6.1 trillion to education. Though in 2017, few states like Sokoto (the state earmarked 27.3 to education), Kwara, Nassarawa, and Ogun etc. gave education the lion's share of the presented state budget the state house of Assemblies while states like Imo, Lagos, and Jigawa gave little attention to education in their 2017 budget allocations.

With the poor commitment of the government to the education sector through insufficient budgetary allocation, the various challenges of the education sector may not be addressed. Despite the budgetary allocations, another worrisome issue in regards to education budgeting is the unclear budget headlines. For monitoring purposes, looking at the budget items, it is difficult to determine for example location of project/program. Another challenge in the allocation is that the recurrent expenditure which is made of up salaries and administrative cost, takes chunk of the budget allocation.

Recommendations

To ensure that all children have access to free and compulsory quality education in Nigeria, we therefore the recommend following

- Government at all levels should work towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 by ensuring access to quality education for all children through provision of conducive teaching and learning environment in schools.
- Government at all levels to take education as a key priority in their development agenda as there is no sustainable development without commitment in the education sector.
- Need for increased commitment to the public education system by the government as the poor state of the public schools have given rise to the private schools which are not affordable to the poor thereby limiting access to the poor and vulnerable in the society.
- The Federal Ministry of Efforts should be made in capturing data on private schools education delivery at all levels.
- Education should be made a top priority at the national and state level which includes increase budgetary allocation to the sector. And budget item lines should be clear and disaggregated for monitoring and tracking purposes.
- There is need for CSOs increase engagement with policy makers and other education key actors at all levels.
- There is need for increase citizen participation in education planning and decision making processes.